CONSERVATISM AND GRACE:

THE CASE AGAINST SECULAR CONSERVATISM

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There can be no genuine conservatism which is not founded upon a religious view of the basis of civil obligation, and there can be no true religion where the basis of civil obligation is treated as purely secular. This has been the conclusion of so many different Conservative thinkers that I should be utterly untrue to the Conservative tradition as well as to my own conviction were I not to say so.[1]

Introduction

There is a widely acknowledged connection between religion and conservatism. That there is an *inherent* connection has been increasingly challenged in recent times, an example of which is found in the political works of Sir Roger Scruton. In this thesis, I seek to address this challenge and uncover the nature of the relationship between conservatism and religion.

The tendency of conservatives to have recourse to religious ideas has aided those among their opponents who consider religion irrational, or at least non-rational, to dismiss conservative arguments. This may be why some conservatives have felt compelled to reframe conservatism in secular terms. In any case, if it were found that the connection between conservatism and religion is an inherent connection, this would imply that any attempt to develop a secular conservatism would be unsuccessful, or it would bring about something that is not conservatism.

My purpose is simply that of uncovering the relationship between religion and the basic conservative attitude. For this reason, I do not focus on ongoing disagreements among conservatives, such as those over the best *form* of government, over marriage and family, private property, taxation, foreign interventionism, welfare, healthcare, agriculture, trade, immigration, the environment, the freedom and regulation of the market, and so forth. These issues may be mentioned along the way, either explicitly or implicitly, but they are not the primary concern of my enquiry. None of these issues account for the attitude conservatives bring to debates about them.[2]

For the same reason, I also do not concern myself with divisions *within* conservatism: I do not focus on what distinguishes social conservatism from cultural conservatism, 'One Nation' conservatism from 'Red Tory' conservatism, national conservatism from traditionalist conservatism. These distinct movements can be treated as historically relative

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[1] Viscount Hailsham, *The Conservative Case* (London: Penguin Books, 1959), 19.
[2] See David McPherson, 'Existential Conservatism' in *Philosophy: The Journal of the Royal Institute of Philosophy*, vol. 94, no. 369 (July 2019), 383-407.

expressions of a basic attitudinal stance, inasmuch as they do express that stance. It is that attitudinal stance – what accounts for it – that is my interest for the purposes of identifying the relationship between religion and conservatism.

Difficulties in identifying conservatism are amplified by the fact that classical liberalism, centred on the primary political ideas of the Enlightenment, is often called 'conservatism'. This is especially so in the United States of America, where 'conservatism' generally refers to the central Enlightenment ideas of the Founding Fathers. In these contexts, 'conservatism', denoting classical liberalism, is contrasted with 'liberalism', which denotes progressive liberalism (this being strongly identified with socialist ideals). Debates that oppose these two approaches, as *conservatism versus liberalism*, in fact present two competing interpretations of a single liberal Enlightenment tradition.[3] The irony is that what in such debates is called 'conservatism' is the very political, social, and moral position that conservatism arose in the eighteenth-century to oppose.

Patrick J. Deneen has suggested that we should see the 'deeper interconnection' between progressive liberalism and 'conservative' liberalism. He argues that the true opposition to progressivism is to be found in the practical application of eighteenth-century counter-Enlightenment conservatism:

> Progressive liberalism was never actually a foe of classical liberalism. Its true enemy was a kind of lived "Burkeanism".[4]

According to Deneen, in opposition to Enlightenment abstractions, conservatives should advocate a practical Burkeanism, centred on real people and communities, with their existent cultures, institutions, and ways of life.

What I call conservatism, then, is the general political, intellectual, cultural, and moral attitude which arose with, and is continuous with, that of the counter-Enlightenment conservatives. In turn, for my purposes it has been necessary to analyse the question of the relationship between conservatism and religion in the two foremost proponents of this tradition at its genesis, Edmund Burke and Joseph de Maistre.

Throughout this volume, my enquiry remains focused on the question of the relationship between conservatism and religion, and consequently the role of religion in a

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[3] See Patrick J. Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 35-36.
[4] *Ibid*. 143.

conservative polity. In pursuit of a satisfactory answer to this question, it has been necessary to uncover a foundational and exegetical principle which provides a plausible account for the conservative attitude in general. The advantages of bringing such a principle to the foreground are not exhausted in this volume, but some advantages and consequences are highlighted for further consideration and future development.

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An enquiry into the notion of secular conservatism

Is a secular conservatism possible, at least in principle? Early conservative thinkers were explicit in their opposition to the deism and atheism of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, arguing for the conserving of a Christian social order. Be that as it may, there are deists and atheists who have identified as conservatives all the way back to David Hume and Viscount Bolingbroke. In turn, the question is of interest from an historical perspective, but my purposes do not chiefly concern this perspective. From a philosophical perspective there is a twofold significance to this question, a practical and theoretical significance.

This question is of theoretical concern as there is a widely acknowledged secular trend in many countries. Whilst there are conflicting data on this, and certain studies indicate that religious practice in general is on the rise among the world's population, this possible trend does not seem to be reflected in any obvious way at the level of politics.[5] Constitutional amendments, legislation and legal changes largely reflect a secular worldview. In this context, is there a future for political conservatism? If it were found that conservatism is *essentially* connected to a religious worldview or ongoing religious practice, and it were found that increasing secularism is the general trajectory of most nations, then conservatism's future would necessarily be at risk.

This question is of practical significance also, as conservatism remains one of the leading political traditions in many countries, with self-identified conservative parties frequently in positions of power. Conservative governments often have to adjudicate on issues that overlap with what is pertinent to religion, whether they wish to or not. Obvious examples of this are practices concerning end-of-life issues in State-funded healthcare institutions, or legislation regarding the dissolving or annulling of marriages.

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[5] For an overview of the data regarding a possible global rise of religious practice, see Harriet Sherwood, *Religion: why faith is becoming more and more popular* ⟨https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/aug/27/religion-why-is-faith-growing-and-what-happens-next⟩ [accessed 20 October 2019]

In recent times, Scruton has been one of the most influential public proponents of conservatism, who, whilst religiously literate and respectful of religious traditions, advances a case for a secular (unreligious) conservatism. In this thesis, I critically engage with Scruton's position.

What do conservatives mean by a *society*? How do they distinguish between private and public life? If religion is public, does that mean it merely has a ceremonial role in the service of the State, or rather that its doctrines should in some way affect the direction of law and legislation?[6] I first offer a general overview to introduce the area of enquiry, and then proceed to consider the arguments of Scruton, one of conservatism's most articulate proponents, inasmuch as he considers religion in relation to politics.

1.1   The secular principles of a conservative society

According to Anthony Quinton, a conservative society, broadly speaking, is one which conserves that which it deems to be of lasting value whilst accepting, and even advancing, change.[7] This openness to change was noted by Edmund Burke: 'a state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation.'[8] Conservatism, then, requires sensitivity to the need for discernment, that what is perennial and what is changeable may be determined and distinguished. This sensitivity may largely account for conservatism's preference for slow and evolutionary social and political change, rather than rapid and revolutionary change. What *can* change, in many cases, *should* change, in part because such change allows for what is deemed perennial to be conserved. Perhaps counterintuitively, then, conservatism, on this account, is a philosophy of change. Conservatives typically claim to *accept* unpreventable or inevitable change, and also to act as agents for change in order to conserve that which they deem to be of lasting value.[9]

Russell Kirk, in his essay entitled *Ten Conservative Principles*, states that 'the conservative believes that there exists an enduring moral order' and that this 'order is made

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[6] By 'religion' I mean, in a general sense, beliefs and practices that pertain to the most fundamental questions about our purpose, dignity, and destiny as human beings.
[7] See Anthony Quinton, *The Politics of Imperfection* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), 16-19.
[8] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: Penguin Books, 1986), 106.
[9] For example, Benjamin Disraeli advanced the new notion of 'One Nation conservatism', and the healthcare and economic policies which followed from it, not to abolish class-distinction but to conserve an already existing social hierarchy, presenting the case for moral union of the classes rather than social egalitarianism. Disraeli's Ecuadorian contemporary, and founder of that country's Conservative Party, Gabriel García Moreno, greatly developed Ecuador's agricultural methods specifically to conserve Ecuador's agricultural life.

for man, and man is made for it: human nature is a constant, and moral truths are permanent.'[10] Having asserted his belief in this static dimension at the outset, Kirk later states that the 'conservative understands that permanence and change must be recognised and reconciled in a vigorous society.'[11]

Conservatives commonly claim to see society and its political organisation as something organic rather than mechanistic.[12] Like an organism, an acorn for example, the political community must ever change and develop, just as the acorn must become an oak. And, as in the case of the acorn, such change must be both allowed and positively advanced if the political community is to remain the *same thing*. According to the conservative, the alternative is not to become something different, but to perish.

Below are three principles that Quinton has argued are definitive of conservatism:

1) *Traditionalism*: this is a basic 'attachment to, and reverence for, established customs and institutions' combined with 'hostility to sudden' or 'revolutionary change.'[13] This principle also includes the notion that an 'historically evolved social order incorporates the accumulated practical wisdom of the community' which is the 'outcome of innumerable adjustments and modifications made by politically experienced individuals in circumstances of responsible political decision.'[14]

2) *Organicism*: society is a 'unitary, natural growth, an organised, living whole, not a mechanical aggregate.'[15] Society is not 'composed of bare abstract individuals but of social beings, related to one another within a texture of inherited customs and institutions.'[16] In turn, social institutions are not external or imposed devices, or ought not to be, but arise organically out of human nature itself.

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[10] Russell Kirk, *Ten Conservative Principles* ⟨https://kirkcenter.org/conservatism/ten-conservative-principles/⟩ [accessed 31 July 2019].

[11] *Ibid.* [accessed 31 July 2019].

[12] The concept of an 'organic society' has been essential to conservatism since its origins in the eighteenth-century. Broadly, the term implies that society is something natural to human nature. It implies that society is made up of families, and change should customarily happen in a 'bottom-up' fashion simply by such families living together, rather than through a 'top-down' policy imposed by a group *above* the community. Such change, then, should ordinarily happen due to a slowly developing way of life, rather than a rapid, revolutionary upheaval. Such a society is deemed to operate more by emotional attachment, loyalties and pieties, than by much procedure, prescription and coercion. Put simply, society is viewed as an *organism* which emerges and evolves over time, meeting the needs of its members with solutions found at the lowest level at which they can be realised.

[13] Quinton, *The Politics of Imperfection*, 16.

[14] *Ibid*. 16.

[15] *Ibid*. 16.

[16] *Ibid*. 16.

3) *Political scepticism*: 'political wisdom, the kind of knowledge that is needed for the successful management of human affairs, is not to be found in the theoretical speculations of isolated thinkers but in the historically accumulated social experience of the community as a whole.'[17] The rich *complexus* of traditions, customs, laws, institutions etc. that make an existent society cannot be reduced to formulae.

Quinton emphasises that 'there is nothing particularly religious about the three… put forward as definitive of conservatism.'[18] For Quinton, these three principles are those which are *definitive* of all conservative traditions, whether Anglo, Continental, or other. Given that there is nothing particularly religious about these principles, Quinton argues that conservatism is essentially secular, and only accidentally religious. In his view, it is appreciation of tradition, an organic view of society and politics, and scepticism towards political activity, that is shared by conservatives, not religiosity.

To varying degrees, the view found among eighteenth-century conservatives in relation to the three principles sketched above – tradition, the organic society, and political scepticism – is that religion is *essentially* relevant. For the first principle, we find the notion of the *divine origin* of the State, whose divinely bestowed authority is deemed to come to the State *through* the political community, or *nation*.[19] For the second principle, we find the notion of God's providential care in the history of the nation. For the third principle, we find a certain pessimism regarding human nature and the darkness of the intellect, linked to the Christian view of creation as *fallen*. Regarding this third point, Schuettinger argues that 'even those conservatives who do not believe that a divine plan rules history still accept the idea of original sin, in the sense that human nature is fatally flawed and capable of evil.'[20] What Schuettinger means is that whilst original sin as a theological doctrine may not be accepted by all conservatives, the existential effects implied by this doctrine are roundly accepted. Indeed, Maistre[21] states that this assumption is the interpretive key for understanding his own

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[17] *Ibid*. 16-17.
[18] *Ibid*. 18-19.
[19] See also Robert Lindsay Schuettinger, *The Conservative Tradition in European Thought* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1970), 12.
[20] *Ibid.* 12-13.
[21] Many authors abbreviate Joseph de Maistre's name to 'de Maistre', or 'De Maistre'. He, however, deemed this bad form. I will use only the form prescribed by Maistre himself (unless I am quoting from an author who uses an incorrect form):
    'Will you permit me, Monsieur, to have a small grammatical quarrel with you? The particle *de*, in French, cannot be joined to a proper name beginning with a consonant unless it follows a title. Thus, you can very well say, "The Viscount de Bonald said," but not "De Bonald

thought: it is original sin 'which explains everything, and without which nothing can be explained.'[22]

Whilst Quinton holds that conservatism *per se* is essentially secular, he notes that there are two distinct traditions of conservatism, at least in Great Britain. There is a secular tradition and a religious tradition. The latter, he writes, 'derives its conservative politics to some extent from religious premises, in particular from the doctrine of original sin, of the moral imperfection of human nature.'[23] Of this religious group he identifies the 'chief members' to be 'Richard Hooker, Edward Hyde, Lord Clarendon, Samuel Johnson, Burke, Coleridge and Newman.'[24] Despite recognising this religious conservative tradition in Great Britain, Quinton argues that the historical connection between religion and conservatism belongs more to the Continent:

> In the European tradition of thought the idea of man's moral imperfection is so closely linked to the Christian doctrine of original sin that the two may seem almost inseparable. The contrary view, that man is at any rate capable of moral perfection, to be achieved wither by a Lockean manipulation of his environment or, in the manner of Rousseau, Godwin and the revolutionary liberalism of the eighteenth-century, by destroying the institutions which repress or obscure his innate moral goodness, is part of the Enlightenment's assault on what it saw as the gloom and defeatism of orthodox Christianity.[25]

Here, Quinton observes that there has been a tendency to link conservative anthropology, which is more or less pessimistic, to the Christian doctrine of *original sin*, but he suggests that this tendency is to be found more among conservatives in the Continental – what he calls 'European' – tradition, rather than the Anglo tradition. Quinton acknowledges that it was the Christian view of fallen human nature that was rejected by liberal or revolutionary thinkers

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said"; one must say, "Bonald said," and yet one says, "D'Alembert said." Grammar orders it so.'
Joseph de Maistre to M. de Syon, 14th November 1820, *Oeuvres complètes de J. de Maistre*, 14 vols (Geneva: Slatkine, 1979), 14:243.
[22] Joseph de Maistre, 'The Saint Petersburg Dialogues' in *The Generative Principle of Political Constitutions: Studies on Sovereignty, Religion, and Enlightenment*, edited by Jack Lively (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 196.
[23] Quinton, *The Politics of Imperfection*, 10.
[24] *Ibid*. 10.
[25] *Ibid*. 14.

on both sides of the English Channel, that is, what he calls the 'gloom and defeatism of orthodox Christianity.' Nonetheless, he holds that whilst conservatism has repeatedly found inspiration in the religious tradition of Europe, by which its ideas have been shaped, its *essential* principles remain secular.

1.1.1   The primacy of the principle of *organicism*

According to Quinton, the conservative understands society as a 'natural' and 'organised, living whole, not a mechanical aggregate.' Hailsham, in his classic defence of Tory principles, makes the same point:[26]

> Instead of a clear-cut conception of an ideal society to which all nations should attempt to the best of their ability to conform, Conservatives believe in a somewhat more mature conception of the nature of political organisation. This theory may be described as the organic theory of society.[27]

The point here is that conservatives are suspicious of abstract and utopian models of social arrangement, and think of society as something *living*, existent, real, whose history is relevant for understanding its political realisation. The view that this is a 'more mature conception' can be traced back to Aristotle, who held that those who are 'young in years or youthful in character' should not engage in political science, not because of any difficulty in grasping abstract principles, but due to their lack of *experience* of society and how people live within it.[28] Conservatives, Hailsham continues, see society 'much more like a living being than a machine.'[29] In turn, political science is 'not the least bit like engineering.'[30]

We have here two metaphors to convey the distinction between the conservative and liberal conceptions of political organisation, those of the *organism* and the *machine*. It is worth exploring the organic metaphor itself, and in contrast to the metaphor of the *machine*,

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[26] Toryism is the British, or Anglo, variety of traditional conservatism. Toryism tends to defend inherited institutions and hierarchies of society and State as well as civil liberties and responsibilities. Strongly opposed to liberalism and radicalism, Toryism emphasises organicism, received custom, and has always been associated with defence of Church establishment, tending towards 'high church' or 'ritualist' forms of belief and practice.

[27] Hailsham, *The Conservative Case*, 28.

[28] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I. 1, 1094b27-1095a13.

[29] Hailsham, *The Conservative Case*, 28.

[30] *Ibid*. 29.

to better understand both what is denoted and connoted by their use, so ubiquitous in conservative writing.[31]

We can imagine society as an organism, like a tree. Once a little seed, over time and with the committed work of gardeners it has become strong and healthy – fragile in some ways, but able to withstand a momentary tempest. Those who are charged with looking after it must know the work of their predecessors, the history of the tree, understand the composition of the soil, where the sun hits, how frequently it rains, which branches are weak, and so forth. Gardeners should understand that trees do not always flourish due to direct care, but often indirect care, or even by stepping back altogether to see how the tree will find its own ways of thriving – ways often unanticipated by the gardeners. A gardener's role will regularly be that of only gently teasing out or encouraging some sprouts, and branches, and sometimes restricting the growth of others. A gardener must be attentive to thorny brambles and creepers, which *appear* to be part of the tree, but are parasitic, blocking out light and strangling the smaller branches, which, though small, have their contribution to make to the whole. Gardeners cannot directly interfere with every feature of the tree without harming it.

The government of a machine belongs to a machinist. As long as the machinist has the right principles, and is working from a good manual, the machine ought to function well. Attentive appreciation of the environment and prudential deliberation on the development of this object over which he has care is not what is primarily required. What is important is knowledge of the *model*, rather than knowledge of the *particular*. As long as it is set up properly from the beginning, a well-oiled machine should work well, and continue to do so. The machinist does not need extensive knowledge of the machine's history. He does not need to know where it was made, what it did in the past, or what tools were used to construct it. He needs only to know the principles of its function. A machine, in this way, is as close as an existent object can be to an abstraction.

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[31] Metaphor does not only help to illustrate or explain concepts that are already grasped. Often the meaning of a concept is grasped by way of the metaphor specifically because the meaning is encased *within* the metaphor and cannot be extracted from the metaphor without it being lost (at least in part). Iain McGilchrist explains this in the following way:

> 'Explicitness always forces this sheering away, this concentration on the surface, and the loss of transparency – or more correctly semi-transparency. It is the analogue of the explained joke, the metaphor laboriously restated. In such circumstances, the mechanism of the joke, of the metaphor, becomes opaque and obtrudes. Metaphoric meaning depends on this semi-transparency, this being-seen-and-not-being-seen.'

According to McGilchrist, stating in literal terms what is meant by the metaphor is not necessarily the best way to elucidate the meaning of it. The understanding is to be found *in* the metaphor. Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* (London: Yale University Press, 2019), 182.

For the machinist, what is important is efficiency and productivity. The gardener's objective is health and beauty. The means used by the machinist are calculation, precision, and accuracy. The means of the gardener are attention, prudential deliberation, and knowledge of *things* rather than *concepts*. The machine is a whole that can be divided up into parts for use by other machines. There is no machine until an engineer or machinist puts it together, only bits and pieces. The tree can be trimmed back here and there but remains a whole. The gardener brings his craft of order and health to an antecedent reality, namely an organism living and growing. Can we speak of a machine *flourishing*, or *thriving*? Can we speak of *progress* in gardening, and if so, does the word differ in meaning from that of *progress* in technology? Surely a machine *works*, and a tree *flourishes*.

Due to the organicism by which conservatives understand society, they 'believe that a living society can only change healthily when it changes naturally – that is, in accordance with its acquired and inherited character, and at a given rate.'[32] For the conservative, revolutionary change is like digging up the tree to replant it upside down. Having been uprooted it may momentarily look as if it has been emancipated from the soil and mire which appeared to be holding it captive. This tree, which was at least living, albeit ever struggling against the elements, then corrupts.

1.1.2 The question of religion

I have given primacy to the principle of organicism in the conservative attitude, for Quinton's other two explanatory principles – sympathy towards tradition and scepticism in regard to political activity – appear to flow from belief in an *organic society*. The two approaches, associated with the two metaphors of the organism and the machine, are bound up with different political attitudes. And these two approaches are also connected to two different ways of thinking about change. The values which are drawn from these approaches are different, one prioritising function, efficiency, and productivity, the other prioritising health, splendour, and flourishing.

I have suggested that the mechanistic metaphor, inasmuch as it is adopted, treats civil society – insofar as civil society is accommodated by the mechanistic metaphor – as a product of the State rather than antecedent to the State.[33] The conservative, due to his

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[32] Hailsham, *The Conservative Case*, 29.
[33] Scruton argues that general blindness to a pre-political society is illustrated well by the architecture preferred by the regimes of liberal, socialist, communist and fascist movements. According to him, 'form follows function' is the mechanistic approach which is transposed from their political positions (the form of society follows from the function of the State) to aesthetic attitudes. Functionalism in

organicism, leans towards a reduced State: there is only so much a gardener can do; the tree must grow itself. The non-conservative, inasmuch as he adopts a mechanistic view, is suspected by the conservative to lean towards the *total State*: the machine only works when it is operated by *someone*.[34] If conservatism can be wholly explained by reference to this organic metaphoric thinking, then Quinton is surely correct to identify religion as accidental to the conservative worldview.

As we have seen, Quinton holds that there are two distinct traditions of conservatism, a secular and a religious one, but in both cases he believes that religion is non-essential. Quinton acknowledges that the object of attacks by eighteenth-century liberals and revolutionaries was the Christian view of man and society. It does not follow, however, that conservatism is *intrinsically* Christian or religious because its genesis is found in reaction to attacks on Christian ideas or institutions.

Quinton presents his three principles of conservatism – traditionalism, organicism, and political scepticism – partly to show that what defines conservatism is not intrinsically religious. What is dissatisfying about Quinton's three principles is that they do little more than indicate phenomena. We are left wondering *why* conservatives adopt these characteristics. An underlying principle that connects these three so-called definitive principles, which unifies the diverse objections and conclusions of conservatives, remains obscure. Among these three principles, I have suggested that organicism ought to be prioritised. Organicism is not a principle that explains itself, however, and therefore further enquiry is required.

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architecture, like that of Bauhaus, and art based on abstracted emotional experiences or subordinated to propagandistic purposes, so prevalent in contemporary 'popular culture', may be contrasted with the basic storytelling, focus on historical events or myth-making, and beauty for beauty's sake (like decorative art), found in the low folk culture and more universal high culture which both tend to be treasured by conservatives. To illustrate this point, Scruton compares the buildings designed by the politically socialist Richard Rogers, drawn from no obvious historical precedent or culturally received notions of form, to those of the socially conservative Léon Krier, which express the subtle vernacular of widely loved forms and established ways of living. See Roger Scruton, *Gentle Regrets: Thoughts from a Life* (London: Continuum, 2005), 211-217.

[34] The notion of the mechanisation of the State, leading to a *total State*, is considered by Marías: '[Modernity] has achieved a complete organisation of the State, which begins to be a perfect machine. Automatically, a series of matters which had been considered individual and private concerns become concerns of the State. The State furnishes more and more services, takes more problems on its shoulders and also makes its weight felt more and more… this process expands constantly and today the State enters into every part of our lives.' Julián Marías*, History of Philosophy* (New York: Dover Publications, 1967), 279.

In the following section, I turn to one of the most well-known proponents of conservatism in our age, Scruton, to show how he advances a case for the conservative cause without any reliance on religion.

1.2   Scruton's uprooting of conservatism from its historically religious framework

Scruton was known not only in the academy but also in the popular and public arena as a conservative philosopher and a philosopher of conservative political thought. He is generally considered one of the most renowned contemporary philosophers of this kind in the world. For him, conservatism is not only the correct approach to politics, but to morality, culture, aesthetics, and even environmentalism. He notes that conservatism is difficult to define, as he tells us that it is an '*attitude* rather than a philosophy.'[35] Nonetheless, over the course of at least five books and a great many essays and articles he has sought to present what he judges to comprise conservative political thought. Scruton is one of few contemporary philosophers who have seriously engaged with conservatism, both by enquiring into its principles and defending it as the 'attitude' which is truest.

Conservatism is a term derived from François-René de Chateaubriand's anti-revolutionary journal *Le Conservateur*, and as an intellectual-political position appeared in the eighteenth-century with (besides Chateaubriand) Edmund Burke, Joseph de Maistre, Louis de Bonald, Juan Donoso Cortés (who came a little later) and others. Though all very different characters, they were united in their opposition to the *philosophes*, the French Revolution, the rise of liberalism, and what they saw to be the anti-Christian climate of their age. In the light of these origins, what is striking in the conservative thought of Scruton is his reframing of conservatism as a secular approach to questions of politics and societies. At times his writing endorses a benevolent attitude towards religion in general, and at other times he appears more unfriendly.[36] In any case, he made religion a marginal aspect of his works on conservative political philosophy where his eighteenth-century predecessors deemed it of the essence. Beyond his works on politics, Scruton wrote positively about religion and the ongoing value of cultivating a religious perspective on the world, as well as the cultural importance of religious institutions for private association.[37]

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[35] Roger Scruton, *Conservatism: Ideas in Profile* (London: Profile Books, 2017), 24.
[36] For an example of what could be construed as unfriendliness in this context, see Roger Scruton, *How to be a Conservative* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 40.
[37] See Roger Scruton, *Our Church* (London: Atlantic Books, 2012).

The secular form of Scruton's political conservatism is interesting for its inherent complexity and force, and also for the way it both departs from and assumes themes which can be traced to the early conservatives. Scruton doubts that religion can play in the modern age the political role it possessed in the past. For him, the Western world has emerged out of a dark past of religious conflict into an age of secular nation States, and this emergence ought to be celebrated by conservatives. Scruton believes that conservatives should uphold the relegation of religion from the public to the private sphere, not from any hostility to religion, but from a recognition that religion is not an appropriate unifying force for the modern nation State. And the nation State is the only kind of State he believes the conservative can consistently endorse.[38]

By 'private sphere', I do not wish to imply that Scruton holds that religion should be permitted no open expression in society, only that such expression belongs to the liberties of civil society and must not trespass on the political processes of the State, especially and principally at the level of law and legislation. According to Scruton, the influence of any religious group – even the established religious institution – on political life must not differ from that of any club or private association. That Scruton permits any influence at all, as well as acknowledging a place for ceremonial expression for State occasions and various other forms of open expression at the level of civil society, indicates that his secular position is not to be compared with French *laïcité*.

For Scruton, the relegation of religion to the private sphere follows from the view that religion ought to have no *formal* influence on State law, law being that with which he predominantly identifies *public life* in a nation State. For this reason, Scruton sees such relegation as entailing the removal of religion's influence from a *narrow* dimension of human activity, namely law and legislation, and as an endorsement of religion in a *broad* sphere of human activity: family life, custom, culture, association, ceremony, education, and so forth. This is why, for Scruton, there is no contradiction between the privatising of religion, excluding religion from political life, and the existence of an established Church, so long as that Church possesses only a 'dignified' ceremonial role in the life of the State. Scruton sees

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[38] 'The terms *Nation* and *State* are sometimes used synonymously. This, however, is incorrect. The former properly refers to a civil community held together by *natural* ties… Patriotism, being founded on natural ties, refers only to the nation; Legal Justice to the State. A political union, however, that in the beginning was purely artificial, may, in lapse of time, owing to change of circumstances, become natural, and thus come within the scope of the virtue of Patriotism.' Edward Cahill, *The Framework of a Christian State* (Dublin: M. H. Gill & Son, Ltd., 1932), 579, n. 3.

such Church establishment as not *public* in any 'efficient' sense of the term.[39] Rather, Church establishment framed in this way expresses the historic beliefs and culture of the nation but has no direct effect on the State's law and legislation, which remain formally secular.

Scruton holds that a ceremonial role for the historic religion of the nation is not only good for patriotism, which he sees to be its main role, but satisfies a deep need in the human psyche, namely the need to bestow upon communal membership a *meaning* or *purpose* that has a transcendent source. Whether the content of this 'meaning or purpose' is true, and whether it really has a transcendent source, is not important. What is important, for Scruton, is that this dimension of human psychology is acknowledged, and in some way satisfied, for the consequences of its denial are undesirable: psychological frustration and misdirected religious passion.

In his political works, Scruton presents religion as just one part of the private lives of the nation's members, albeit a deeply *meaningful* part. The *finality* of the nation's members, the end for which they exist, for Scruton, is found in the nation itself. Everything must be subordinated to the cultivation of what he calls 'national loyalty'.

According to Scruton, were the historic religion of the nation given formal influence on politics, the unity of the nation would suffer. The nation's members who belong to other religions would not experience full membership in the nation, at least not from the perspective of legislation and law. For Scruton, the nation is the most fundamental source of meaning for human life, and the role of religion in relation to the nation is that of ceremonially reflecting the experience of membership entailed by nationhood. Out of this prioritising of nationhood arises the central theme in Scruton's conservatism: conservatism essentially implies patriotism, 'national loyalty', and everything else conservatism proposes flows from this loyalty.

In the following sections I consider the theme of national loyalty in greater detail. First, however, I further consider the secular character of Scruton's conservatism. From this it will be clearer why the relegation of religion from the public to the private sphere is not, for Scruton, an attack on religion, but its reappointment to a *broad* sphere of human activity.

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[39] The distinction between 'dignified' and 'efficient' aspects is derived from the British constitutional theorist Walter Bagehot: 'Central to Bagehot's method is the distinction between the "dignified" and "efficient" versions of the constitution. The dignified version focuses on the ancient, complex, and ceremonial aspects of the constitution. These "excite and preserve the reverence of the population" and thereby generate "its motive power". The efficient version focuses on the modern, simple, and functional aspects. These deploy that power; they are the parts "by which it, in fact, works and rules".' Martin Loughlin, *The British Constitution: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 34.

1.2.1 The relationship between conservatism and religion in the thought of Scruton

In *The Meaning of Conservatism*, Scruton explicitly presents his scepticism towards the notion that conservatism and religion (Christianity in particular) have any *intrinsic* connection. For Scruton, there are grave disadvantages to closely associating the conservative worldview with the Christian worldview. Not only does this alienate from the conservative cause those sympathetic persons who are atheists, agnostics, or belong to a non-Christian religion, but such an association may leave conservatives 'helpless' if Christian institutions (Church organisations and the incumbents of pastoral offices) adopt liberalism.[40] Indeed, Scruton believes this has already happened within Christianity, not only by the Church of England (Scruton's own denomination), but by most Christian ecclesial communities adopting political and moral liberalism, sometimes in extreme forms.[41]

What, then, accounts for the common intuition that conservatism and Christianity have some profound connection? Scruton argues that conservatism is based upon obligations and allegiances to family and society.[42] These 'pieties' do not belong to the order of arranged contractual agreements, but arise from the kind of beings *we are*, that is, they flow from our *nature*; Scruton calls them 'transcendent'.[43] According to him, contractual arrangements are found in every society. These contracts which establish the institutions and associations of *this* particular people, in *this* particular society, with *their* particular history and so forth, are not transcendent, but just that: *particular*. On the other hand, the *pieties* bound up with family life, and by extension with society *per se*, are found in all human societies. Such bonds are not particular to this or that people but belong to all: they are transcendent. Scruton associates these obligations and allegiances, or 'transcendent bonds', with the old Roman virtue of *piety*.[44]

For Scruton, we can think of politics as 'independent of the existence of God,' that is, as a secular practical science, but not as 'independent of the belief in God.'[45] This is because Scruton holds that politics, *existentially*, presupposes the 'transcendent bonds' of piety felt among the members of society. And these bonds, Scruton observes, seem to be inseparable in

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[40] Roger Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 158.
[41] *Ibid*. 158.
[42] *Ibid*. 158.
[43] *Ibid*. 158.
[44] *Ibid*. 159.
[45] *Ibid*. 158.

the common mind from a more or less religious worldview. Such a worldview, he notes, seems to be natural to the sort of beings we are.

According to Scruton, it is from a sense of 'transcendence' that the mistaken notion arises of an intrinsic connection between conservatism and religion. Scruton judges, however, that this misplaced association does not harm conservatism (despite his reservations described above), and may encourage Christians to support its cause, and therefore he is content to treat religion in society as something like the *noble lie*,[46] to which he explicitly likens religious doctrines in a later work, calling them 'literal falsehoods expressing emotional truths.'[47] Scruton's view on the connection between the conservative worldview and religion is expressed clearly in the following passage:

> The nature of this connection can be perceived at once, as soon as we consider again the character of the social bond. This bond, I have argued, is transcendent: it contains obligations and allegiances which cannot be seen as the result of contractual choice. It is a small step from belief in a transcendent bond to belief in the transcendent Being who upholds it. This vision of another and vaster world, from the laws of which all actual obligations spring, lends incomparable support to bonds that were never contracted. Seeing such bonds as the expression of Providence, people will be more disposed to accept them. They will accept as a divine command what they might reject as a personal undertaking.[48]

Scruton presents in this passage a division between those two kinds of 'bond'. One kind of bond is formed by particular arrangement, the 'contractual' bond. Another kind of bond is a pre-political obligation or allegiance, and on bonds of this kind he thinks the conservative worldview rests; such bonds he calls 'transcendent'.

For Scruton, since 'religious feeling' exists in society, and conservatism tends to 'benefit from its presence', it is better to 'propagate and also to influence it,' especially as he believes that there is 'nothing more dangerous to the state than the transfer of frustrated religious feeling to petty secular causes.'[49] Nonetheless, Scruton emphasises that the conservative 'vision of society can survive in the absence of clear religious belief,' there

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[46] Plato, *Republic*, 414e-415c.
[47] See Scruton, *How to be a Conservative*, 37.
[48] Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, 158.
[49] *Ibid*. 159.

being no inherent connection between conservatism and religion.[50] What is necessary for a conservative society is patriotic attachment felt in transcendent bonds: piety directed towards one's family and society. Scruton highlights the Japanese as an example of a people with a deeply pious, and yet largely unreligious, approach to family, society, and nationhood.[51]

Scruton's argument from 'transcendent bonds' can be summarised as follows. Religion will always be found among the members of a nation, and since the State is the political realisation of the nation, it cannot be avoided that religion will in some way be realised at the level of the State. *How* it should be realised is a question he seeks to answer when he addresses the 'problem of Church and State'. In any case, the conservative attitude rests on the common experience of 'transcendent bonds' (domestic and patriotic pieties) which are felt by many to be bound up with a religious viewpoint. Scruton acknowledges that religion and 'transcendent bonds' are bound up in the human psyche, but he argues that they are not *essentially* connected. Rather, such bonds are natural to human nature and presupposed by an organic society. The mistaken mental connection between religion and the 'transcendent bonds' of a conservative society does no *practical* harm, since it serves to strengthen the convictions of conservatives who are religious. Nonetheless, it is important to present the case for why, in reality, the connection between religion and conservatism is not intrinsic, for not only does the alternative have the disadvantage of alienating non-religious people, it thwarts conservatism's potential success in a secular age. It is clear that, for Scruton, whilst there are drawbacks to seeing conservatism as inherently religious, conservatives should nevertheless look benevolently upon religious feelings, knowing this to be a normal part of human psychology.

1.2.2 The secularity of State legislation and its superiority to religious law

According to Scruton, conservatives lose nothing of the secular character of their position by accepting that 'religious belief will be reflected in the state of civil society, and will seek its expression in law.'[52] For him, it is wrong to think that 'politicians can proceed while ignoring the actual religious beliefs of those they propose to govern,' and to think otherwise is 'hardly conservative.'[53] In stating this, Scruton emphasises the general benevolence of conservatism towards the religion of the land, whilst not conceding that religion is a part of conservatism

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[50] *Ibid*. 158-159.
[51] *Ibid*. 158-159.
[52] *Ibid*. 158.
[53] *Ibid*. 158.

per se, still less its foundation. Scruton's point is that religious feeling in its communal expression will naturally affect the direction of the State, just like any other club or private association. A religion seeking expression in a particular matter of law does not change the *secular form* of the law, which Scruton holds must remain secular.

For Scruton, what distinguishes the Western conception of law from that of countries with an Islamic history and culture is the insistence on the privatising of religion in relation to law:

> To someone raised on the doctrine that legitimate law comes from God, and that obedience is owed to Him above all others, the claims of the secular jurisdiction are regarded as at best an irrelevance, at worst a usurpation. Such is the message of Sayyid Qutb's writings... Qutb denounces secular law, national identity and the attempt to establish a purely human political order without reference to the revealed will of God: all are blasphemous in Qutb's eyes.[54]

As Scruton explains, in the West, State law is not seen to come from Holy Writ, but from deliberation on rational principles in secular courts. This is the case in Western traditions of State law, both Common and Napoleonic. For those who see God to be the only lawmaker – as in the Islamic Sharia tradition – the law of secular courts may be seen as an 'irrelevance', or a blasphemy according to some authorities (Scruton mentions Sayyid Qutb, the mid-twentieth century leading member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood as an example of someone who took this view).

According to Scruton, introducing religious considerations into legal process would be regressive for the West. In his view, religion's presence in law accounts for many internal social problems in Islamic countries, as well as difficulties Muslims face in integrating into communities with non-Islamic histories. By using the situation of Islamic countries as an analogue of pre-secular Europe, Scruton diagnoses the old European model of a public Christian religion, religion which influenced the form of law as well as particular legal processes, as a kind of *baptised Sharia*. Scruton argues that the conservatives of today must be 'people who identify their political rights and duties in national terms, and who have

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[54] Scruton, *How to be a Conservative*, 38.

learned to put God in the place where He belongs,' which, for Scruton, means outside the public arena, and into the private sphere.[55]

Whilst seeing liberalism to be the principal opponent of conservatism, Scruton acknowledges a 'great value' in it, namely its secularising of the State:[56]

> We must acknowledge the great value of liberalism, which, since its birth at the Enlightenment, has striven to impress upon us the radical distinction between religious and political order, and the need to build the art of government without depending on the law of God.[57]

This aspect of Scruton's thought is surprising, for not only does it endorse a core principle of liberalism but that very principle which was the primary point of contention between the early conservatives and the liberals. This alone, we can speculate, would have placed Scruton in the camp of the Enlightenment liberals in the eighteenth-century, marking him as an opponent of conservatism. His support for a core principle of liberalism, identified as such, is not made as a passing remark, but emphatically advanced. Scruton states that 'while religions demand unquestioning submission, the political process offers participation, discussion and law-making founded in consent,' and that this is now 'the Western tradition, and it is largely thanks to liberalism that this tradition has been maintained.'[58]

1.2.3   The *public* and *private* implications of the natural religious impulse

Scruton holds that religion is an inextinguishable component of human psychology. He argues that religion manifests the human need to root a settled community, and membership of that community, in a mythology which appears prior to, and transcendent from, the community itself.[59] He describes the practice of religion as 'a way of life, involving customs and ceremonies that validate what matters to us, and which reinforce the attachments by

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[55] *Ibid*. 40; see also Roger Scruton, *The West and the Rest* (London: Continuum, 2002), 49.
[56] By liberalism, defined as broadly as possible, I mean the intellectual-political position based on the primacy of the individual, the priority of *negative liberty* (that one is free inasmuch as one is free *from*, rather than free *for*, a condition or end), the need for consent from the governed via a theoretical contractual arrangement with the governing power, and above all the rejection of the idea of a commonly shared '*telos*' (end, finality, or purpose) of human nature, and consequently any association of religion and public life
[57] Scruton, *How to be a Conservative*, 64.
[58] *Ibid*. 66.
[59] See Roger Scruton, *A Political Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), 119-122.

which we live.'[60] For this reason, one journalist has written that Scruton 'was drawn to the idea of Christianity as a unifying cultural force, and so came to idealise the era of strong Anglican establishment, when this religion was a cultural fact of life.'[61] The same article concludes that Scruton primarily thinks 'religion's truth lies in its contribution to patriotism.'[62]

Scruton does not accept the account of religion offered by the eighteenth-century *philosophes* – shaped by an *a priori* acceptance of deism, or atheism – but nor does he accept the conservative response in that age. He holds that we ought to 'look behind the naïve Enlightenment view of religion, as a species of intellectual delusion, to present the striking counter-assertion, that religion is a species of emotional truth, but a truth that is not aware of itself, and could not become aware of itself without ceasing to be.'[63] Religion, then, is not a delusion, but nor is the truth or falsity of its doctrinal content what is important. Rather, religion is a category of emotional truth. Realising this fact has the effect of erasing religion, and yet this does not erase the emotional impulse that religious doctrine and practice express. One who mentally transcends religion by seeing it for what it is, namely the expression of a truth about our needs, may find himself free from this or that religion, but not free from the emotional impulse which gave rise to religion, and will in turn find himself still yearning for the sacred.

Scruton helpfully gives the following summary of his position:

> We instinctively connect the sacred with the transcendental, seeing holy places, times and rituals as windows on to another realm – places in the empirical world where we look out in astonishment at something that we can understand through ritual and prayer, which we try to explain through theological doctrine, but which always in the end eludes our attempts to describe it… Religion is a stance towards the world, rooted in social membership, and influencing every aspect of experience, emotion and thought… if the counter-enlightenment view of religion has any truth in it, they are rooted in feelings that even faithless people have. Hence secularisation does not impact only the thoughts and feelings of religious people. It impacts on the thoughts

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[60] Scruton, *Our Church*, 6.
[61] Theo Hobson, *Is Roger Scruton really a Christian?* ⟨https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2012/nov/20/is-roger-scruton-really-a-christian⟩ [accessed 12 July 2018].
[62] *Ibid.* [accessed 12 July 2018].
[63] Scruton, *A Political Philosophy*, 128.

and feelings of everyone, causing radical changes in the experience of social membership.[64]

Scruton believes that there is something deep in our psychology which yearns to peer into another world, and that we all have experiences throughout life that give us a sense of doing this. According to Scruton, it is upon this yearning that we build religious doctrine as an attempt to explain it. By a shared experience of peering through 'windows on to another realm' we stabilise our attempts to be 'rooted in social membership.' The community, as a single moral unit, is 'rooted' and united in its pursuit of that which is *beyond* the community. Here we can identify what Scruton sees to be the real threat of any secularism which does not merely seek to relegate religion to the private sphere, but to eradicate religion. That kind of secularism does not just threaten a way of life for religious believers but launches an assault on a deep aspect of human psychology that is at the foundation of how we root ourselves in a shared experience of communal membership. As Scruton writes elsewhere: 'religious experience is a *specific* way of encountering and solving the problem of membership, and one that engages another and deeper aspect of the human psyche, which is the recognition of the sacred and the associated fear of profanation.'[65]

In summary, for Scruton, the religious impulse is natural to human nature, and therefore conservatives, believing in an *organic society* flowing from human nature, should expect religious feeling to seek some State realisation, but, as noted, such a realisation must have no formal influence on law.[66] This brings us to Scruton's complex view of the proper relationship between Church and State.

1.2.4   The desirability of an established Church in a secular State

We moved from Scruton's general considerations of the connection between religious feeling and conservatism to the more specific question of the relationship between Christianity and conservatism. Now, we arrive at his position on the classical question of the proper

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[64] *Ibid*. 130-131.
[65] Scruton, *Our Church*, 13.
[66] 'Religious impulse' is a term also used by Russell Kirk which denotes the primitive, unsystematic and unreflective desire of man for knowledge of, and union with, his absolute source and finality; see Russell Kirk, 'Civilization without Religion?' in *The Essential Russell Kirk*, edited by George A. Panichas (Delaware: ISI Books, 2007), 112. This term seemingly corresponds to Jacques Maritain's notion of the 'primordial intuition of God'; see Jacques Maritain, *Man's Approach to God* (Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 23.

relationship between Church and State.[67] Early conservatives such as Burke and Maistre were committed to defending an integralist Christian social order.[68] By 'integralist' I mean the belief that the Christian religion should be confessed not only by private individuals but by the State, which should in turn legally privilege and protect it as the true religion, part of which entails subordinating legislation to the morality taught by the Christian religion. This is certainly the view of early conservatives such as Burke, Maistre, and others. On this point Scruton departs from these early conservatives. It seems to be this discontinuity of his philosophy with theirs that inspires his remark that 'it is in the relations of Church and state that we find one of the most difficult problems for conservative doctrine.'[69]

Traditionally, Christians have judged the *Great Commission*, the mandate given by Jesus Christ to the Apostles to 'make disciples of all nations,' to imply not only that private individuals, but *nations* themselves must be Christian (Matthew 28:19).[70] Discipleship of a nation, Christianity has traditionally held, enables its members to achieve their supernatural end (union with God), an end incomparably greater than their natural end (health and virtuous flourishing).[71] In turn, the duties of the citizen are always secondary to those of the believer if there is any conflict, which in the integralist view there ought not to be.

It is difficult to see how Scruton's view – that the duties of the citizen should overrule those of the believer – can be adopted by those who accept the implications of the *Great Commission* as traditionally understood. Nonetheless, Scruton makes a case for how the

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[67] This is a question with which theologians, philosophers, and statesmen in Christian or historically Christian countries have engaged at least since 494 when Pope Gelasius I wrote his letter, known as *Duo Sunt* ('There are Two'), to Byzantine Emperor Anastasius I on the distinction between, and relationship of, the spiritual and temporal powers.

[68] See Edmund Waldstein, *Integralism in Three Sentences* ⟨https://thejosias.com/2016/10/17/integralism-in-three-sentences/⟩ [accessed 20 October 2019].

[69] Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, 159.

[70] This view is explained from the Roman Catholic perspective by Tommaso Maria Cardinal Zigliara in his *Summa Philosophica* (1910): '[The] Church encompasses all nations, whether in act or in potency… furthermore, it is of its nature a doctrinal society, and possesses an infallible magisterium in the matters which look to dogmas and morals; it is a society whose invisible head is Christ Himself, at once God and man; whose visible head is the Supreme Roman pontiff, exalted with supernatural dignity, subject to no man, having civil powers subordinate to him, and directed, by the special assistance of the Holy Ghost, to the salvation of nations. ⟨https://thejosias.com/2015/12/01/on-the-subordination-of-the-state-to-the-church/⟩ [accessed 30 December 2019].

[71] There is a tendency today to use the term 'supernatural' in reference to fairies, ghosts, or 'spooky things'. This is not the classical Christian use of the word. In this case, *Supernature* refers to the transformation of human nature by an order of reality which pervades nature from without, for the purpose of redeeming it and bringing it to a finality for which, unaided, it does not possess the means. The *Catholic Encyclopaedia* puts it this way: 'The Supernatural Order is the ensemble of effects exceeding the powers of the created universe and gratuitously produced by God for the purpose of raising the rational creature above its native sphere to a God-like life and destiny.' ⟨https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14336b.htm⟩ [accessed 2 May 2020].

Great Commission can be upheld without requiring any call for *national discipleship*. Scruton argues that Christian discipleship can remain exclusively *private*, but as private individuals we can still 'attempt to fill our hearts with the love of God, and our world with the love of our neighbour.'[72] In this way, Christians can fully accept – endorse, even – the secular, non-confessional State, and still redeem it with their loving presence whilst leaving intact the secular character of its law and political institutions.

Scruton argues that the Enlightenment should not be seen as a *rupture* in the history of Christian civilization, but as a *development* that procured a true Christian social order. He writes that 'the Enlightenment was the culmination of this process, the moment when Christian civilization recognised that secular law is "ordained by God".'[73] According to Scruton, the sundering of Church and State has brought about the establishment of a true Christian social order, one he argues was explicitly endorsed by Jesus Christ in his teaching on rendering to Caesar 'the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's' (Matthew 22:21).

It seems that Scruton sees the value of the Church as an institution primarily in its role as protector of a *noble lie*. The conservative, in his view, should see the Church's political importance in 'its ability to generate consoling myths, provided these myths prepare people for the acceptance of a given civil order.'[74] Due to the mental connection made by people between what Scruton calls 'transcendent bonds' and a transcendent Being, however misplaced, the disappearance of religion can have the effect of weakening those bonds on which he believes the conservative vision of society hinges. In turn, the myth-generating instrument of the Church has pragmatic value, since it plays its political part in shaping national identity, social cohesion, and societal stability:

> The withdrawal of religious doctrine does, after all, bring about a withering in transcendental social bonds. Religion – and in particular Christianity – was too much a part of the common way of seeing things. The destruction of its dogmas, its liturgy, its rituals, and its ceremonial presence, has left a vacuum. The very unsatisfactoriness of the secular picture of the human condition leads one to suspect that it will not in fact last. There will be religious revivals; hence the need for an established religion, and if possible, for an established Church. In times of disestablishment religion

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[72] Scruton, *How to be a Conservative*, 139.
[73] *Ibid*. 139.
[74] Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, 160.

fragments into fierce and muddled gestures… It is with no surprise that one should observe the spread of Manichean sects and witchcraft.[75]

Religion is deemed by Scruton to be an undeniable part of the human condition. Religious feelings will not go away, and the 'secular picture of the human condition' will be rejected for this reason. An established Church, Scruton suggests, can satisfy the psychological religious impulse, moderating it, and providing it with the myths it craves. It is inevitable, therefore, that by losing a politically endorsed religious presence many less controllable and perhaps highly noxious superstitions will take its place.

Intriguingly, in his political works, Scruton concludes to a quasi-integralism. His integralism is not based on arguments in favour of the effects of Sacraments, or the efficacy of prayer, or the veracity of Christian doctrine, in procuring the final end of human nature. Rather, his is a pragmatic integralism which recognises the political advantage of promoting religious 'myths' that support the stability of the nation State. What Scruton appears to have done is adopt a variant of the old conservative principle of State-Church union, upholding a place for liturgy and ceremonial duties, but has emptied it of its originally conceived purpose. The role of Scruton's integralism is not to procure the final end of the nation's members, but to support the State in providing ceremonial rites for State occasions and to disseminate myths that gratify the widely felt religious impulse in such a way as to prevent such urges becoming dangerous for the State.

For Scruton, the advantage of recognising that religion is actually an 'emotional truth' bound up with our need for membership is that we can bestow upon the religious impulse an ordered and healthy communal expression. This is exactly what Scruton believes to happen in the formation of a State religion, or established Church.[76] Scruton's support for the idea of an established religious institution leads to reservations about the Enlightenment idea of *religious freedom* that is associated with Locke and others. Religious freedom, Scruton argues, leads to religious indifferentism in society, which he considers to be deeply problematic. Religious freedom has the effect of *destabilising* States. Given the intrinsic relationship between shared 'religious feeling' and 'communal membership' in the social theory of Scruton, religious pluralism in the polity will, he argues, have bad effects for social cohesion:

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[75] *Ibid*. 162-163.
[76] See Scruton, *A Political Philosophy*, 140-141.

If religion is primarily a matter of belief and doctrine, then by allowing freedom of belief, and freedom to discuss and proselytise, it is thought, we ensure that people will make their own religious space, communities will be able to worship God in their own way, and rival faiths will live side by side in mutual toleration. However, the Enlightenment view is profoundly wrong. Belief and doctrine are part of religion, certainly; but so too are custom, ceremony, ritual, membership… By allowing religious freedom we do nothing to create a public world in which religious communities can feel truly at home.[77]

Here, Scruton calls into question the Enlightenment solution to increasing religious diversity, namely religious freedom. In this context, *Religious freedom* chiefly means the governmental defence and endorsement of religious pluralism. His point is that religion does not simply give rise to a system of belief, but rather a way of being together in a community. Religious freedom, in his view, can cause religion to degenerate into a mere set of ideas, failing to strengthen communal membership in society.

For Scruton, religion is not about a need for doctrine, but the need to establish proper membership in a community. In turn, the deep connection between religion and membership effects a quasi-integralism in Scruton's thought which looks positively on the notion of an established Church, and is somewhat hostile to the idea of a religious freedom that treats all religions as equally welcome. Intriguingly, by arguing in this way he concludes similarly to early conservatives like Burke and Maistre on the need for Church-State union, but for radically different reasons. Scruton's establishmentarianism, however, does not entail a confessional State as classically conceived, but purely a State-endorsed ceremonial Church.

Scruton turns his thoughts to the specific situation of his own country. It could be argued that the British constitution is inherently *integralist*, the affirming of which being part of the monarch's coronation oath, who is thereafter head of the Church of England, and whose nobility are in part comprised by the *Lords Spiritual*, the bishops in the House of Lords. Scruton insists that this peculiarity should not cause us to think it 'serves to distinguish the British from the American approach,' stating that the Church of England's role ought to be deemed – using the language of Bagehot – only 'the "dignified" rather than

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[77] *Ibid*. 144.

the "efficient" aspect of government.'[78] This does not seem wholly true, given that the Anglican bishops in the House of Lords are there by virtue of their episcopal offices, and can make a direct difference to the passing of legislation. Be that as it may, the purpose and consequences of the 'dignified' aspect of government is presented by Scruton as follows:

> It is an inoffensive reminder of our history, of where we have come from, and of the source of the moral outlook that is encapsulated in our law and customs. But it confiscates nothing from the secular culture.[79]

Again, in this excerpt the religious aspect of the nation is discussed only in terms of 'history' and 'source', as it offers only a 'reminder', whilst remaining 'inoffensive' inasmuch as it leaves untouched the essentially 'secular culture' that Scruton defends. The ceremonial functions of the Church are public expressions of something Scruton deems in essence private, and are merely celebrations of the 'moral outlook that is encapsulated in our law,' having no formal effect on law or legislation whatever. For this reason, Scruton concludes that this role of an established Church 'confiscates nothing' from the secularity of modern society.

At this point Scruton's characteristic pessimism comes to the foreground:

> Conservatives… wish to keep the frail crust of civilization in place as long as possible, knowing that beneath it there does not lie the idyllic realm of Rousseau's noble savage, but only the violent world of the hunter-gatherer. Faced with civilizational decline, therefore, they hold… that "delay is life".[80]

Conservatives like Burke and Maistre believed that the civilization they sought to conserve was the product of the transformation by Christianity of that 'violent world of the hunter-gatherer.' According to their view, to rescue this civilization it was necessary to reverse the process of secularisation advanced by the Enlightenment and invite the operation of the Church back into political life by its integration with the State; this was called the defence of 'Throne and Altar'. Scruton holds to a different view: accepting Enlightenment secularism as a cornerstone of conservatism, he nonetheless proposes to prolong the *effects* of what he

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[78] Scruton, *How to be a Conservative*, 141.
[79] *Ibid*. 141-142.
[80] *Ibid*. 165.

seemingly deems religious 'myths'. Scruton, then, believes that the rejection of religion as something politically relevant is necessary, even inherent to the Christian religion, whilst also believing that in this rejection begins the decline of civilization. The conservative's role, therefore, is to make this process of decline as slow as possible.

Scruton concludes that whilst conservatives must acknowledge a debt of gratitude towards religion, it is not in religion that they can find a solution to the problem which concerns them, namely the problem of how to *conserve* civilization. Scruton proposes that conservatives should look to the theme of national loyalty, and a national loyalty which sees the secularisation of the State as something good. The true enemy of conservatism is not the secularising component of liberalism but its anti-nationhood component. Conservatives, according to Scruton, ought to target 'transnational bodies' which seek to 'confiscate the legislative powers of sovereign nations.'[81]

In sum, Scruton's establishmentarianism encourages Christians to live out the imperatives of the Gospel, even the *Great Commission*, whilst accepting a purely unpolitical interpretation of those imperatives. According to him, the privatising of religion and secularisation of the State is inherent in Christianity. It took the birth of the Enlightenment (according to Scruton, itself a product of Christianity), however, to unveil this truth. Scruton argues that, following the Enlightenment, the State stands in no need of religion. It does, nonetheless, stand downstream from religion, and therefore should be benevolent towards it, affording it a ceremonial place in public life as part of the 'dignified aspect' of politics. Prohibiting such an expression of religious feeling would lead to frustrated and misdirected religious impulses. It is, for Scruton, an unhappy truth that religion must be excluded from the political arena – with both the nature of Christianity and post-Enlightenment Western political settlements requiring this – for once this privatisation is achieved, greater peace and liberty is established but so too does civilizational decline begin. In his view, conservatism's role is to 'delay' this decline by encouraging national loyalty and resisting transnationalism.

1.2.5 Summary

Notwithstanding developments over the course for forty years of writing on the subject of political conservatism, Scruton is remarkably consistent, presenting the same principles, albeit emphasising different aspects at different times. I will summarise the key components of Scruton's secular conservatism.

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[81] *Ibid*. 165-166.

Conservatism and religion are not intrinsically connected. Scruton consistently argues that religion and conservatism are not, in principle, intrinsically related. They are, however, historically connected. Religion is considered by him to be at the origins of civilization, including civilization's political, institutional, and cultural aspects, all of which conservatives seek to conserve. Their attitude towards religion ought to be one of benevolence.

The secularity of State legislation and its superiority to religious law. According to Scruton, neither Christianity rightly interpreted nor modern Western conceptions of politics and law allow for religion to have any role beyond that of public ceremony and private conviction. This privatising of religion should not impoverish the life of faith for the Christian or religious believer. Scruton holds that if any conflict were to arise between the requirements of religious belief and those of the citizen, however, religious convictions are secondary to the duties of citizenship. Scruton sees politics to have a narrow remit, within which few problems can be solved. Private life, on the other hand, covers the whole *complexus* of custom, association, tradition, arranging settlement, education, and so forth. Scruton argues that his case is for the exclusion of religion from a narrow – though important – sphere of the nation, to the broad sphere of civil society,

The religious impulse is natural to human nature. For Scruton, religion is a vital dimension of human psychology, and its suppression will ultimately cause the eruption of frustrated religious emotion, something that he deems dangerous. In turn, conservatives should respect religious conviction and grant religion a ceremonial role in the public life of the nation.

The desirability of Church-State union. If ordered properly, in an established form, with State patronage, Scruton holds that religion can fulfil the human need to root our experience of membership in a 'consoling mythology'. Obviously, this does not support the notion that religious claims are true, but affords religion an instrumental value which Scruton deems to be of no small importance. An established Church, according to Scruton, should only be part of the 'dignified' rather than 'efficient' aspect of political life.

This, in sum, is Scruton's position on the relationship between religion and the conservative attitude to politics. It is now necessary to take a closer look at the primary theme in Scruton's conservatism, namely *national loyalty*. In *national loyalty* he seeks to re-root conservatism, having transferred conservative principles from their traditionally religious framework.

1.3 Scruton's rooting of a secular conservatism: national loyalty

Scruton sharply distinguishes national loyalty – a synonym of 'patriotism' – from *nationalism*. This is an important distinction that runs throughout his political theory:

> Suspicion of the patriotic motive arises partly because people confuse patriotism with nationalism. The latter is not a form of loyalty, but an ideology and a call to arms on behalf of it. Often nationalism results from the collapse of empire, when people previously ruled by a distant metropolitan power look for a more local form of legitimate government, a form that will correspond to the customs, language and history that tie them to each other. Almost invariably, however, this involves an act of self-assertion – either against the collapsing empire, or against rival nationalities embarking on the same project of "self-determination". The history of this project in our time is not a happy one; nevertheless, one part of it – which is the attempt to give political expression to a natural allegiance – commands the sympathy of conservatives. What conservatives object to is the desire to rationalise national loyalty through the myth that "we" are somehow superior to "them", and therefore entitled to destroy them. Patriotism is an altogether quieter view of the matter: it is, simply, the recognition that we stand or fall together, and that we therefore owe it to each other to maintain the customs and the symbols of our common membership.[82]

The passage above contains three essential points. First, patriotism is a natural form of loyalty, an attitude that arises organically from 'common membership', whereas nationalism is an ideology, arising from a 'desire to rationalise' affection for one's nation by judging it 'superior' to other nations. Second, nationalism – unlike patriotism – is not something *normatively* felt by a nation's members but tends to arise from unusual historical circumstances. Third, there is a truth in nationalism, namely that politics should in part express the 'allegiance' of national loyalty, but the error is in effecting such allegiance through ideas of ethnic or national pre-eminence, rather than through the inoffensive endorsement of the nation's 'customs and symbols'. Put simply, according to Scruton, conservatism is intrinsically patriotic, which is attitudinal, not nationalistic, which is ideological.

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[82] Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, 26.

1.3.1 Conservatism is intrinsically patriotic

Scruton notes that 'the Christian faith has receded from public life, leaving a vacuum into which nihilism, materialism and militant Islam have flowed unresisted.'[83] The remedy he proposes is not the return of Christian faith to public life, but a spirit of loyalty to the identity of the nation State.[84]

For Scruton, a nation is simply a settled people in some way distinguishable from other settled peoples in other parts of the world. The State is the political and legal realisation of such a people. Nonetheless, Scruton believes that this distinction ought to become, over time, a *conceptual* and not *real* distinction:

> Every society contains the seeds of a constitution, in the form of custom, tradition, precedent and law. But it may have to fight to preserve these, and from every successful fight a degree of "nationhood" emerges. For most of us the state means, not just government, but also territory, language, administration, established institutions, all growing from the interaction of unconscious custom and reflective choice. The nation state is the state at the extreme of self-consciousness. It has its territory, its people, its language, sometimes even its church.[85]

As is clear from this excerpt, Scruton holds that a settled people, a nation, is distinguished from other peoples by their traditions, customs, ways of settling disputes, and the many other unique facets of their society. Much in the course of their history will threaten such a way of life, and yet with each successful assertion of what comprises that life, a clearer sense of national character will be felt. For Scruton, the State should not merely mean the government, but how the nation and its political ordering operate *together*. This, for Scruton, is what is meant by the constitution of a 'nation state'.

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[83] Scruton, *How to be a Conservative*, 108.

[84] See *Ibid*. 108. Scruton, in this vein, identifies Otto von Bismarck as an exemplar, as he had united the German principalities and thereby created a nation State based on a 'shared language, shared customs and historically vindicated borders.' For this reason, according to Scruton, it was necessary for Bismarck to issue his '*kulturkampf* against the Catholic Church' in order 'to neutralise transnational sources of authority, and not to endorse them.' By doing this, Bismarck 'was creating a new centre of loyalty, one that subsumed the traditional allegiances of the German-speaking peoples, and gave them a shared identity.' Scruton's use of this example further clarifies his position: the conservative cause, inasmuch as it advances cultural stability, should affirm and promote national loyalty, even if that requires the suppression of a politically authoritative ecclesiastical presence. See *Ibid*. 109.

[85] Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, 174.

In *The West and the Rest*, Scruton attempts to deal directly with the issue of religion in nation States. He holds that the subordination of religion to the State, and the eventual privatising of religion, is part of the process of a nation State coming to maturity:

> National loyalty does not rule out religious obedience. The nations of Europe began life as Christian communities, and the boundaries between them often mark out long-standing religious divides – usually between Catholic and Protestant, though in some places between Catholic and Orthodox, or even Greek Catholic and Roman Catholic. Nevertheless, once the national idea gains ascendency, religion is gradually reshaped in terms of it – which is why we distinguish Greek from Russian Orthodox, for example, or Anglican from the Scandinavian forms of Protestant Christianity.[86]

It may appear from this passage that Scruton does not believe in the privatising of religion, but rather endorses a public religion, albeit one subordinate to the State. From the following passage, however, we see that such subordination is for an end, namely to begin the State's process of privatising religion to prioritise other cultural aspects of the nation, that in times of crisis religious difference does not threaten the united stand of the nation's members:

> By joining clubs and societies, by forming teams, troupes, and competitions, by acquiring sociable hobbies and outgoing modes of entertainment, people come to feel that they and their neighbours belong together, and this "belonging" has more importance, in terms of emergency, than any private difference in matters of religion or family life. Indeed, freedom of association has an inherent tendency to generate territorial loyalties and so to displace religion from the public to the private realm.[87]

For Scruton, other forms of association ought to become more important to people than religious association, so that the nation becomes a settled people who do the things they enjoy together. Religion, in turn, becomes as private as family affection. Any possible unifying effects of religion are diminished within a modern pluralistic society comprising members belonging to different religions. In turn, if religion is accepted by the nation's members as a private affair, different religions will not compete for political preferential treatment. With

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[86] Scruton, *The West and the Rest*, 47.
[87] *Ibid*. 49.

the privatisation of religion, religious affiliation cannot so easily be a source of public division. Even where most share the same religion, Scruton thinks that it is still better for religion to become a private matter. Political endorsement of a religion may place on the State the requirement to identify religious dissent, thereby bringing conflict where this could be avoided by religious privatisation.

Scruton holds that the Enlightenment concept of belonging to a State, namely *citizenship* – that is, someone *belonging* by virtue of legal recognition – presupposes the moral *experience of belonging* to a nation, an experience felt in patriotism. He holds that this patriotic sense of national belonging is 'dwindling', and this is due to the rise of a 'culture of repudiation'.[88] Interestingly, this 'culture of repudiation', which expresses itself by an attack on tradition, is deemed by Scruton to have arisen due to the disappearance of a religious culture:

> Why is there a "culture of youth", and why does this culture define itself negatively, in opposition to the loyalties and pieties of parents? The answer lies surely in the mounting religious deficit in modern societies – the disappearance of the rites of passage and forms of submission that grant, at the end of the long hard road of adolescence, the transition to a higher state of membership. When religious faith evaporates, when adults cease to induct young people into the national culture, when loyalties no longer stretch across generations or define themselves in territorial terms, then inevitably the society of strangers, held together by citizenship, in under threat.[89]

This passage seems to contradict much of what Scruton wants to affirm. He appears to hold that the 'culture of repudiation', which is characterised as corrosive of national culture, has arisen due to the disappearance of religious practice. Scruton closely associates 'religious faith' and 'national culture', so much so that he thinks that the 'religious deficit in modern societies' is threatening citizenship itself by eroding what is presupposed by such citizenship, namely the experience of membership. Scruton holds that a key part of a nation State coming to maturity is the privatising of religion, and yet he holds that the nation is being destroyed by the disappearance of religion. This is not necessarily inconsistent. For Scruton, religion is a private affair of the family (not directly a part of political life), but the family has failed in

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[88] *Ibid*. 67.
[89] *Ibid*. 81-82.

one of its social roles of providing religious instruction, and as a consequence the nation is threatened.

The distinction between national loyalty and nationalism is of such importance because, in rooting a conservative vision of society in national identity rather than in any sort of religious framework, Scruton wants to avoid endorsing any kind of race-focused or hateful ideology. He characterises nationalism as 'part of the pathology of national loyalty, not its normal condition.'[90] What Scruton advocates is 'a natural love of country, countrymen and the culture that unites them.'[91]

Scruton holds that national loyalty is one of three possible forces of identity which can closely bind the members of a given State, the others being the *tribe* and the *creed*. He explains that tribalism binds through family ties and private agreements. In his view, such private and domestic loyalties are insufficient to provide a reliable foundation for nationwide citizenship, and as a consequence will produce a weak State. Religion, or *creed*, binds in such a way as to always exclude the heretic or dissenter, and therefore cannot provide the reliable unity needed for the State's stability. National loyalty demands only that the nation's members see themselves as 'a people settled in a certain territory, who share language, institutions, customs and a sense of history and who regard themselves as equally committed both to their place of residence and to the legal and political process that governs it.'[92] In sum, national loyalty, Scruton holds, only requires that we 'see each other as neighbours.'[93]

Scruton sees the great achievement of Western nations to be their replacement of religion with nationhood as that which binds their members:

> Europe owes its greatness to the fact that the primary loyalties of the European people have been detached from religion and re-attached to the land. Those who believe that the division of Europe into nations has been the primary cause of European wars should remember the devastating wars of religion that national loyalties finally brought to an end. And they should study our art and literature, which is an art and literature not of war but of peace, and invocation of home and the routines of home, of gentleness, everydayness and enduring settlement.[94]

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[90] Scruton, *A Political Philosophy*, 3.
[91] *Ibid*. 3.
[92] *Ibid*. 10.
[93] *Ibid*. 10.
[94] *Ibid*. 14.

The historical claims of this passage are contestable, and certainly it could be argued that the vast majority of European material culture does not have secular themes of 'home' and 'settlement' as their subject, but religious themes. Nonetheless, Scruton's position is clear: Europe's 'greatness' comes from its people relegating religion to the private sphere and placing their primary shared loyalty in devotion to their respective nations. Of course, Scruton is making a deeply conservative point, namely that loyalty ought not to be directed towards *ideas* and *abstractions*, but towards the real, the tangible, the concrete: *a territory*.

One reason why Scruton is quick to condemn any form of nationalism is that he considers this phenomenon to be the reintroduction of public religious sentiment under another form. That is, nationalism is partly bad because it threatens the secular character of the State:

> Nationalism is… a religious loyalty dressed up in territorial clothes. In every case we should distinguish nationalism and its inflammatory, quasi-religious call to re-create the world from national loyalty, of the kind that we know from our own historical experience. Nationalism belongs to those surges of religious emotion that have so often led to European war.[95]

Nationalism, according to Scruton, is not the replacing of public religion with secular national loyalty, but the replacing of one State religion with another. For Scruton, nationalism is an expression of religious feeling that 'occupies the space vacated by religion, and in doing so excites the true believer both to worship the national idea and to seek in it for what it cannot provide – the ultimate purpose of life, the way to redemption and the consolation for all our woes.'[96] The error of nationalism is not normative, however, and for 'ordinary people' the nation 'means simply the historical identity and continuing allegiance that unites them in the body politic.'[97] National loyalty arises out of what Scruton calls the 'first-person plural of settlement.'[98] That is, a people within a certain territory who can meaningfully say '*we*', without this requiring disdain for a 'them'.[99]

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[95] *Ibid*. 16.
[96] Scruton, *How to be a Conservative*, 32.
[97] *Ibid*. 32.
[98] *Ibid*. 32.
[99] Thus, Cahill writes: 'The relations of one's country or nation to other nations are akin to the mutual relations of different families, so that the nation's place in the universal society of mankind is somewhat like the position of the family within the nation itself. Just as one's family affections do not exclude a due regard and real love for members of other families and for the nation at large, so neither

Without national loyalty, which is felt in the 'we' of the nation's members, some other principle of unity will be established. The obvious candidate, for Scruton, is religion, whose content is of sufficient gravity to effect a similar intensity of loyalty. According to him, in 'states foundered on religious, rather than secular, obedience, freedom of conscience is a scarce and threatened asset.'[100] That is, he who dissents due to his conscience will be persecuted. In Scruton's view, people in a secular conservative society are more likely to enjoy freedom of conscience due to the general trust which arises from a shared love of the nation and its territory.

Scruton argues that there are two aspects to the first-person plural on which political life in a nation State depend: 'shared territory, defined by law' and 'the history and customs through which that territory has been settled.'[101] This second aspect, however, seems problematic if religion is judged to be a purely private matter, since religion of some kind has played a central role in shaping such 'history and customs' for every nation. Scruton acknowledges this role of religion in history, but does not consider this point as important as others might. He remarks that 'customs may include religious services, but these are by no means essential.'[102] He holds that increasingly 'the stories and customs of the homeland are secular,' but his examples seem deeply bound up with religion, and public religion at that: 'like the stories that the French tell about Jeanne d'Arc, about the Bastille and about the Revolution, or the stories that the Scots tell about Robert the Bruce and about the Jacobite rebellions.'[103] Perhaps Scruton deliberately chose these examples as ones he felt had transitioned from stories that are deeply connected to religion to secular national legends. He concludes that we should see the 'history and customs' of the nation in much the same way as he thinks the *rational* person sees religion:

> They are, as Plato put it, noble lies: literal falsehoods expressing emotional truths. A rational being will see through them, but nevertheless respects them, as he respects religious convictions that he does not share, and the heroes of other nations.[104]

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does… patriotism, even in its most intense form, exclude love and due appreciation of other nations, or zeal for the good of the human race. In fact, these latter are the natural development of a true love for one's own country, just as the domestic virtues and affections are the natural foundation of Patriotism itself.' Cahill, *The Framework*, 591.

[100] Scruton, *How to be a Conservative*, 32.

[101] *Ibid.* 37.

[102] *Ibid.* 37.

[103] *Ibid.* 37.

[104] *Ibid.* 37.

I return to the question of law in Scruton's thought, for when Scruton advocates the separation of politics and religion it is primarily law that he has in mind. For him, since the Enlightenment we have understood national belonging as citizenship, and citizenship is a legal construct. This is why Scruton tells us that we must be keenly aware of the role of law in the formation of the nation State, and why this law must be formally secular. He helpfully outlines his position in the following passage:

> By the end of the seventeenth-century, as the Enlightenment spread its influence far and wide across the Christian world, it was beginning to be accepted that we manage our affairs in this world by passing our own laws, and that these laws are man-made, secular, and if possible neutral when it comes to the various religions that compete within the state. Should there be an apparent clash between secular law and religious obedience, it has become accepted in our society that secular law prevails. The hope has been that the two spheres of duty, the sacred and the secular, are sufficiently separate, so that there would in any case be little or no overlap between them. To put it bluntly, religion, in our society, has become a private affair, which makes no demands of the public as a whole.[105]

There are four points in this passage. First, State law is man-made and secular in character. Second, effort must be made to make sure that such law is neutral in regard to the various religions which exist among the people of the nation. Third, if there were any conflict, State law would prevail over religious obedience. Fourth, this is only possible if it is accepted that religion is a private affair. These four points will be accepted, according to Scruton, if *national loyalty* is prioritised, for all law, especially the legal construct of citizenship, presupposes a first-person plural, as he explains:

> When God makes the laws, the laws become as mysterious as God is. When *we* make the laws, and make them for our purposes, we can be certain what they mean. The only question then is "Who are *we*?" And, in modern conditions, the nation is the answer to that question.[106]

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[105] *Ibid.* 32.
[106] *Ibid.* 35.

Scruton acknowledges that his position is perhaps more palatable to a Christian than to someone of another religious tradition. Of course, a devout Christian, like a devout Muslim, will likely not obey a law that conflicts with what he judges to be a divine law. Scruton highlights, however, that Christians and Muslims differ in that there is nothing in Christianity that might absolve its adherents from accepting the legitimacy of State law *per se*. On the other hand, Muslims have often viewed Islamic (Sharia) law to be the only legitimate law. Scruton believes that this is now posing a problem for Western countries:

> Christians will agree [with Muslims] that obedience to the secular law is impossible when that law conflicts with the law of God. But there is a great difference between the Christian and Islamic interpretation of what this means. For the Christian the law of God coincides with the moral precepts laid down in the Ten Commandments, which were reduced by Christ to just two – namely, to love God entirely and to love your neighbour as yourself. These commandments do not replace the secular law but constrain it. They set out limits to what the sovereign can command: but so long as the sovereign does not transgress those limits, the secular law retains absolute authority over the citizen.[107]

Scruton observes that, for the Christian, divine law has a *constraining* effect on State law. This constraining effect, however, is little more than the measurement of State law by the criterion of love, and in no way implies the replacement of State law with religious law, which is what Scruton associates with the Islamic law tradition. In any case, *public* religion is dangerous, in his view, for it always makes divine precepts a higher authority than any secular law, and he holds that this undermines the very notion of the 'rule of law', which he deems the safeguard of our liberties.[108]

1.3.2   Social desecration and the culture of repudiation

I have already introduced Scruton's theme of 'cultural repudiation'. With the use of a wider selection of texts, it is worth revisiting this theme due to its pertinence to Scruton's view of religion and politics.

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[107] Scruton, *The West and the Rest*, 65-66.
[108] Scruton, *A Political Philosophy*, 17.

He holds that if the private arena fails to provide sufficient religious instruction, this gives rise to an unhealthy society, and consequently the State suffers. Scruton has stated that, in his view, the Western world looks evermore like the world presented in George Orwell's *1984*.[109] A culture without religion is a culture *with* something else; the vacuum religion leaves when it has been vanquished will be filled with fanatical and superstitious convictions. Scruton believes that failures in religious transmission account for the 'ideas and emotions behind the totalitarian movements of the twentieth-century.'[110] For Scruton, religion in the private lives of individuals marks the attempt to solve the great problems of human life and death, attempts which belong outside the limited domain of politics:

> Violence comes from another source, and there is no society without it since it comes from the very attempt of human beings to live together. The same can be said of the religious obsession with sexuality: religion is not its cause, but an attempt to resolve it.[111]

Scruton is responding here to a common accusation that religion is marked by obsession with sex and violence, and therefore is the cause of much that is bad in the world. Scruton, however, holds that the human condition simply entails violence and sexual perversion, due to human nature's *inherent* defects. It is not, he thinks, perverse obsession which we detect in religion, but attempts to remedy this darker side of the human condition. Scruton proposes that without what he calls 'the sacred' we are without a response to the 'darkness' present in every human being, which becomes manifest in our attempts to live in community. These are enormous topics to which he alludes, but his remarks suffice to see that he views religion as an attempt to remedy maladies inherent in the human condition.

Scruton holds that to understand what religion 'brings to us we must not examine only belief, but also the way in which life with religion differs at every level from life without it.'[112] He notes how secularisation changed the visible face of the Western world. Its presence in 'architecture went hand in hand with socialist and fascist projects to rid old

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[109] See Scruton, *Our Church*, 176.
[110] Roger Scruton, *The Sacred and the Human* ⟨https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/features/roger-scruton-on-religion⟩ [accessed 14 January 2016].
[111] *Ibid*. [accessed 14 January 2016].
[112] Roger Scruton, *The Sacred and the Secular*, 3 ⟨web.princeton.edu/sites/jmadison/calendar/conferences/scrutonpaper.pdf⟩ [accessed 16 January 2016].

Europe of its hierarchical past, to re-shape it as a godless but orderly society, which would live in honest recognition that it is man, not God, who is the final purpose.'[113] Scruton's criticisms of the ideologies of the twentieth-century are akin to attacks made by early conservatives in the face of the French Revolution. Those conservatives believed the project would fail, leading only to newly imposed hierarchies and the loss of many lives.

Scruton believes that the education of children is primarily the duty of parents, and only secondarily the role of institutions, themselves extensions of the private sphere. This explains why he does not believe that by education having a religious character, religion encroaches on the public arena. Indeed, according to Scruton, secularism in education is detrimental for intellectual development. He does not accept the accusation that religion produces closed minds.[114] He believes it is quite the reverse, with secularism in education precluding the raising of questions which require religious answers. This, he says, encourages 'an ever-growing vagueness and cynicism about nature and destiny of humanity.'[115]

His concerns about the emergence of an unreligious culture is expressed powerfully in the following passage:

> [Westerners] find themselves in the midst of a culture of near universal desecration, in which human relations are voided of the old religious virtues – innocence, sacrifice, holy vows and sacramental commitments… Our art is full of sacrilegious images and satires of the godly. And the city is being blown apart by a new kind of joke architecture, which has put aside the puritanical discipline of the modernists in order to remind us that there is no permanence, no eternity, no heavenly city to be built in stone, but only a facetious, glassy laughter.[116]

Scruton paints a picture here of what he deems to be the society that we have established by departing from conservative principles. He holds that due to the moral effects of liberalism we have accepted new visions of ourselves and how we relate to one another, visions which he deems untruthful, and in his opinion contemporary material culture expresses this. In turn, he traces what he sees to be our modern maladies to a crisis of anthropology, advancing the

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[113] *Ibid*. 11 [accessed 16 January 2016].
[114] See Roger Scruton, *My Tribal Religion* ⟨https://www.catholicherald.co.uk/commentandblogs/2015/10/08/roger-scruton-my-tribal-religion/⟩ [accessed 16 January 2016].
[115] Scruton, *The Sacred and the Secular*, 12 [accessed 16 January 2016].
[116] *Ibid*. 12 [accessed 16 January 2016].

case that it is only the religious perspective on anthropology which enables us to grasp the truth about ourselves:

> It is very hard for us to live with the new perception of the human body. Everything in us points back to that religious vision from which we have strayed, telling us that the human form is sacred, untouchable and an object of awe.[117]

Modern materialism, Scruton believes, has given rise to a view of the human body as a possession which can be *used*. This is, in his opinion, a consequence of abandoning traditional Western religious anthropology. This facet of Scruton's thought shows clearly that whilst he believes that religion should be the least expressed aspect of shared public culture, it should be a prominent aspect of private culture. In this way, in public culture, religion's explicit expression will be almost invisible, but the effects of its private expression will be felt.

In the Scrutonian schema, religion is a key component of the culture of the private arena, that is, the family and the family home. The union on which the family has been traditionally understood to depend, namely marriage, has been understood by civilizations as a religious union. In turn, secularism in the private sphere renders marriage no longer a *transcendent bond*, but a 'fragile contract… which can be broken and amended with only commercial costs.'[118] For Scruton, the failure to relegate religion to the private sphere in such a way as to preserve religion in that sphere has deeply damaged the family, and by extension the State.

Scruton holds that intrinsic to religion is the act of repentance. It is our pride that drives us to damage ourselves, and it is in developing our ability to judge ourselves and repent that we are protected from moral ruination:

> The Roman Catholic Church is right to regard penance as a sacrament. Penance is the work of restoration, which renews and purifies the sinner by putting him once more in a relation of love. It requires the sinner to face up to his failings, to confess them, to humble himself before God and to make atonement. There are many things wrong with modern societies, but nothing more wrong, it seems to me, than the loss of the

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[117] *Ibid*. 13 [accessed 16 January 2016].
[118] *Ibid*. 14 [accessed 16 January 2016].

habit of repentance. All that is most gross and offensive in the world in which we live comes from the inability of people to live in judgement, to accept the need for remorse and atonement, and to accept that, in begging forgiveness, they must also offer it. All of Christian doctrine points to that process, and when Calvin removed penance from the list of sacraments, he made the first and fatal step towards the de-Christianization of the world.[119]

According to this passage, at the heart of what Scruton deems to be wrong with 'modern societies' is contemporary man's inability to repent. The failure of religious induction in modern civil society is leading to moral bankruptcy.

Scruton thinks that a 'godless society' is a depraved one, and that Christianity offers a certain redemption of social membership that should not be neglected. This is presented in his comparison of Christianity's 'gift of peace' with *Anti-social behaviour orders* ('Asbos'):

Those nurtured in the Christian faith know that Christianity's ability to maintain peace in the world around us reflects its gift of peace to the world within. In a Christian society there is no need for Asbos, and in the world after religion those Asbos will do no good — they are a last desperate attempt to save us from the effects of godlessness, and the attempt is doomed.[120]

What does Scruton mean by this praising of the idea of a 'Christian society', when he explicitly endorses the privatising of religion? A Christian society is not the same as a Christian State. Scruton holds that Christianity belongs to individuals, and by extension to the nation inasmuch as those individuals make up the members of the nation. He has conceded nothing to the notion that Christianity should be public, in the sense of directly affecting political decision-making, legislation or law. The State, he believes, ought to be secular, even if all or most of its citizens are religious.

Scruton's observations about the condition of modern society, and how he sees its redemption in its return to some acknowledgement of the place of religion in the private lives of individuals and their families, leads to an important theme of his wider thought, namely

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[119] Scruton, *Our Church*, 178.
[120] Roger Scruton, *Dawkins is wrong about God* ⟨www.spectator.co.uk/2006/01/dawkins-is-wrong-about-god/⟩ [accessed 16 January 2016].

what he calls 'homecoming'.[121] Scruton believes that the human need for the sacred cannot be extinguished. It is deep in the human psyche. In turn, when religious expression is suppressed, our need for the sacred manifests in disordered ways:

> We may have lost belief in the transcendental. But our hunger for the sacred still erupts into the public world, in grotesque forms that would be comic were they not signs of a deep emotional disorder – of a refusal to accept the sacred in the only form that has actually been offered to us.[122]

Much of what Scruton rejects in modern society he sees to be tied to the spread of secularism among individuals, families, and the communities of civil society. Contemporary materialism, modern moral values, zealous behaviour united to supposed social justice causes and so forth, he sees to be connected to the rejection of religion. He observes that the 'wave of secularisation launched itself with a plethora of manifestoes – modernist, futurist, dadaist, symbolist, socialist – by way of announcing the absolute break with the past.'[123] The Burkean undercurrents in Scruton's position are obvious. Scruton sees civil society to be based upon a covenant between the dead, the living, and the yet to be born.[124] For his conservatism, there can be no 'break with the past', and for this reason he must defend religion. But that means defending religion in the only way apparently possible today: defending its place in the sphere of private life and private association. In Scruton's view, in place of a religious worldview have come materialist ideologies, and these have ultimately had the effect of interiorly displacing us. No longer able to see ourselves as part of a continual community of the dead, living, and yet to be born, we are adrift, with no obvious sense of belonging to a bigger project. A conservative society is one which is felt by its members to be *a home*, something one has received, can call one's own, and will pass on to future generations. This feeling of home requires a worldview that looks to a bigger picture of our purpose and destiny, and this bigger picture is one Scruton associates with the religious worldview that we have lost.

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[121] A theme centred on 'that love of home and soil, of "all the customs, ceremonies and practices whereby the sacred is renewed, so as to be a real presence among us, and a living endorsement of the human community".' See Mark Dooley, in Roger Scruton, *The Roger Scruton Reader*, edited by Mark Dooley (London: Continuum, 2011), xxi.
[122] Scruton, *The Sacred and the Secular*, 17 [accessed 16 January 2016].
[123] *Ibid*. 11 [accessed 16 January 2016].
[124] See Burke, *Reflections*, 194-195.

1.3.3 Summary

In Scruton's view, conservatism *per se* is secular, and ought not to view itself as the defender of religion, still less religion as something political. Rather, conservatism is the defender of the nation State and national loyalty, against transnational bodies which undermine such loyalty. Insofar as religion is subordinated to the State and serves this end, however, it ought to be encouraged and utilised by the conservative cause.

For Scruton, national loyalty, or patriotism, is natural to human beings; it is a love for one's people, and their shared history, customs, traditions, language, and so forth. These objects of love form over time in a particular territory, and therefore 'settled territory' is essential to the identity of a nation.

According to Scruton, the legal tie of citizenship presupposes the moral tie of national loyalty. That is, the trusting and law-abiding character expected of those who enjoy citizenship presupposes that citizens see themselves as members of a people who *belong* together. What follows from this, for Scruton, is that in order for a State to operate as a healthy State, it should be a nation State. Indeed, a nation which can be identified as such is what Edward Cahill calls 'one moral whole', and therefore at least some kind of political autonomy is proper to it.[125]

Patriotism is distinct from *nationalism*. The latter, according to Scruton, is a belligerent *ideology* of presumed national superiority, which comes about due to a misguided desire to rationalise what is meant to be an organic and tacit affection for one's people and territory. Nationalism, importantly, is contrary to Scruton's secular vision of politics, as he regards this ideology as one that makes the nation into a religion, mutating natural affection for country into religious zeal. Nationalism corrupts the love of something concrete and actual – a territory and those who enjoy it – into the love of something abstract, a *national idea*.

Scruton acknowledges that religion plays a role in the emergence and identity of nations, but holds that as nations become States, religious allegiance must become secondary to the allegiance required by the State. Thereby religion becomes just one kind of private association within the State's legal jurisdiction. Such a process he thinks is natural to the maturation of a nation State.[126]

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[125] Cahill, *The Framework*, 583.
[126] To offer an example of my own, archery is a highly treasured aspect of South Korean culture, and yet it remains only the private hobby of individuals. Every archery club in South Korea is bound by

Scruton does not wish to see the abolition of religion, but the relegating of religion from the public to the private sphere. That is, religion must be excluded from the political arena. He believes that such exclusion has been successfully executed in the reception of Enlightenment ideas. The secularisation of politics has spilled over into civil society, however, and as a consequence the family has failed in its duty of religious instruction. This failure has given rise to what he calls a 'culture of repudiation' which has eroded patriotism. This erosion of patriotic feeling has undermined the authority of law and destabilised the State. Scruton does not, however, address the question of whether this failure to conserve religious induction within the domestic sphere is a direct consequence of the secularisation of the political arena.

Finally, Scruton believes that the health of a nation State depends on the *rule of law*. He sees the law of the State and religious law potentially to be in conflict, and therefore holds that the law of the State must be purely secular, with the law of religion being only the private law over the hearts of believers. His hope is that the two orders of law are separate enough for no conflict to arise. Nonetheless, his position is that if any conflict manifests, secular State law is to prevail.

1.4   Chapter summary

For Kirk, conservatism is primarily distinct from liberalism due to the former's theocentric perspective on the world, the latter being said by him to have an anthropocentric perspective.[127] Quinton holds that conservatism *can* be religious but is not necessarily so.

Scruton's view aligns with that of Quinton, namely that there is no *inherent* relationship between conservatism and religion. Scruton's conservatism is not directly antagonistic to religion but requires – for the health of the State and the integrity of its law – that it be relegated to the private sphere. Scruton acknowledges that religion is an inextinguishable part of human psychology, and therefore he affords it some public, *purely*

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the law of the State in the same way as a club for any other purpose. Something similar could be said, in Scruton's political vision, of religious worshippers and their places for congregating. Scruton goes further, however, arguing that among one's hobbies and pursuits, religion should be the *least* overt, even if privately the most deeply felt. This is because in times of crisis religious differences tend to weaken national unity, whilst people tend to take pleasure in the activities of others, even if those pursuits are not their own. Scruton holds that a public religion necessarily alienates religious dissenters, and therefore will not unify a people for political purposes, whereas he thinks that such unity is exactly what nationhood achieves. In turn, it is necessary that national myths be somewhat emptied of divisive religious content.

[127] See Russell Kirk, *Russell Kirk's Concise Guide to Conservatism* (Washington DC: Regnery Publishing, 2019), 9-16.

ceremonial, role. This role prevents the psychological need for religious expression from becoming frustrated and disordered, and can also strengthen the State by dignifying it.

For Scruton, religious obligation is secondary to political and legal obligation. Conservatism should not seek the re-establishment of public religion but loyalty to the *nation*. Since, he argues, citizenship presupposes national loyalty, it is proper for the content of a State to be that of a nation, or put another way, for nations to be politically autonomous. Conservatism's adversary is not political secularism, but transnationalism. Conservatives, according to Scruton, must be primarily concerned with the nation and its *territory*. If conservatives really want political stability, their efforts should be directed towards encouraging national loyalty, a patriotic loyalty which ought not to be conflated with nationalism.

Religion does not, according to Scruton, unite the nation, but weakens it, to the degree that it is politically involved. Nonetheless, when religion is not successfully passed on and received within the sphere which he deems proper to it – the sphere of private association – it also weakens national identity, giving rise to a 'culture of repudiation'. Such a failure in civil society effects a weakening of the rule of law, and in turn the State itself. According to Scruton, conservatives seek political stability, and this requires the exclusion of religion from political processes, but they also want continuity with the past and the sharing of a cultural inheritance, and this requires religious induction in the private life of home and society.

It is on the issue of the rule of law that Scruton is especially clear about the need to privatise religion. He sees 'God's laws' and those of the State to be in potential conflict and argues that in their own spheres of operation – private and public – there will be sufficient separation to preclude such conflict. If conflict does arise, however, Scruton insists that the law of the State must prevail.

Scruton's thought leaves important questions unanswered on the relationship between religion and politics: concerning law, does State law presuppose a higher order of law, such as natural law, and if so, does natural law reflect a yet higher order, an eternal law, as has classically been thought?[128] Can State law truly have the weight of an objective moral imperative without depending on some higher order of law? If there is a higher order of law, how can State law require the highest allegiance? Furthermore, given that at the heart of

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[128] For a concise overview of natural law, its content and application, see Austin Fagothey, *Right and Reason: Ethics in Theory and Practice* (Charlotte, North Carolina: TAN Books, 2000), 170-188.

Scruton's conservatism is national loyalty, what mechanism can his conservatism provide to prevent such loyalty from corrupting into nationalism?[129]

Scruton's position on the issue of public religion is complex. He believes that religion is a good for the individual, the family, and private association. Religion, then, ought to be part of the life of the nation, that is, of the shared life of the settled people. He does not, however, believe it can become a political or legal force. Given that, from the conservative perspective, the State should reflect the nation, should not the State be formally religious if the nation's members are religious?

If the State may endorse a ceremonial public role for a particular established religion, as Scruton argues is compatible with a secular view of the State, might not such an endorsement indicate at least an indirect endorsement of that religion's moral and social teaching? If the health of the nation State depends in part upon religious induction in the private sphere, as Scruton argues, ought not the State to publicly recommend and support such religious activity, even with legislation? Would such support be regarded as formal State religion? Furthermore, if the State were to support religious instruction within the private sphere, should it display a preference for certain religions over others, on the grounds that some are of greater benefit to the State by virtue of their doctrinal and moral content?

To answer the above questions, it is necessary to present an alternative perspective from within the conservative tradition on the relationship between politics and religion. To this end, I proceed to introduce the position of an *inherently religious* conservatism. I will then consider those widely deemed the most important conservative thinkers of the eighteenth-century, namely Burke and Maistre, with a view to reconstructing the role of religion in their political thought. Undertaking such an enquiry should allow for insight regarding why these thinkers would not concede that there was merit in the project of political secularisation.

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[129] Many conservatives have argued that if the nation is the highest object of devotion, natural national loyalty will corrupt into nationalism. Thus, Cahill writes: 'Patriotism, however, differs essentially from the false and exaggerated Nationalism which is sometimes called by the same name… [In the latter] concept there is a tendency to regard the State or the Nation as the highest object of devotion, as if it were an end in itself… The votaries of this false Nationalism tend to measure virtue and vice only in relation to the supposed public good, and to ignore not only the claims of religion, but also the duties of Justice and Charity as between one's own country and a foreign nation. These tendencies, which were a natural outcome of the pagan philosophy of ancient Greece and Rome, reappear in modern semi-pagan ideals.' Cahill, *The Framework*, 590-591.

A response to secular conservatism

What are the alternative conservative views to Scruton's secular conservatism? Scruton's case for a secular conservatism, namely a conservatism that is not politically bound up with religion, is complex as it requires that religion be relegated to the private sphere, but also that religion must thrive there in the private sphere, with the State suffering when it does not thrive there. One alternative to Scruton's position is that conservatism is an inherently politically Christian cause.

Noël O'Sullivan, in *The Politics of Imperfection*, posits that central to conservatism is an understanding of man that is inseparably bound up with a religious view of human nature:

> The inevitable imperfection of man's condition is derived from a moral or theological vision of the world. For defenders of this position, who include Burke and the leading French reactionary thinkers, de Maistre and Bonald, the limits to which human action is subject are determined by the conception of the world as an ordered, hierarchical whole in which everything, including man, has had a place assigned to it by God, who created the universe. On this view, change is bad insofar as it threatens to disrupt the original perfection of creation, and man is singled out as especially liable to attempt such change. He is dangerous, because he is distinguished from the rest of creation by his capacity for deliberate evil.[130]

Above, O'Sullivan observes that the early conservatives believed man to have a static nature situated in a created order. By discovering his nature, his place in creation, and his relation to God, that is, by having a 'moral and theological vision of the world', man was believed to be capable of understanding his place in the 'ordered, hierarchical' structure of creation. Due to man's 'capacity for deliberate evil', however, all change marks a danger for him and therefore must be approached with caution. In this vein, O'Sullivan emphasises the place of the *perennial* in conservative thought, stating that conservatives search

> for what may be called an absolute principle of order – for a principle, that is, which is eternally valid. The school finds such a principle in the plan upon which God originally organised creation, and it derives its conception of limits, therefore, from a

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[130] Noël O'Sullivan, *Conservatism* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1976), 22.

supra-historical world of absolute values. For that reason, its conception of order is
predominantly static.[131]

O'Sullivan explains above that conservatism presupposes an ontological, or 'supra-
historical', worldview, that is, a view of the world which allows access to an 'eternally valid'
set of 'absolute values' by which 'God originally organised the world.' Seemingly, for
O'Sullivan, early conservatism is more or less based on a creation-emanation theory of the
kind held by both Platonists and Christians.

Although some of the early conservatives, especially Maistre, drew much from
Platonism, they were all explicitly Christian and it is likely that it was from Christianity that
they ultimately derived their worldview. Certainly, they saw the political upheavals of the
eighteenth-century to be an assault on the Christian social order of their countries, and of
Europe as a whole.[132] It is O'Sullivan's view that early conservative political principles were
essentially related to the Christian religion:

> The initial reaction of conservatives in every major European country to the French
> Revolution was dominated by concern for something which has long since ceased to
> be the focal point of Western political thought. This was the civilization of
> "Christendom". Christendom was what conservatives considered to be principally
> threatened by the desire of the French Revolutionaries to spread their iconoclastic
> creed to other lands, and it was the traditional institutions of Christendom that they
> wished to defend and preserve.[133]

O'Sullivan explains that whilst this focus on conserving a Christian social order may not be
obvious in conservativism throughout Europe and the Anglosphere *today*, the early
conservatives were concerned with conserving a particular civilization, namely
'Christendom', that is, the *Kingdom of Christ*. They deemed Christian civilization to be under
threat by the revolutionaries of their age, whom O'Sullivan compares to iconoclasts. Finally,
O'Sullivan notes that conservatism did not merely seek to conserve institutions for their own

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[131] *Ibid*. 22.
[132] See Philippe Barthelet, 'The Cambridge Platonists mirrored by Joseph de Maistre' in *Joseph de
Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*, edited by Carolina Armenteros and Richard A. Lebrun
(Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2011), 67-78.
[133] O'Sullivan, *Conservatism*, 32.

sake, but rather the 'traditional institutions of Christendom'. According to O'Sullivan, then, conservatism has its origins in the defence of a Christian social order.

2.1 Response to specific points of Scruton's position on politics and religion

As has been noted, Scruton holds that the belief in an inherent connection between conservatism and Christianity arises from an error by which people mistakenly connect the 'transcendent bonds' upon which the conservative worldview is based – obligations and pieties which arise from human nature – with a *Transcendent Being*. He judges that these bonds do not in fact require such a Being. *How does Scruton think people get from 'transcendent bonds' to a Transcendent Being?* His argument seems problematic. He argues that it is from the existence of such bonds that people make the erroneous mental step to believing there is an inherent connection between conservatism and belief in a Transcendent Being, on whose existence they believe such bonds to depend. *How* people make this error, and consequently assert a connection between this basic view of obligation and an entire religious worldview, is left unclear. Scruton implies that the phenomenon is due to equivocation on 'transcendence', but this is unconvincing since the term employed to denote natural obligations is seemingly specific to Scruton. In any case, Scruton thinks that many people make such a mental leap, and that it might be expedient for conservatism that they do. It seems, therefore, that conservatism benefits from its adherents widely making erroneous judgements. This seems to play into the hand of those who agree with John Stuart Mill's famous remark that 'although it is not true that all conservatives are stupid people, it is true that most stupid people are conservatives.'

Is the content of religion only illusory? Scruton moves from what he thinks accounts for the oft-felt intuition that there is an inherent connection between conservatism and religion, to what he thinks accounts for the religious impulse itself. The psychological account he offers is important, for his conclusions in this area are connected to his understanding of religion's relationship to politics. For him, religion is not principally a body of doctrine or particular set of practices, but a 'species of emotional truth'. This view appears to give rise to a disadvantage from Scruton's perspective. As he notes, the moment religion becomes aware of itself it destroys the very phenomenon of which it seeks to give an account. Were the religious person to discover that religion refers only to an arbitrary psychological need and not an objective truth independent of himself, he would likely cease to be religious. With that, on a mass scale, not only does much of the material culture disappear which Scruton wishes to conserve (after all, it is difficult to believe that a sociological theory about

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communal emotional needs would give rise to gothic architecture or the requiem) but perhaps also the social order of the West too, which Scruton acknowledges is downstream from the Christian proclamation. Furthermore, this view of religion seems to entail an anthropology which would surprise many conservatives, namely a view of human nature as partly driven by impulses that have no intelligible end.

What are the consequences for Scruton's view of religious freedom? Scruton's view of religious freedom seems paradoxical. He holds that 'religious freedom is itself a legacy of the religion that has enjoyed precedence in the Western world.'[134] He also states that when this religion 'declines… there remains only the shell of the political order that grew from it.'[135] Scruton holds, then, that the benevolence shown to the religious dissenter in Western societies is a legacy of Christianity, and therefore is less often witnessed in parts of the world with no dominant Christian history. Nonetheless, he also believes that the secularisation of historically Christian States does not come from a cause extrinsic to Christianity, but *from* Christianity, as he holds it to have been endorsed by Jesus Christ in his teaching on the separate duties to God and Caesar (Mark 12:13-17). Yet, once secularisation of politics is achieved, the Christian religion in the private sphere wanes as a consequence. Scruton holds that Christianity's desirable social effects then begin to disappear too, leaving a fragile political order that is no longer sustained by its source.

It seems that Scruton wants the effects of the 'religion which has enjoyed precedence', whilst not allowing it any ongoing influence over how the State ought to operate. This unusual view of religious freedom and the secularisation of States seems to be a consequence of Scruton's opinion that the content of religious doctrine is akin to a 'noble lie', the good effects of which the conservative must conserve whilst recognising such effects to depend on an illusion. The view that conservatism's relationship to religion is that of an attitude that seeks to conserve effects of falsehoods or illusions, many would feel strips conservatism of any attractiveness.

Elsewhere, however, Scruton criticises the notion of *religious freedom* as something that increases social divisions.[136] Having rejected the proposed Enlightenment solution to religious conflict, namely *religious freedom*, Scruton will also not accept the traditional conservative solution, namely that of the confessional State. The latter settlement would entail religion's influence on State legislation, which Scruton rejects. Having rejected both

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[134] Scruton, *How to be a Conservative*, 139.
[135] *Ibid*. 139.
[136] Scruton, *A Political Philosophy*, 144.

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solutions, he offers no alternative: 'I have no final answer to the dilemmas that I have just exposed.'[137]

Some clarity is provided by Scruton's engagement with the question of Church-State relations. He explicitly argues in favour of an Americanist model of Church-State relations, affirming the secularisation of the State, but also 'the right to wear a cross at work, to place a cross in the classroom, to teach Christian morality in matters of sex and family life.'[138] He laments that 'all these have been questioned by secularists.'[139] His acceptance of such displays of religiosity follows from his view that the workplace, the classroom, and the family home are all extensions of the private sphere. Scruton summarises what he deems the proper conservative attitude to religion in the State:

> We regard religion as the root of communities and a consolation in the life of the individual. But we allow it only a ceremonial role in the life of the state, which is built upon purely secular principles, including the principle of religious freedom.[140]

As Scruton asserts, religion is what first binds a community, and remains the consoling framework for the individual, through which he makes sense of the joys and trials of his life. The public role religion is afforded when the community has reached its maturity as a nation State, however, is purely ceremonial, leaving the State formally secular.

Scruton holds that religion relates to the State in the same way as he argues it relates to culture. Religion *kick-starts* the State, so to speak. Thereafter, however, religion must play no further role other than that of 'a consolation in the life of the individual.' The exception he allows is that of its use in lending ceremony to State occasions for the sake of maintaining national tradition as part of the 'dignified aspect' of politics. Notwithstanding this exception, once religion has fulfilled its role of 'rooting' the national community, that it may function as a political body, religion must step back from that political realm, finding its home in the cloistered sentiments of the private individual and those with whom he privately communes.

Scruton's proposal is that of a secular State overseeing a religious society. Thomas Storck constructs an argument against proposals of this kind in his Introduction to Louis

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[137] *Ibid*. 144.
[138] Scruton, *How to be a Conservative*, 140.
[139] *Ibid*. 140.
[140] *Ibid*. 141.

Billot's *Liberalism*.[141] Storck argues that whilst the idea of a secular State may be appealing to the believer, since political indifferentism towards religion will (it is hoped) leave the religious life of the citizenry to flourish undisturbed by State interference, the actual consequences of this position do not aid religious flourishing among the nation's members. On this model, the role of the State is not to protect and promote any one religion in particular, or religious belief in general, but only *religious liberty*. The State will only interfere in the practices of private religious associations if those practices conflict with State law, such as the ceremonial use of an illegal drug, for example. As John Locke put it, in his *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 'these things are not lawful in the ordinary course of life, nor in any private house; and therefore neither are they so in the worship of God, or in any religious meeting.'[142] Locke, like Scruton, wants the State to permit any religious practice on the condition that it is a private matter and does not conflict with State law. Locke explains his position in the following way:

> If any people congregated upon account of religion should be desirous to sacrifice a calf, I deny that that ought to be prohibited by a law. Meliboeus, whose calf it is, may lawfully kill his calf at home, and burn any part of it that he thinks fit. For no injury is thereby done to anyone, no prejudice to another man's goods. And for the same reason he may kill his calf also in a religious meeting… But if peradventure such were the state of things that the interest of the commonwealth required all slaughter of beasts should be forborne for some while, in order to the increasing of the stock of cattle that had been destroyed by some extraordinary murrain, who sees not that the magistrate, in such a case, may forbid all his subjects to kill any calves for any use whatsoever? Only it is to be observed that, in this case, the law is not made about a religious, but a political matter.[143]

Here, Locke initially states that his position requires nothing beyond religious groups obeying the law of the State. Having said this, however, he advances an argument that the State, having subjugated all religious practice to its law, may prohibit any practice if it be advantageous from the perspective of secular policy. Surely, on this account, for secular

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[141] Louis Cardinal Billot, *Liberalism: A Critique of its Basic Principles and Various Forms*, translated by Msgr George Barry O'Toole and Thomas Storck (Bridgeport, Canada: Arouca Press, 2019).
[142] John Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 25 ⟨https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3ll3/locke/toleration.pdf⟩ [accessed 8 January 2020].
[143] *Ibid*. 25-26. [accessed 8 January 2020].

reasons the State may also forbid the transmission of certain teachings by religious groups. If, say, a religious group disseminated moral teachings that were at odds with those endorsed by the State in its schools, healthcare services, and publicly-funded parades, on Locke's reasoning there is no obvious reason why the State could (or should) not use coercion to prevent such moral instruction by the religious group. That the secular State purports to permit any belief or practice is of little significance if it can legitimately (by its own lights) quash such belief or practice for secular purposes at any moment. One can easily envisage, on such a model, how religious practices and teachings would have to increasingly conform to the secular criteria of the State, 'thus it is society, as much as the political order, that is rendered secular.'[144] The point here is not one for or against such societal secularisation, but to highlight that the secularisation of politics does not necessarily leave the religious life of private individuals and associations undisturbed, as Scruton envisages.

Is national identity another 'noble lie'? Scruton does not only seem to see religious doctrines as 'noble lies', but much of what can be called the 'national story'. Scruton holds that the religious impulse must have some expression in the private sphere and be afforded a public ceremonial role, but it cannot be the unifying principle presupposed by legal citizenship. That, according to Scruton, is the role of national loyalty. Such loyalty, however, finds much of its focus in national stories. Again, Scruton suggests these stories are fantasies with good effects, untruths which he groups together with the doctrines of religion.[145] This seems to undermine his own position. If two obvious options for a unifying principle, *presupposed* by citizenship, are national loyalty or religious conviction, and Scruton is arguing for national loyalty, it seems disadvantageous to characterise its focus as myths and fantasies. Perhaps this treatment of national identity is a mechanism by which to avoid national loyalty degenerating into nationalism. It is not clear why Scruton advances the position he does. In any case, again, this may have the effect of making conservatism unattractive in the face of competing approaches to culture, society, and politics.

Scruton has much to say about the need for nation States to legislate in a way that is independent from religious law. But the question remains: when a law of the State is instituted, what accounts for its authority beside the State which authored it? Furthermore, what bestows upon it the character of an imperative? If State law is to be distinguished from some political manifestation of arbitrary power, not only does it seem that State law must

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[144] Thomas Storck, in Billot, *Liberalism*, xxxi.
[145] Scruton, *How to be a Conservative*, 37.

derive its authority from a higher, unchanging law, but presumably it only has the weight of a *moral* imperative if it can be demonstrated to be so derived.[146] If the law of the State is derivative of an eternal law, it is plausible that the knowledge of this latter law is connected to the religious worldview.

2.1.1   The relationship between cult, culture, and civilization

The points made by O'Sullivan indicate that the conservatives were concerned not so much with the preservation of a particular political regime, but rather of a particular kind of society, way of life, values, and ultimately with a *culture*. Indeed, in the conservative view, the constitution of a State is merely the political reflection of the culture and history of the land and its people. This explains the conservative preference for unwritten constitutions, with the nation's constitution (shared way of life) being understood to arise out of the pre-existing culture of the land, not as *a priori* formulae issued for a people irrespective of their pre-existing manifold customs and agreements.[147] Conservatives have tended to see constitution and culture as being inextricably connected to *cultus*. Certain modern conservatives have insisted on this point, one of whom is Kirk:

> Culture can be renewed only if the cult is renewed; and faith in divine power cannot be summoned up merely when that is found expedient. Faith no longer works wonders among us: one has but to glance at the typical church built nowadays, ugly and shoddy, to discern how architecture no longer is nurtured by the religious imagination. It is so in nearly all other works of twentieth-century civilization: the modern mind has been secularised so thoroughly that "culture" is assumed by most people to have no connection with the love of God.[148]

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[146] Personal note: I raised this point in conversation with Scruton, asking him if English common law necessarily presupposed transcendent natural law, and by extension divine eternal law, to which he responded (to my surprise): 'I think it must.'

[147] Thus, Maistre writes: 'Any political constitution whatever… has not been made a priori. Never have statesmen gathered together and said: *let us create three powers, balance them in such and such a manner*, and so on: no one thought this. The constitution is the work of circumstances, and the number of these circumstances is infinite. Roman, ecclesiastic, and feudal law, Saxon, Norman and Danish customs, every kind of class privilege, prejudice and ambition, wars, revolts, revolutions, conquests and crusades, all the virtues, vices, sciences, errors and passions; all these elements, acting together and forming by their intermixture and interaction endlessly multiplying combinations, have finally produced after many centuries the most complex unity and the most delicate equilibrium of political forces the world has ever known.' Maistre, 'Essay on the Generative Principle of Political Constitutions' in *The Generative Principle*, 152.

[148] Kirk, 'Civilization without Religion?' in *The Essential Russell Kirk*, 112.

For Kirk, the culture of a land is at every moment reliant upon the vibrancy of the religious observance: culture is to cult what music is to the violinist; if the violinist stops playing, the music stops. Kirk states that pointing out this connection is insufficient, for people cannot simply become religious on the grounds that it is expedient for the nation, rather they must actually *believe*. He remarks that the absence of religious belief in modern societies has caused material culture to become 'ugly and shoddy'. For Kirk, a successful culture is bound up with a society that has a 'love of God.'

Kirk argues that the concepts of culture and civilization are deeply connected, and that these arise from the *cult* of the people:

> What ails modern civilization? Fundamentally, our society's affliction is the decay of religious belief. If culture is to survive and flourish, it must not be severed from the religious vision out of which it arose. The high necessity of reflective men and women, then, is to labour for the restoration of religious teachings as a credible body of doctrine.[149]

Kirk sees civilization to be a flourishing, or even *flowering*, of a particular culture. Thus, the great European, Middle Eastern, Indian, or Chinese civilizations were the cultures of those very peoples arriving at great achievements in practical techniques, the arts, the humane disciplines, and so on. These cultures were identified by the cult whose doctrines (and practices) were believed to be expressive of the end for which all other efforts were made. Thus, we speak of Christian, Islamic, Hindu, and Confucian civilization, among others. Kirk does not have a positive view of contemporary Western society; what he sees to be its cultural impoverishment is, in his view, directly related to the process of secularisation it has undergone. He suggests that great apologists for 'religious teachings as a credible body of doctrine' are needed.

The cities of the ancient world were always built around temples. The temple was the icon of unity for the people, and that unity came from the cult.[150] This was the case, albeit with different political arrangements, not only for the Greeks, Romans, and Israelites, but

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[149] *Ibid*. 114.
[150] Thus, Herodotus observed that, besides sharing a language, the Greeks were unified only by their worship of the same gods.

also for the Hindus, Buddhists, and even the Central and South American Amerindians with their temples of sacrifice.

Private religion was an accepted notion in Rome, but it was continuous with the State cult. Thus, the Romans distinguished between the hearth gods of the family home, among whom were admired ancestors, and the strong gods of the polity.[151] Christianity was generally supportive of the *Pax Romana*, its adherents having been charged by the leading Apostle to 'honour the emperor' (1 Peter 2:17). Christianity presented a problem, however, in that it could only be practiced privately in such a way as to be discontinuous with the public cult, recognising none of the latter's gods. Furthermore, Christianity's private status was seemingly only accepted by Christians as a mere temporary measure; it seems they had no intention of settling for this status, believing they had a divine mandate to make Christianity the public cult of all nations (Matthew 28:19).

The notion of the political arena being secular or neutral, and *all* religion being private, is an idea unique to modernity.[152] Certain difficulties of establishing a totally unreligious State manifested themselves immediately after the French Revolution had triumphed and the Christian religion of France had been forcibly expelled from the public square, with the eviction or execution of monks, friars and nuns, and the State seizure of ecclesiastical buildings. This process of secularisation had barely been completed before there were religious processions and liturgies throughout France, many of which were held in secularised church buildings, in honour of the *goddess of reason*. Abstractions such as *liberté, égalité,* and *fraternité* were seemingly felt to be insufficient for unifying the French people. Rather, they required a 'cult of reason', accompanied by all the things proper to a public cult. Public religion was vanquished only to be replaced with a new public religion.

It may be argued that it was impossible to quickly secularise a people so conditioned by religion, and therefore an intermediary 'religion of reason' was necessary to transition from an age of religious superstition (as the *philosophes* saw it) to one of reason. Nearly two and a half centuries later, however, it is not obvious that any country has truly established itself as a secular or religiously neutral State. Some have questioned whether the modern liberal democratic State has become truly secular. It has been accused of having its own cult,

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[151] See Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City: A Study of the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome*, translated by Willard Small ([n.p.] Pantianos Classics, 2019), 15-30, 87-121.
[152] For an interesting presentation of the religiosity of human societies see Christopher Dawson's essays 'Religion and the Origins of Civilization' and 'The Rise of the World Religions' in Christopher Dawson, *Progress and Religion: An Historical Enquiry* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 81-119.

and of being as coercive in favour of this public cult as any State with an established religion.[153] Both the confessional State and the liberal State could be said to operate in such a way as to relegate to the private sphere dissenting opinions, restrict publicly-expressed positions that conflict with the public cultus, and support quasi-liturgical events and processions that the nation's members are expected to celebrate.[154] It is possible that the modern liberal State is seeing the rise of a public religion, with its own liturgical year, festivals, sacred doctrines, anathemas, moral prescriptions, and its own concept of the purpose of human life, both private and public.[155] Other secular alternatives to liberalism have not, it seems, fared better at realising a truly secular and neutral State, obvious examples being Nazism and Communism.[156]

2.1.2   Summary

According to O'Sullivan, eighteenth-century conservatives were not only defending a Platonic-Christian vision of the world based upon a participation-emanation theory of creation's relation to the Divine Nature, but a view of politics based upon the establishment of a Christian social order. The relationship between this Platonic ontology and their Christian political endeavours is found in the idea of Christendom as a temporal reflection of the heavenly realm.

The diagnoses of Quinton and O'Sullivan are very different, but what can be inferred from both is that conservatism is not concerned with the implementation of a particular political regime. Conservatism's focus is a way of life, custom, values, accountability, and ultimately with established cultures. Culture, as the word's etymology indicates, is bound up with the idea of cult, or religion, and conservatives have routinely felt that the absence of

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[153] For an exposition of the view that liberalism has a religion, see Adrian Vermeule, *All Human Conflict is Ultimately Religious* ⟨https://churchlifejournal.nd.edu/articles/all-human-conflict-is-ultimately-theological/⟩ [accessed 2 September 2019].

[154] One example of this may be *Gay Pride*, whose 'pride parades' receive government funding in many Western countries, and for which in recent times months of national celebration have been instituted. An interesting exploration of the view that liberal secularism and its moral worldview *is* a religion can be found in the following article: Rod Dreher, *Social Justice: Our New Civil Religion* ⟨https://theamericanconservative.com/dreher/lgbt-pride-social-justice-our-new-civil-religion/⟩ [accessed 1 August 2019].

[155] This idea of a certain religiosity and coerciveness in liberalism is well described in Scruton, *Gentle Regrets*, 230-233.

[156] Christopher Dawson, in his essay 'The Secularisation of Western Culture and the Rise of the Religion of Progress', argues that the rise of the competing twentieth-century ideologies did not mark a process of rendering the Western world irreligious, but rather of replacing the old religion with new ones, which he sees as divisions of the 'religion of progress.' See Dawson, *Progress and Religion*, 140-157.

religion causes culture to immediately erode, as Kirk argues. Civilization, in turn, is thought by conservatives to be the *flowering* of a religious culture, with religion being the unifying principle for any people or nation. Indeed, it remains unclear whether such a thing as a secular State exists or has ever existed; much suggests that in the West today we have a public religion, what Dawson has characterised as a 'religion of progress'.

2.2   Reconstruction of the role of religion in the two principal early conservative philosophers: Burke and Maistre

Before embarking on the task of reconstructing the views of Burke and Maistre, inasmuch as they pertain to the question of politically established religion, something should be said about why I focus on them to the exclusion of others. One answer is that conservatism is – it is widely agreed – a product of the eighteenth-century, specifically emerging as a response to the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Why not, then, choose Vico, Herder, Kant, Hegel, Hume, or even Coleridge, all of whom have been claimed by various conservatives, and were responding to, and engaging with, the Enlightenment and its effects in various ways?

I have three reasons for choosing only Burke and Maistre. First, they are canonical; that is, works on the origins of conservatism look to these two thinkers.[157] Second, they were politically involved in a direct way as statesmen throughout their lives. In turn, their work reflects an urgent attempt to bring conservative principles into practical application in the face of that to which they objected. This second point leads to the third, namely that they were overtly and unambiguously conscious of opposing the Enlightenment, and the French Revolution which they deemed to be its product. If one looks for all three of these traits among the philosophers at conservatism's genesis, one finds oneself coming back to these two thinkers. There were of course other important conservative thinkers during the same period, among whom were Chateaubriand, Louis de Bonald, and the later Juan Donoso Cortés, all of whom were politically involved, counter-Enlightenment figures. I do not ignore their contributions; nonetheless, it is widely agreed that 'the anti-Revolutionary movement of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries found its greatest intellectual

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[157] See Darrin M. McMahon, *The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 9; Anthony O'Hear, *After Progress* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999), 38-47; Scruton, *Conservatism: Ideas in Profile*, 39-77; Graeme Garrard, *Counter-Enlightenments: From the eighteenth century to the present* (London: Routledge, 2006), 37-54; Schuettinger, *The Conservative Tradition*; O'Sullivan, *Conservatism*.

representatives in the brilliant Joseph de Maistre and Edmund Burke', and therefore I focus on these two figures.[158]

2.2.1   Edmund Burke (1729-1797)

An Irish-born Whig parliamentarian, philosopher of politics and aesthetics, an historian and student of law, Burke was known for his brilliant oratory, and made a name for himself seeking the impeachment of Warren Hastings from the East India Company, promoting Catholic emancipation, and launching a powerful intellectual assault on the French Revolution. A prolific writer, Burke attacked the deism and Enlightenment themes of Tory leader Viscount Bolingbroke in *A Vindication of Natural Society*. He wrote on aesthetics, advancing a Platonic and theocentric account of beauty, with especial sensitivity to our interior response to it, in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. He wrote, in *An Abridgement of English History*, about the social and political constitution of England from an historical perspective, arguing that English civil liberties arose from an integration of democratic, aristocratic, and royal powers under the religious instruction of the Church. In his *Tracts on the Popery Laws*, Burke defended the rights of Irish Catholics against what he deemed to be ongoing discrimination.

Against the French Revolution, Burke wrote his most famous work, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, in which he condemned the *philosophes*, their ideas, the Revolution, and predicted the coming Terror with remarkable foresight. When this work was denounced by Whig leader Charles James Fox, Burke wrote *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*, defending his view of the Revolution as well as his place in the Whig party. So constant was Burke in his condemnation of revolutionary France that when Prime Minister William Pitt sought to establish a peace agreement between Great Britain and the new French Republic, Burke published his four essays, *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, against any such pact. Burke wrote many other works and hundreds of letters and speeches. Besides his parliamentary career, Burke was a committed family man and an important cultural figure.[159]

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[158] Bradley J. Birzer, *Newman & Dawson Against Liberalism* ⟨https://theimaginativeconservative.org/2017/06/john-henry-newman-christopher-dawson-liberalism-bradley-birzer.html⟩ [accessed 6 January 2021].

[159] Burke co-founded The Club with Samuel Johnson, an elite dining club for discussing politics and culture, among whose members (during Burke's lifetime) were biographer James Boswell, painter Joshua Reynolds, literary figure Oliver Goldsmith, botanist Joseph Banks, historian David Gibbon, and exiled Corsican statesman Pasquale Paoli, as well as other distinguished figures. The Club, with a male-only membership, continued after Burke's lifetime, with most of the leading British political

There are four aspects of Burke's thought which are of particular importance for my purpose, which is the presentation of Burke position on the relationship between politics and religion. These four aspects are as follows: his teleological ontology, his conception of law, his religious anthropology, and his understanding of the Church and its relation to the State.

2.2.1.1 Burke's teleological worldview

Burke holds that 'religion is the basis of civil society.'[160] This is because Burke believes that society is purposive, that is, it possesses a *telos*, an end. As Samuel Burgess puts it, Burke advances 'a teleological account of both man and the state, which is to say that he saw them as created by God for specific ends.'[161] Perhaps his most oft-quoted expression is his declaration that society is a partnership 'between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born.' On looking at the passage in which he makes this declaration it is seen that this is a discourse on the *end* or purpose of society:

> [Society is] a partnership in every virtue and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born. Each contract of each particular state is but a clause in the great primeval contract of eternal society, linking the lower with the higher natures, connecting the visible and invisible world, according to a fixed compact sanctioned by the inviolable oath which holds all physical and all moral natures, each in their appointed place.[162]

Human nature, Burke explains, is a political and a religious nature. In this excerpt above, Burke states that what we call society is the highest possible partnership, specifically because the *purposes* of this partnership require it to be a partnership *through time*, not only of those currently living but a single partnership spanning many generations. Only such a partnership will allow a society to flourish, for a politically ordered society takes much time to grow from embryonic condition to maturity. For Burke, it does not belong to society to totally self-

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class belonging to it throughout the nineteenth-century. The Club is believed to have survived until the late 1960s.
[160] Burke, *Reflections*, 186.
[161] Samuel Burgess, *Edmund Burke's Battle with Liberalism* (London: Wilberforce Publications, 2017), 23.
[162] Burke, *Reflections*, 194-195.

determine, *choosing* an end as if it is an artefact, an object of human contrivance with an *accidental form*. Rather, according to Burke, society is something natural with an *intrinsic* end. Its purpose is already determined by 'the great primeval contract of eternal society,' as Burke puts it. It is by being in his 'appointed place', according to Burke, that man is linked to the 'invisible world'. As long as man pursues the *end* of his nature – a social nature – he is situated properly in the divine scheme of things, and by this he flourishes. Certainly, Burke acknowledges that there are all sorts of mundane and more immediate ends for which a polity exists, but as a *moral whole* it exists ultimately for the flourishing of its members according to their nature, for nature has provided man with no greater or more expansive society.

Out of the *purposiveness* of political society comes Burke's 'providential politics': the State is purposive, for it is *provided* for an end. Joseph L. Pappin observes that 'providential politics' is a way of framing political life in such a way as to recognise 'the role of divine purpose in history, which is manifested in the telic nature of man and society.'[163] For Burke, providence and teleology are deeply connected, as he explains in a letter in 1795:

> If the Creator never can be absent from the minutest as no more than from the greatest of his Works. If it be true, that he must see them in every state of their existence with the Eye of the same Reason and design with which he first made them – if the whole scale of Nature is subservient to a moral End, then it is most sure that as no sparrow falls to the ground without a purpose so no being is preserved in its vital energies but for some purpose too.[164]

This view, that a Creator exists on whom the world depends at every moment, who makes the world inherently 'subservient to a moral End' and imbues it with purpose and meaning, is a view that Burke transposes into his political thought. God wills and authors the political society, because without it 'man could not by any possibility arrive at the perfection of which his nature is capable, nor even make a remote and faint approach to it.'[165] According to Burke, then, God has willed political life for man's perfection in virtue, *and* has 'willed its connection with the source and original archetype of all perfection,' namely Himself.[166]

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[163] Joseph L. Pappin, *The Metaphysics of Edmund Burke* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1993), 139.
[164] *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, edited by Thomas W. Copeland, 10 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958-78), vol. VIII, 364.
[165] Burke, *Reflections*, 196.
[166] *Ibid*. 196.

Burke's general position is deeply anti-rationalist. According to Michael Oakeshott, rationalism prioritises abstract, technical knowledge over practical, experientially acquired knowledge (and consequently concepts over existent things). Oakeshott argues that rationalism developed as a mental disposition, and then later as an approach to politics, in part due to decline in belief in divine providence:

> [Rationalism] is certainly closely allied with a decline in the belief in Providence: a beneficent and infallible technique replaced a beneficent and infallible God; and where Providence was not available to correct the mistakes of men it was all the more necessary to prevent such mistakes.[167]

As Oakeshott explains, as belief in divine providence diminished, this diminishment necessitated a widespread change in mentality, and people began to conceive of themselves as determining the development of political life, the constitution, the arrangements of peoples, as well as their customs and mores and so forth.[168] The assumption was established that there was no hand besides the human hand that was guiding such affairs. According to Oakeshott's analysis, Political *technique*, that is, the seeking to apply *a priori* universal and abstract principles, became paramount. In turn, human communities were assumed to be more like machines requiring the correct manual than organic, historically conditioned and unique entities.

Against the rationalist perspective, Burke advanced an organic, theocentric, and providential perspective. One might suggest that an organic view of society could be maintained, with the primary role 'gardener' simply moving from God to human government, thus achieving an atheistic (or deistic) political *organicism*. For the Burkean conservative, however, an existent human society is simply too complex for any political programme to fully grasp, therefore he holds that rationalist political approaches will inevitably try to account for such a society by reducing its arrangement and function to abstract principles that *are* graspable. By so doing, society itself is reduced to an abstraction which then fails to account for the thing it was meant to explain.

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[167] Michael Oakeshott, 'Rationalism in Politics' in *Rationalism in Politics and other essays* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1991), 23.
[168] Oakeshott argues that the decline of belief in divine providence, and its corollary, the rise of deism and atheism, is downstream from the anti-metaphysical worldview postulated by Francis Bacon. See *Ibid*. 17-25.

Burke's thought presupposed a view of reason at odds with the increasingly rationalist conception of reason popular in his age. Oakeshott comments on this modern conception of reason:

> One important aspect of the history of the emergence of Rationalism is the changing connotation of the word 'reason'. The 'reason' to which the Rationalist appeals is not, for example, the Reason of Hooker, which belongs still to the tradition of Stoicism and of Aquinas. It is a faculty of calculation by which men conclude one thing from another and discover fit means of attaining given ends not themselves subject to the criticism of reason, a faculty by which a world believed to be a machine could be disclosed.[169]

Burke subscribed to the older view of reason, to which Oakeshott refers, namely that of Cicero, Aquinas, and Hooker. The rationalist concept of reason, which Oakeshott calls the 'sovereignty of technique', prioritised theoretical knowledge of abstract principles, seeking their universal application.[170] Burke's view of reason, however, prioritised the mind's capacity to render the realities of experience intelligible. Reason was primarily understood by Burke to be *practical reason*, what Aristotle called 'wisdom', whose purpose was to prudentially navigate through life's difficulties in order to reach a state of flourishing.[171]

Burgess observes that, for Burke, the role of the statesman was that of understanding 'the moral course of action in particular circumstances without speculating upon utopian schemes to recast society at large.'[172] For this reason, Burke considers prudence to be the key to grasping the true craft of statesmanship, and 'the first in rank of the virtues political and moral, but she is the director, the regulator, the standard of them all.'[173] Burgess explains that Burke saw 'prudence' to be 'the bridge between the natural moral law and the contingent set of circumstances in which any human society exists.'[174] What follows from this prioritising

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[169] *Ibid*. 22, n. 24.
[170] *Ibid*. 23.
[171] For in-depth analyses of the difference between Burke's prudential approach and the approach of Enlightenment *natural rights*, see Peter J. Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law* (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1958), 125-159; Burgess, *Edmund Burke's Battle*, 57-68.
[172] Burgess, *Edmund Burke's Battle*, 25.
[173] Edmund Burke, *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*, 19 ⟨https://archive.org/details/appealfromnewtoo00burkiala/page/18/mode/2up/search/political+and+moral⟩ [accessed 3 March 2020].
[174] Burgess, *Edmund Burke's Battle*, 25.

of prudence is that, for Burke, politics is less about having the right *formula* for government, and more about having the right sort of people *in* government. For Burke, that means cultivated and virtuous people. In this sense, Burkean conservatism is truly *attitudinal*.

Burke's belief in an unchangeable moral law, and in our ability to reason abstractly about its formal content, was coupled with an acute awareness of the existential, contingent and time-conditioned character of lived realities:

> I do not vilify theory and speculation – no, because that would be to vilify reason itself… No, whenever I speak against theory, I mean always a weak, erroneous, fallacious, unfounded, or imperfect theory; and one of the ways of discovering that it is a false theory is by comparing it with practice. This is the true touchstone of all theories, which regard man and the affairs of men – does it suit his nature in general? Do it suit his nature as modified by his habits?[175]

As seen from this passage, it was not reason which Burke treated with suspicion, but what he considered a truncated view of reason propounded in his age. As Burgess notes, for Burke reason was much broader, leading him to see 'prudence, informed by culture, education and the natural moral law… as the guiding light of the statesman.'[176] Francis Canavan links this requirement for personal cultivation and the development of prudence to Burke's theocentric view of the State. According to Canavan, Burke conceives of the political order as a 'joint product of God and man in which the order of society – derived from and reflecting the divinely-ordained order of the universe – was produced, maintained and improved by the constant exercise of man's political reason.'[177] Peter J. Stanlis, quoting Burke, further explains this idea:

> Within history, Burke maintained, "the rules of prudence… are formed upon the known march of the ordinary province of God"; prudence is the spirit of God's moral law fulfilling itself throughout history. Not only through divine revelation, but also through prudence in history and civil society as perceived by natural right reason, God

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[175] Edmund Burke, *The Speeches of the Rt. Hon. Edmund Burke* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1816), III, 48.
[176] Burgess, *Edmund Burke's Battle*, 25.
[177] Francis Canavan, 'Edmund Burke's Conception of the Role of Reason in Politics' in *Edmund Burke*, edited by Iain Hampsher-Monk (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 34.

has made clear the whole duty of man toward man. In short, prudence is God's "divine tactic" fulfilled in man's moral and political tact.[178]

As Stanlis explains, the Burkean idea here is that God, being the ultimate cause of creation (as it is contingent upon Him at every given moment), is necessarily also the ultimate cause of all *free* acts by creatures. Burke's view of a divine purpose does not exclude the metaphysical freedom of man, and he acknowledges that man may be *permitted* by God to act in a way contrary to that which has been ordained by divine providence. It is man's capacity for straying from (to paraphrase Canavan) a *shared project with God* that, in the Burkean schema, caution, slow deliberation, and a desire to know God's will insofar as it can be known, are all central to his *providential politics*.

For Burke, the free acts of human beings, insofar as they conform to 'God's moral law', are the fullest realisation of the divine order in history. For this reason, Stanlis detects a subterranean mystical doctrine in Burke's highly practical political thought:

> Through the Natural Law and prudence Burke combined his eloquent religious mysticism and stark concrete practicality. Nature and prudence gave Burke his conviction that society is of divine institution but that its various forms, and those who administer them, originate from the people. As a normative code of ethics, the Natural Law was the basis of his conservatism; it taught him that man and society were organically immortal, and were bound through precedents and conventions beyond history to God.[179]

As Stanlis explain, Burke believes in an unchangeable moral law and a corresponding imperative to prudentially relate to, and realise, its content. This perennial law Burke sees to be rooted an eternal and absolute Reality. Prudence is the disposition required by man for bringing his nature into harmony with the law of God's own Nature. For this reason, Stanlis argues that the natural law, which he asserts forms the 'basis' of Burke's conservatism, entails that a kind of legal mysticism undergirds his political thought. Burke's view of reason, then, is bound up with his theocentrism. For him, by losing a sense of the imminence of God's providential care, we are led to abandon an organic view of society. The reason for this

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[178] Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law*, 118-119.
[179] *Ibid*. 123.

is that we cease to trust in the guidance of the divine hand or seek the proper prudential response to God's providence operative in history. The temptation, then, in the Burkean analysis, is to opt for a mechanistic view in which man alone is seen to rule. Man alone is seen to determine the future, with success depend on establishing the right principles not for *this* or *that* people, but abstract principles for the abstraction of 'humanity'. Burke's alternative: 'We ought to elevate our minds to the greatness of that trust to which the order of Providence has called us.'[180]

Burke's view of politics relies on his conception of God's providential care for nations. He does not believe that the State is an institution of human contrivance, with which the members of the citizenry have a contractual relationship as individuals. Rather, Burke holds that the State has been established by God for an end which cannot be achieved without it. The State, according to Burke, is of divine origin. For him, political life is proper to human nature and the end for which it exists is to help the its members to be good people.

In one sense, for Burke, human nature is fixed, this is in its *essential* aspect, as in when Burke refers to 'the Nature of man, which is always the same.'[181] On the other hand, he affirms the dynamism of human nature, as Pappin explains:

> There is no dimension of process on the level of the essential nature of human beings. But the dynamic, developmental aspect of reality is accommodated by man's social nature, or second nature. This social nature permits social differentiation, accounting for distinction of peoples through custom, clime and habit. Through the confluence of a variety of forces impinging on him, together with the choices he makes, the individual becomes something distinct, something unique, while retaining his essential humanity. The entire social order is created and exists for the purpose of man's perfecting of his being, that it, for the dignity of man.[182]

In the passage, Pappin distinguishes between what is essential to human nature, and what is changeable. What is essential cannot be changed without human nature ceasing to be what it is. There are, however, many characteristics that can change, and these play an important role in distinguishing nations. Such differences among peoples, according to Pappin's interpretation of Burke, have developed for the perfecting of those peoples, that is, for

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[180] Burke, *The Speeches*, I, 337.
[181] Quoted in Pappin, *The Metaphysics of Edmund Burke*, 115.
[182] *Ibid*. 115-116.

realising their 'dignity'. Pappin explains that, for Burke, this perfecting of human nature in the context if its particularisation specifically entails connecting 'the human understanding and affections to the divine.'[183] Supplementing this view of the organic and dynamic diversifying of communities for human perfection, however, is Burke's belief that national customs and habits are insufficient for the perfecting of peoples in the acquisition of virtue. For him, humans are not simply *social*, they are *political*, and therefore seek to order and govern their communities with a view to attaining an end. It is for this end that, according to Burke, God established the State:

> Without… civil society man could not by any possibility arrive at the perfection of which his nature is capable, nor even make a remote and faint approach to it… [God] who gave our nature to be perfected by our virtue, willed also the necessary means of its perfection. He willed therefore the State.[184]

There are three points that Burke makes here. First, without a human community man cannot acquire the virtue he requires to perfect himself in accordance with his nature. Second, God intends to bring man to virtuous flourishing, and therefore He provides the means. Third, the means provided are found in the State.

For Burke, it is because the State has the duty, bestowed upon it by God, to bring its members to virtuous flourishing that not only must its laws be derived from, or at least not in contradiction to, the perennial law of God, but insofar as its laws are in such accord they are binding on all under their rule. The purpose of both law and custom, for Burke, is the same as that of the State itself: to make people good. The attack on law and custom in the French Revolution marked for Burke a revolt against the pursuit of virtue itself, and for this reason Stanlis highlights that Burke deemed the Revolution nothing less than satanic:

> To Burke nothing was stronger proof of individual depravity than an unwillingness or inability to live under the moral law as that law was variously embodied in man's inherited institutions. There was something satanic in… the leaders of the French Revolution, who sought to rid society of its economic and social evils by destroying

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[183] *Ibid*. 116.
[184] Burke, *Reflections*, 196.

the solid work of generations, and who frequently objected to all civil and religious authority on principle.[185]

As Stanlis notes, for Burke, law, custom, and the inherited institutions in which they are realised, are essential for human flourishing in the acquisition of virtue and mark the particularisation of the natural law for a particular people. The overthrowing of a settled constitution and its institutions, in the Burkean analysis, is nothing other than attempting emancipation from the moral law. Burke believes that, through practical wisdom, which is a socially acquired wisdom, man can conform himself to the perennial law of God. This process ultimately procures participation in God's very own Divine Nature. This brings us more specifically to Burke's mystical view of law.

2.2.1.2 Law in the thought of Burke

Burgess notes that when Burke, in 1757, embarked upon *An Abridgment of English History*, he showed himself to be 'steeped in the common law' and 'deeply interested in its sources.'[186] Burgess observes that English common law[187] largely grew out of 'Christian natural law thinking.'[188] Certainly, English common law authorities have linked the law to the legal thought of Aquinas, as in the case of the writings of Sir John Fortescue.[189] On this connection, Burges writes the following:

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[185] Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law*, 190-191.

[186] Burgess, *Edmund Burke's Battle*, 21.

[187] As outlined by Raymond Wacks in his introduction to *Law*, as a body of law, common law is derived from judicial judgements in courts and tribunals. Its defining characteristic is its focus on *precedent* to settle disagreements over legal interpretation, looking at past comparable cases and studying the decisions of courts in those examples. Cases without obvious precedent are resolved by argumentation, the posing of opinions supported by reasons. Common law, in turn, is *unwritten law*. It is not learned by the memorising of codes and canons, but by the study of cases.

Two principles arise from the defining characteristic of *precedent*. First, common law is *tradition-based*, taking seriously the authority of judicial predecessors and treating their judgments as 'living' principles to be applied today. Second, common law is *particular*, its focus being history and legal development, rather than abstract rights. Both of these principles, as well as its uncodified, unwritten form, make it appealing to conservatives.

Prior to the emergence of legal positivism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, common law was widely understood to rest on *natural law*. Still today, the power of the court is not understood as arbitrary, but a servant of objective justice, the imperatives of which it must *discover*. The court's judgements are considered to arise out of a *process of discovery*, by which the court *finds* the right judgement. For more information see Raymond Wacks, *Law: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 8-13.

[188] Burgess, *Edmund Burke's Battle*, 20.

[189] See Sir John Fortescue, *On the Laws and Governance of England*, edited by Shelley Lockwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

When we look at the leading thinkers in the tradition, with whom Burke was familiar, we see that they believed the natural law to be critical in informing healthy laws and customs. For these thinkers, the immemorial law of the land is conceptually conjoined to what is essentially a Thomistic understanding of the natural law.[190]

Burgess argues that Burke's understanding of law was downstream from the Thomistic view, and that this was not uncommon, as 'a broadly Thomistic vision of man and society was incorporated into the basic presuppositions of the common law tradition which passed into the eighteenth-century.'[191]

According to Burgess, Burke was working within a broad classical tradition, at least in his studies of law and politics:

In the English common law tradition Burke found a rich heritage of medieval Christian writings on natural law which were consistently related to political and legal issues. It was this common law tradition more than any other that informed Burke's political opinions and provided him with a chronicle of the nation's character.[192]

Burgess notes that Burke researched deeply into the sources of English law, policy, and the nation's constitution, which helped to develop his own approach to political life, one shaped by medieval thought. Burgess is not the only Burkean scholar to take this view. Quinton observes that all prominent eighteenth-century thinkers appeal to some conception of 'natural law', including Locke, Montesquieu, and Rousseau. According to Quinton, the ways such thinkers use this term, however, does not correspond to Burke's use, with his approach standing 'in pronounced contrast to the emphasis on the natural rights of man of Locke and the Enlightenment.'[193] In Quinton's view, 'the version of natural law theory to which Burke… subscribe[s] is an ancient and traditional one' and we can only understand Burke's position if we situate it in the tradition 'of Aristotle and Cicero… Aquinas, Bracton, and Hooker.'[194]

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[190] Burgess, *Edmund Burke's Battle*, 21.
[191] *Ibid*. 21.
[192] *Ibid*. 21.
[193] Quinton, *The Politics of Imperfection*, 65.
[194] *Ibid*. 65.

Pappin, too, argues that Burke's conception of natural law is not that of Hobbes, Locke, or the *philosophes*. Burke does not think of natural rights as *a priori* principles brought to the table of a contractual agreement with the State's power for certain benefits returned. Burke sees State law as a particularised application of the law of human nature itself, adherence to which procures flourishing. For Burke, whilst this application is historically conditioned and particular, it is nonetheless a human participation in an eternal law, which is ultimately the law of God's own Nature, a God whose Nature has determined the existence of all created things, that they may in part reflect His goodness.[195] In turn, law is the essential component of the theocentric society Burke seeks to defend and conserve. Indeed, law and custom (or, to use his word, 'prejudice') are two vital components in Burke's "providential politics", whose purpose is to lead us to God.

The conception of natural law within which Burke develops his arguments and objections is well summarised by Stanlis:

> Until the time of Hobbes, the classical and Scholastic conceptions of Natural Law were in agreement upon the following basic principles: Natural Law was an emanation of God's reason and will, revealed to all mankind. Since fundamental moral laws were self-evident, all normal men were capable through unaided "right reason" of perceiving the differences between moral right and wrong. The Natural Law was an eternal, unchangeable, and universal ethical norm or standard, whose validity was independent of man's will; therefore, at all times, in all circumstances and everywhere it bound all individuals, races, nations, and governments. True happiness for man consisted in living according to the Natural Law. Whereas Natural Law came from God and bound all men, various positive laws and customs were the product of man's reason and will and applied only to members of particular political communities. This was the distinction between Natural Law and civil laws. Finally, no positive law or social convention was morally valid if it violated the Natural Law; moral sovereignty and justice, therefore, were intrinsic, and not the product of power exercised by kings or popular legislation.[196]

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[195] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 90-97.
[196] Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law*, 7.

As Stanlis explains, the natural law was classically deemed to emanate from God's Divine Nature, the basic imperatives of which could be perceived by all people capable of reason. Therefore, at the most basic level, all people were capable of distinguishing between right and wrong. This law was judged to be the same for everyone at all times, whereas the positive laws and customs by which it was lived were particular to this or that people. For this reason, no State law or social custom could rightly violate the natural law. The law of the State was ultimately the particularisation of the natural law for a particular people.

For Burke, prudence is the virtue that aligns one's life with the law of nature. Prudence, as a political virtue, enables those in government to grasp difficulties as they actually arise in *their* community.[197] Politics, for Burke, entails navigating through the nation's difficulties and challenges with prudential deliberation and careful action, often finding solutions at the most local level. Such prudential deliberation must be in relation to some criteria for human flourishing, for Burke the criteria are provided by the natural law, the basic content of which is perceivable by all. The requirements of the natural law for a community has to be worked out through the slow and organic processes of courts and local customs. Whilst the basic content of the natural law is perceivable by all, everything it entails for one's community and the flourishing of its members will take centuries of tacit negotiation, lasting institutions, collaborative effort, and a lot of *received wisdom* ('prejudice'). This is Burke's view.

For Burke, the State is 'linked' to God, and in a sense *sanctified*, not only by virtue of its divine origin, but by its ongoing participation in the eternal law of God's Nature through State law and social custom.[198] Burgess comments on the theme of the sanctification of the State through law:

> Burke, like the common lawyers before him, expressed the belief that the British state
> had emerged in accordance with the natural law, and he saw the hand of providence

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[197] This is the notion behind Burke's view of healthy nations being composed of semi-autonomous and yet interdependent 'little platoons'. He also thought that nations ought to be self-governing, even if having relatively interdependent relationships with other nations. For this reason he championed the cause for Ireland to be both part of the United Kingdom and have its own parliament. In his view, besides Ireland being a moral unity in its own right, the English parliament simply did not possess the experiential knowledge of Ireland to make the regular prudence-based decisions appropriate to good government.

[198] Indeed, in the Burkean view, custom and prejudice are important for *limiting* State law, for their existence indicates that State law is not the only way to participate in the natural law as a political community.

actively ordering the state. The state was in some sense sanctified by virtue of its congruence with the natural law.[199]

As Burgess explains, the law of the land, inasmuch as it is in accordance with the natural law, sanctifies the State. This is because participation in the natural law conforms human nature to the eternal law, that is, the wisdom of God. The shaping of the political community in the natural law, therefore, raises the State to God.

Burke holds that departure from this classical view of law leads to the exercise of arbitrary power, and this he condemns outright, specifically in religious terms. In the following passage Burke conveys his religious perspective on law:

> Law and arbitrary power are in eternal enmity. Name me a magistrate, and I will name a property; name me power, and I will name protection. It is a contradiction in terms, it is blasphemy in religion, it is wickedness in politics, to say that any man can have arbitrary power. In every patent of office the duty is included. For what else does a magistrate exist? To suppose for power is an absurdity in idea. Judges are guided and governed by the eternal laws of justice, to which we are all subject. We may bite our chains, if we will, but we shall be made to know ourselves, and be taught that man is born to be governed by law; and he that will substitute *will* in the place of it is an enemy of God. [200]

This opposition of law and arbitrary power is very important for understanding Burke. He associates arbitrary power with the French Revolution, which he also analyses in religious terms. According to Burke, if the theocentric view of law is lost, law reframed as arbitrary power prevails. For Burke, the reason the Jacobins exalted arbitrary will above accepted moral norms was because they would 'not acknowledge the existence of God as a moral governor of the world.'[201] According to Stanlis, it was his theocentric conception of law, custom, and constitution which drove Burke to so vehemently condemn the revolution:

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[199] Burgess, *Edmund Burke's Battle*, 23.
[200] Edmund Burke, 'Speech on the Impeachment of Mr Warren Hastings', quoted in Schuettinger, *The Conservative Tradition*, 47.
[201] Edmund Burke, 'Letters on a Regicide Peace' in *The Works of the Rt. Hon. Edmund Burke* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854), vol. 13, 207.

This is what is behind Burke's extensive and violent attacks on the *philosophes* and the Jacobin's "atheism by establishment". To Burke the Natural Law was so basic to the ancient inherited social order of Europe that its subversion was enough proof that the revolution was the most extensive project ever launched against all religion, law, property, and real civil order and liberty.[202]

As Stanlis explains, Burke held that the great achievement of European civilization was in part the conforming of its members to the natural law. The revolutionaries' rejection of natural law as classically understood was, in Burke's view, a rejection of the very order bestowed upon his civilization by God Himself.

That Burke holds the ultimate purpose of State law to be that of conforming its members to God's own Nature is perhaps shocking for those who interpret him as a mere pragmatist or even a utilitarian.[203] Pappin insists on the theocentism of Burke's conception of law in the following way:

Only God is above the law, not as being outside the law, but as the source of all law. The law itself is an expression of God's being. Thus, God is the supreme metaphysical principle as the cause and foundation of all other principles and of all reality... And the natural law, itself as an element of Burke's metaphysics, likewise finds its source and ground, as Burke notes, in the existence of God.[204]

As Pappin explains, for Burke, all law finds its source in, or is limited by, the Divine Nature. One might say that, for Burke, *everything* is law. It is law that connects the State with the Divine Nature. All State law, all custom, all prejudice, all mores, all ways of living, inasmuch as these are good, mark a rational participation in God's own life, the eternal law.

According to Burke, *explicit knowledge* of the dependence of State law on God is essential, as he explains in the following passage:

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[202] Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law*, 80.

[203] Examples of Burke being depicted as a pragmatist or utilitarian can be found in works by Henry Buckle, John Morley, William Lecky, Leslie Stephen, Elie Halevy and John Randall. One author, John MacCunn, has compared Burke to Jeremy Bentham, see *The Political Philosophy of Burke* (New York: Longmans Green and Company, 1913). The commentators on whom I focus, including Pappin, Stanlis, and Burgess, who interpret Burke as a classical realist and natural law thinker, have all explicitly challenged the utilitarian interpretation of Burke in their works.

[204] Pappin, *The Metaphysics of Edmund Burke*, 156-157.

We are all born in subjection, – all born equally, high and low, governors and governed, in subjection to one great, immutable, pre-existent law, prior to all our devices and prior to all our contrivances, paramount to all our ideas and all our sensations, antecedent to our very existence, by which we are knit and connected in the eternal frame of the universe, out of which we cannot stir.

This great law does not arise from our connections or compacts; on the contrary, it gives to our conventions and compacts all the force and sanction they have. It does not arise from our vain institutions. Every good gift is of God; all power is of God; and He who has given the power, and from whom alone it originates, will never suffer the exercise of it to be practiced upon any less solid foundation than the power itself. If, then, all dominion of man is the effect of the divine disposition, it is bound by the eternal laws of Him that gave it, with which no human authority can dispense, – neither he that exercises it, nor even those who are subject to it; and if they were mad enough to make an express compact that should release their magistrate from his duty, and should declare their lives, liberties, and properties dependent upon, not rules and laws, but his mere capricious will, that covenant would be void. The acceptor of it has not his authority increased, but he has his crime doubled. Therefore can it be imagined, if this be true, that He will suffer this great gift of government, the greatest, the best, that was ever given by God to mankind, to be the plaything and the sport of the feeble will of a man, who, by a blasphemous, absurd, and petulant usurpation, would place his own feeble, contemptible, ridiculous will in the place of Divine wisdom and justice?[205]

In this passage, Burke begins by advancing the case for a natural 'pre-existent' law, as a law of human nature prior to any State law. Indeed, this law precedes the existence of any given individual. He argues that natural law does not arise out of society and the State, but these arise out of this law of human nature. Given that all human dominion flows from this law, according to Burke, nothing of it can legitimately depart from this law. Any human power that fails to recognise this and legislates in such a way as to dispense with the natural law has,

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[205] Burke, 'Speech on the Impeachment of Mr Warren Hastings', quoted in Schuettinger, *The Conservative Tradition*, 46-47.

in Burke's view, rendered its authority null and void. furthermore, such a human power has committed *blasphemy* against 'Divine wisdom and justice.'[206]

Burke's theocentric view of the polity both secures reverence for the State as something divinely intended and sets limits to the State, limits set by God, preventing the State from degenerating into tyranny.[207] Burke's position is not eccentric: recourse to a superior, transcendent, law of God, by which State law may be measured, is common down the ages in the face of unjust State structures; perhaps the most famous modern example is Martin Luther King Jr's *Letter from Birmingham Jail*:

> One may well ask, "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer is found in the fact that there are two types of laws: there are just laws, and there are unjust laws. I would agree with St Augustine that "An unjust law is no law at all."
>
> Now, what is the difference between the two? How does one determine when a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law, or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St Thomas Aquinas, an unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal and natural law. [208]

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[206] References to 'blasphemy' may be startling to a modern reader. The concept of blasphemy, however, concerns both protected and forbidden ideas pertinent to religion. Obviously, ideas not expressed cannot be directly known by anyone but the bearer of such ideas, but once expressed, the accusation may be launched. Many Western countries have law and legislation concerned with both protected and forbidden ideas, that is, ideas which are forbidden by law to be expressed. Much hate crime legislation is based upon this concept. Sixteen European countries, as well as Israel, have laws forbidding denial, in part or in whole, of the mass-killings by Nazi forces called the *Holocaust*. These are ideas which are forbidden, because the history of the Holocaust and associated ideas have protected status due to the seriousness with which they are viewed.

[207] Thus, Cahill writes (somewhat romantically) about the society conservatives see themselves to be conserving: 'The whole political and social structure centred round, or rather reposed on, the principle that God was its Author; and His divine ordinance was recognised as the fundamental sanction of all valid rule and the basis of all social and civil obligations. The general acceptance of this principle secured reverence and obedience towards the government while setting strict limits to its power, and affording safeguards to the subjects against oppression. When, on the other hand, this principle is ignored, or in other words, when God is eliminated from the political organism, and His rights rejected in favour of what are termed the "Rights of Man" (as occurs in the Liberal system), the foundations of legitimate authority are taken away; there is no fixed principle to set limits to the competency and scope of the ruling powers; and no real safeguard against tyranny and abuse of authority.' Cahill, *The Framework*, 113.

[208] Martin Luther King Jr, *Letter from Birmingham Jail* ⟨https://www.csuchico.edu/iege/_assets/documents/susi-letter-from-birmingham-jail.pdf⟩ [accessed 6 March 2021].

King, like Burke, claims that only by recognising the natural law as a divine ordinance can a just law be distinguished from an unjust law of the State. This point marks a major feature of conservative thought, namely the preoccupation with limiting arbitrary power and maximising accountability.

For Burke, man is both naturally religious and political: the polity is the proper milieu for man to order his life to God. Man attains this end partly by obeying the just laws of the State. This is because these laws – inasmuch as they reflect the natural law – are means by which man comes into harmony with the law of God's own Nature, and thereby in part he achieves his religious end. What is entailed by the notion of 'conforming man to God' may not be described in full with ease, but the point on which Burke predominantly focuses is the subjugation of appetite to reason and will. The substituting of law with arbitrary power has, in Burke's view, one chief cause: greed, selfishness, appetite. Like St Paul, the Church Fathers, and the medieval scholastics before him, Burke holds that there is an inherited fault in man's nature, which has turned him metaphysically upside-down, so to speak. One effect of this fault is that his lower faculties rule his higher faculties. For Burke, the *end* of State law – that of making man good – requires that law aid man in subjugating his lower faculties, thereby freeing him from interior slavery to insatiable appetite:

> Society requires not only that the passions of individuals should be subjugated, but that even in the mass or body, as well as in the individuals, the inclinations of men should frequently be thwarted, their will controlled and their passions brought into subjection.[209]

A feature of the French Revolution that so horrified Burke was what he perceived to be the near total emancipation of irrational appetite, an emancipation presented to the populace as true liberty which he in fact identified as interior slavery.

Such emphasis on the subjugation of passion might strike us as puritanical, but Pappin does not interpret this aspect of Burke's thought in that way:

> [There is] a fundamental struggle at the core of man's being, his passionate nature threatening to disrupt a precarious balance between itself and reason. But complexity, inward struggle, and strife express only one side of human nature. Out of this struggle

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[209] Burke, *Reflections*, 166.

between reason and the passions can emerge a harmony. This is not meant to be a harmony where the passions are completely suppressed in deference to rationality. This would deny a crucial component in man's complex nature. Rather, the passions can and should be placed in service to reason, and through this service can emerge at least a partial harmony.[210]

As Pappin explains, the process of subjugating passion and appetite is not that of seeking to eliminate these human faculties, as certain extreme forms of stoicism would prescribe. Rather, Burke recommends ordering the passions in accordance with reason and true liberty, for their *integration*.[211] Indeed, Burke explicitly commends expressions of 'vehement passion', when such passion moves 'harmoniously' with reason:

> Vehement passion does not always indicate an infirm judgement. It often accompanies, and actuates, and is even auxiliary to a powerful understanding; and when they both conspire and act harmoniously, their force is great to destroy disorder within and to repel injury from abroad.[212]

As noted, for Burke, the final end of political life is union with the Creator.[213] Man's final end cannot be achieved by those in whom human nature is disintegrated. There is a burden of duty, therefore, upon the State to bring its members to a condition of human integration, that is, if the State is to serve them in the pursuit of their finality, and thereby fulfil its purpose.

Whilst, as Stanlis puts it, 'Burke regarded the Natural Law as a divinely ordained imperative ethical norm which, without consulting man, fixed forever his moral duties in civil society,' *how* any given community observes the natural law is prudentially worked out by them over generations, according to their particular circumstances and way of life.[214] Burke is

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[210] Pappin, *The Metaphysics of Edmund Burke*, 111.

[211] One might recall the teaching of St Paul, that the true Christian is one who has 'crucified the flesh with its passions and desires' (Galatians 5:24). When St Paul refers to crucifixion, he has the death of Jesus Christ in mind. In turn, the flesh and its passions and appetites are not crucified for the sake of their destruction, but that they may rise in a glorified state. Baroque architecture and the Western orchestra are examples of the fruit of human passion; not unfettered, chaotic and unruly passion, but passion ordered by reason, contemplation, and rational desire.

[212] Burke, 'Second Letter on a Regicide Peace' in *The Works of the Right Honorable Edmund Burke* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1866), vol. 5, 407.

[213] In this Burke is of one mind with Aquinas: 'The virtuous life therefore is the purpose of the human community… the ultimate end of the multitude joined together is not to live according to virtue, but through virtuous living to attain to enjoyment of God.' (*De Regno* 1, 14).

[214] Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law*, 73.

an absolutist regarding the criteria that comprises proper political government (he is intensely opposed to tyranny, for example), but he is a relativist in regard to the application and realisation of that criteria for any particular community in history. Burke acknowledges that man has a common ultimate finality, namely that of flourishing according to his nature and drawing close to God, but the means to this end are diverse, and what might be helpful for one people may be of little or no use to another, or could even be damaging. So too, what may have been a good means in one age, may not be so in another age for the very same people. Pappin explains Burkean relativism in the following way:

> Reality as created is not mechanistic in its substance. Rather, it is purposive, giving evidence of design. And there is a natural law, the principles of which the human mind can apprehend… Both the telic nature of man and the laws governing his existence demonstrates a sameness and continuity throughout man's history. Yet the ends for which man exists are realised in unique ways in concert with the singular moment of his historical epoch. The laws governing his existence, coming as they do from the Creator, are constant in their principles yet flexible enough to find a fresh application to the changing social situation into which each new age is thrust.[215]

Pappin explains here that, from the Burkean perspective, there are transcendent and perennial truths about man, but created spatio-temporal reality is dynamic. This means that what is entailed by the unchangeable truths in which Burke wholly believes must always be realised in new and diverse ways with the passing of time. This point about the dynamism of creation is the basis for Burkean conservatism, inasmuch as it is a philosophy, being a *philosophy of change*.[216] His conservatism seeks to reconcile the perennial with time and change in an integrated worldview. What conservatives say of society more generally they say of the laws of the polity specifically: laws can and should change, that they may apply anew the unchanging law of nature to ever changing contexts and circumstances.[217] Since, however, change in general should not be rapid or revolutionary, according to Burke, nor should changes in law.

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[215] Pappin, *The Metaphysics of Edmund Burke*, 157.
[216] Burke, *Reflections*, 106.
[217] What Newman said of the Christian religion might be said, from the conservative perspective, of political society: 'Old principles reappear under new forms; it changes with them in order to remain the same.' John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* ([n.p.] Kessinger Publishing [n.d.]), 100.

Burke trusts the manifold ways by which the natural law can be observed according to the different cultures and peoples of the world, as he conveys in his impeachment speech against Warren Hastings of the East India Company:

> Mr Hastings has no refuge – let him run from law to law; let him fly from common law, and the sacred institutions of the country in which he was born; let him fly from acts of parliament… still the Mohammedan law condemns him… let him fly where he will – from law to law – law, thank God, meets him everywhere – arbitrary power cannot secure him against law; and I would as soon have him tried on the Koran, or any other eastern code of laws, as on the common law of this kingdom.[218]

It is noteworthy that Burke holds that all cultures at least in part fulfil the requirements of the natural law. The law of human nature is not, according to him, a condition from which any culture can remove itself. Furthermore, he explicitly connects such observance of the natural law with the religious traditions of those cultures. Burke believes in *natural religion*, and he sees the religious traditions of the world as manifesting the religious impulse which is part of the law of human nature. In turn, he is not surprised that other cultures also fulfil other aspects of the natural law.

Quinton, further explaining Burkean relativism, states the following: 'men are transformed by their social experience, which in turn is determined by the set of customs and institutions into which they are born, customs and institutions which are for each society an historically accumulated deposit from the past life and particular circumstances of that society.'[219] And Quinton draws from this the Burkean conclusion: 'no one system of social and political arrangements is ideal for all men, at all times and places.'[220] It does not follow from such a conclusion, that acknowledges the diverse applicability of the essential content of morality from people to people that the content itself differs from people to people; against such a view Burke rails:

> These gentlemen have formed a plan of *geographical morality*, by which the duties of men, in public and in private situations, are not to be governed by their relation to the Governor of the Universe, or by their relation to mankind, but by climates, degrees of

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[218] Burke, *The Speeches*, III, 366-367.
[219] Quinton, *The Politics of Imperfection*, 59.
[220] *Ibid*. 59.

longitude, parallels, not of life, but of latitudes: as if, when you have crossed the equinoctial, all the virtues die.[221]

Quinton observes that, for Burke, to 'believe that government in general is a divine ordinance is not to believe that there is divine, and therefore unconditionally moral, authority for any specific form or action of government.'[222] Burke's conservatism, as he explains above, is absolutist in regard to the objective 'duties of men' that are determined in relation to the unchanging 'Governor of the Universe', but relativistic regarding the application of such objective criteria among actual existent societies, and the interpersonal relations that comprise them.

2.2.1.3 Natural religion in the thought of Burke

I have alluded to Burke's belief in natural religion, that is, his belief that man is inclined to seek God, on whom he judges himself to depend for his existence, and consequently whom he adores through ritual, worship, and sacrifice. It is necessary to consider more deeply this feature of Burke's thought to better understand the role of public cult and politically established religion in his own political outlook.

Pappin argues that on assessing Burke's various statements about human nature and what he deems to be man's natural relationship to God, we repeatedly find the following two themes:

> First, Burke affirms causality. God is causally present to the universe not only in His role as Creator, but also as sustainer and, beyond that, as the end of the universe, urging man toward perfection, and calling for man's cooperation in the pursuit of justice. Second, the effect of God's causal presence is intelligible to man. Man can recognise through reason God's hand in the universe, although, more important for Burke, man apprehends God's handiwork according to his natural feelings.[223]

According to Pappin, Burke is committed to the philosophical validity of causality and causal regularity. Furthermore, like the scholastics before him, Burke holds that God is both the

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[221] Burke, 'Speech on the Impeachment of Mr Warren Hastings', quoted in Schuettinger, *The Conservative Tradition*, 45.
[222] Quinton, *The Politics of Imperfection*, 63.
[223] Pappin, *The Metaphysics of Edmund Burke*, 116.

ultimate efficient and ultimate final cause of creation. Given that the existence of creation is not necessary (it did not have to exist), its existence must depend on that which necessarily exists. In turn, God is judged to be the origin, end, and sustainer of creation. Man, that part of creation which is of a rational nature, may intentionally order his life towards the ultimate end of creation generally, and his own end in particular, namely God. Man does this by realising his own good, and inasmuch as he does this, he more approximates God, who is the perfection of all goodness and convertible with infinite goodness. In Burke's mystico-political schema, this foundational worldview entails that the pursuit of justice is the pursuit of union with God. Man, that part of creation which is rational, can apprehend 'God's causal presence' in creation, and the *affective* response to this is the religious impulse which rises up within him and reaches out to God in religious acts.

To state that Burke believes that God is causally present in His creation is not to say that God's existence is self-evident.[224] He acknowledges that 'it is by a long deduction, and much study, that we discover… God in his works.'[225] Nonetheless, it is *natural*, according to Burke, for us to so study and contemplate in this way, since we naturally pursue a first cause of the effects which we perceive more immediately. The religious impulse in our nature is connected with this disposition to intellectual contemplation. For Burke, this religious dimension concurrently moves with man's intellectual intuition of the divine presence in creation, and it also effects in us a desire to execute religious acts in response to this presence. Nonetheless, Burke thinks that this religious dimension of human nature can easily become corrupted and idolatrous, for it is 'extremely hard to disentangle our idea of the cause from the effect by which we are led to know it.'[226]

Burke has been characterised as a religious instrumentalist, and seen as arguing for the importance of religion only inasmuch as it might be said to have desirable social effects.[227] As Garrard notes, Burke 'believed in the utility of religion as an indispensable foundation of political legitimacy and form of social cement, in the absence of which he thought that institutions would crumble and society atomise.'[228] Whilst this acknowledgement of religion's utility is part of Burke's wider repertoire, he does not hold

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[224] On this he agrees with Aquinas. See *Summa Theologica*, I, 2, 1.
[225] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 86.
[226] *Ibid*. 142.
[227] See Ian Harris, 'Burke and Religion' in *The Cambridge Companion to Edmund Burke*, edited by Christopher Insole and David Dwan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 103.
[228] Garrard, *Counter-Enlightenments*, 42.

that religion is good because it has such social effects, but rather that religion has these effects because it is good. For Burke, religion is good because human nature is essentially religious, and this feature of man's nature points to a truth beyond his nature, towards which he can order his life. For Burke, given that God is not only the Author of individuals but the Author of society, the corporate person of the State must exercise religious piety through public religion towards the Creator. This notion introduces Burke's view of public religion, which he advances against what he calls 'atheism by establishment'.[229]

According to Burke, the State exists to so order civil society as to secure its many ends, chief among which is its religious end. This is, for Burke, the highest purpose for man's social congregating. For this reason, he calls religion the very foundation of human societies. Atheism is a political evil because its erodes this foundation, as Pappin explains: 'Atheism, for Burke, gnaws at the very foundations of society,' for so 'basic to man's being is his religious nature that religion holds first place among the values of life.[230] Burke is unequivocal on this point:

> On religion, according to our mode, all our laws and institutions stand, as upon their base. That scheme is supposed in every transaction of life.[231]

Burke holds that human beings are joined together in society to attain the ends entailed by their nature, highest among which is spiritual union with the Creator, all other ends are subordinate to this end. Religion, for Burke, provides the ultimate explanation for society, and the chief reason for seeing society not as a necessary evil to lessen the trials of life, but a positive good: 'we know, and, what is better, we feel inwardly, that religion is the basis of civil society, and the source of all good.'[232] It is because religion, according to Burke, is the foundation of society, that he deems the expulsion of religion from the public arena not just wrong, but actually impossible to achieve. Religions different from his own he deems to be expressions of something good in human nature – the religious impulse – and therefore a good for society: 'where the Hindoo religion has been established, that country has been flourishing.'[233]

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[229] Burke, 'Letters on a Regicide Peace' in *The Works*, vol. 13, 170-171.
[230] Pappin, *The Metaphysics of Edmund Burke*, 119.
[231] Burke, 'Fourth Letter on a Regicide Peace' in *The Works*, vol. 5, 112.
[232] Burke, *Reflections*, 186.
[233] Burke, quoted in Harris, 'Burke and Religion' in *The Cambridge Companion*, 99.

Burgess argues that Burke deemed religion to be the determining factor in whether one followed the *philosophes* or sided with his view:

> Burke rejected the suggestion that the complex web of human life, replete with myriad social goods which often operate in symphony, could be reduced to one governing first axiom. The one first axiom which might justifiably cite at the heart of Burke's work is that of God's sovereignty. However, a foundational belief in the sovereignty of a relational God cannot be converted into a political system. To assert God's sovereignty is to defer to the untameable, ineffable and incomprehensible mystery of God's own being. Moreover, it is to accept that his ways are unfathomable and his thoughts untraceable. The admission that God alone is rightly the founder, sustainer and guide of society encourages a radically different approach to our political endeavours. No longer are we political architects drawing a blueprint for the polity, but we are labourers attentive to the director's voice in each concrete circumstance by means of prayerful prudence.[234]

According to Burgess, the one 'axiom' necessary to understand Burke's approach is that of *God's sovereignty*: all is God's, and all is ordered to Him. Whilst this axiom cannot be directly converted into a political system, it does *account* for the existence of political systems in the Burkean schema. A people who acknowledge that God is the 'founder, sustainer, and guide of society' will not, Burgess suggests, rationalistically seek to develop *a priori* formulae for the ordering of society. Rather, they will assume that they cannot author society even if they try. Burgess suggests that such assumptions will cause such people to let their society develop organically. They will assume that the existence of the polity depends on God, with the role of its members being to prudentially respond to God's providential care down the ages. Burgess's point is that the atheist society will naturally tend towards rationalism, whereas the theist society will naturally tend towards an organic and conservative model.

In the Burkean view, what Enlightenment revolutionism seeks to establish, namely the expulsion of religion from political life, is an impossibility because it is based on the denial of something inextinguishable in human nature, namely the social need for God. What

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[234] Burgess, *Edmund Burke's Battle*, 114.

atheism establishes, therefore, is not a society free from religion but a society submerged in *frustrated religion*. Burke conveys this theme in the following way:

> I call it *Atheism by Establishment*, when any State, as such, shall not acknowledge the existence of God as a moral Governor of the World; when it shall offer to Him no religious or moral worship; when it shall abolish the Christian religion by a regular decree; when it shall persecute with a cold, unrelenting, steady cruelty, by every mode of confiscation, imprisonment, exile, and death, all its ministers; when it shall generally shut up, or pull down, churches; when few buildings which remain of this kind shall be opened only for the purpose of making a profane apotheosis of monsters whose vices and crimes have no parallel amongst men, and whom all other men consider as objects of general detestations, and the severest animadversion of law. When, in the place of that religion of social benevolence, and of individual self-denial, in mockery of all religion, they institute impious, blasphemous, indecent theatric rites, in honour of their vitiated, perverted reason, and erect altars to personification of their own corrupted and bloody Republic; and schools and seminaries are founded at public expense to poison mankind, from generation to generation, with the horrible maxims of this impiety; when wearied out with incessant martyrdom, and the cries of a people hungering and thirsting for religion, they permit it, only as a tolerated evil – I call this *Atheism by Establishment*.[235]

In this remarkable passage, Burke conveys in no uncertain terms what horrified him most about by the Revolution in France, namely the revolt against God's sovereignty. He holds that the State must 'offer to Him…religious and moral worship'. In ceasing to do this, the State has in fact not become secular, but a great religious fanaticism has erupted. Now, Burke argues, 'indecent theatric rites' at altars erected for the purpose of divinising the Republic itself have replaced *real* religion, which is treated as 'a tolerated evil'. Burke's point here is that the revolution has not eradicated religion, which he deems to be inextinguishable, but has only directed it to improper ends, thus frustrating it and debasing the nation's members.

Burke clearly summarises his position on established religion in the following passage:

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[235] Burke, 'Letters on a Regicide Peace' in *The Works*, vol. 13, 170-171.

We know, and it is our pride to know, that man is by his constitution a religious animal; that atheism is against, not only our reason, but our instincts; and that it cannot prevail long. But if, in the moment of riot, and in a drunken delirium… we should uncover our nakedness, by throwing off that Christian religion which has hitherto been our boast and comfort, and one great source of civilization amongst us, and among many other nations, we are apprehensive (being well aware that the mind will not endure a void) that some uncouth, pernicious, and degrading superstition might take place of it.[236]

First, Burke explains in this excerpt that man is a 'religious animal' by nature and for this reason atheism cannot persist. This does not mean, however, that were a State to pursue 'atheism by establishment' it would soon exhaust itself and turn to some genuine and sound expression of the religious impulse. Rather, as Burke sees it, secularism will only effect a social paradigm within which frustrated and misdirected religion will be expressed. If the Revolution is not defeated, Burke believes it will lead the nations into 'degrading superstition.'

Burke believes that it is easy for man to fall into error in the realm of religion, even without the State's endorsement of secularism, for inasmuch as man is inclined by nature to be religious, he is also predisposed to misdirect the religious dimension of his nature. Ever bombarded by his unruly passions and appetites, his reason is often darkened. Therefore Burke, whilst believing in natural religion, holds that natural religion cannot fulfil its own purposes without being assumed into supernatural religion and the operation of divine grace. This, for Burke, is the social purpose of the Church.

2.2.1.4 Integralism in the thought of Burke

Burke believed in natural religion and he explicitly praised expressions of the religious impulse among non-Christian peoples, as evidenced by his complimentary statements about 'Mohammedan law' and the 'Hindoo religion'. Burke did not believe that a polity could be secular any more than he believed human nature could be secular. Burke held, however, that Christianity was different in kind, rather than degree, from natural religion or its expressions. Whilst Christianity, in his view, fulfilled natural religion, it was a religion imparted from

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[236] Burke, *Reflections*, 187-188.

without to human nature rather than having its origin in an impulse within. He believed that Christianity was imparted through participation in the Church.

Certainly, for Burke, the State is in some way *sacred* by its own right. He holds the State to be of divine origin, directly willed by God. Furthermore, the State's law-making – inasmuch as it accords with the natural law – conforms its members to the Divine Nature itself. For Burke, political institutions and courts are instruments of God, set apart in His providential purposes for the ordering of humankind – as humankind is particularised in various and diverse societies – towards its proper finality. Stanlis conveys this in the following passage:

> Since God had "willed the State" and man was by nature a political animal, Burke regarded legislators as God's instruments, acting in trust, responsible for their conduct to the great Master, Author, and Founder of society, and fulfilling in the temporal world the divine purpose of the Creator. Burke's statements that civil society was of divine origin and that commonwealths were not physical but moral essences, were also the logical consequence of his Christian conception of man. By a "divine tactic" man had been formed that at his best he might rule himself rationally and morally. Burke has a mystical conception of society, not because he was a mystic or irrationalist, but because he saw the reality in society of spiritual powers which transcended the merely rational understanding of man, and even the complex processes of history itself. When reason and history had revealed all that man was capable of knowing about government and the art of politics, there still remained for Burke the power and wisdom of God, whose spirit touched the innermost springs of human nature.[237]

As Stanlis explains, Burke believes that God has authored the State for the good of the nation's members. Statesmen, by prudentially governing the nation's members towards that good for which the State exists (natural human flourishing), are the very instruments of God in His plan for humankind. The State, according to Burke, does not exist merely to restrain people within their private spheres of self-interest, that some peaceful communal living might be achieved for the reaping of its benefits. Rather, the State has the *positive role* of realising human flourishing: civil society is a 'moral essence'. Stanlis calls this view a 'mystical

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[237] Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law*, 193-194.

conception of society' because it adopts a God's-eye-view, so to speak, of civil society. Society is seen as existing for a transcendent, willed purpose, one that pre-exists any *system* or ideological plan which man might attempt to develop. Technical knowledge can get man so far; practical knowledge gained through extensive experience (and participation in the experience of others) will get man further still. Neither division of knowledge, however, can exhaust the content of political science, for its content and its proper realisation in a *particular* and *actual* community is known only by its Author, to whose providential care Burke prescribes a certain 'abandonment' rather than over-confidence in human mastery. For Burke, trust in the God who has created humankind for a purpose, and provided the means to that end, is a component of ruling oneself 'rationally and morally'.

The consequence of Burke's view that, as Burgess puts it, 'God's mystical action is present in society from its conception onwards,' is that the 'constitution was in some sense sanctified.'[238] The State, then, is sacred, but this sanctity is a *natural sanctity*, by virtue of its special status in God's plan. For Burke, however, the State cannot properly achieve its purpose without being raised to *supernatural sanctity*. This supernatural sanctity is bestowed upon the State by an ongoing act of *consecration* procured through its admixture with the Church. Church and State, in the Burkean schema, are understood as two principles of a single consecrated society whose purpose is the transformation and flourishing of its members. As Stanlis puts it, 'Church and State were the embodiment of the divine and Natural Law working through history, the instruments of man's temporal and spiritual redemption.'[239] In turn, 'man, though in a fallen state, was capable through God's grace and his own right reason and free will of glorious worldly achievements and an even more glorious supernatural destiny.'[240]

The two principles of State and Church complement one another. They possess distinct but correlative spheres of social activity. The State, in developing policy, passing laws, issuing legislation, enforcing regulation, punishing wrongdoers, and so forth, orders man to natural flourishing. The Church, by introducing the operation of grace through the sacraments, liturgy, preaching, bringing back to the fold those who dissent, and so forth, supernaturally transforms the inner spirit of the State's members. The State, as a corporate person, becomes a 'disciple' through Church establishment.[241] The product is a *single* society

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[238] Burgess, *Edmund Burke's Battle*, 35.
[239] Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law*, 230.
[240] *Ibid*. 185.
[241] This was explained by John Keble in his *National Apostasy* sermon (1833): 'A nation, having for centuries acknowledged, as an essential part of its theory of government, that, as a Christian nation,

composed of two dimensions: a supernatural dimension and a consecrated (by virtue of its union with the supernatural dimension) natural dimension.[242] This conception of Church and State as comprising a single society is explained by Burke in the following way:

> We have not relegated religion (like something we were ashamed to show) to obscure municipalities and rustic villages. No! We will have her to exalt her mitred front in courts and parliaments. We will have her mixed throughout the whole mass of life and blended with all the classes of society.[243]

Burke's view appears to be comparable to like that of the scholastic '*soul-body union*' view of Church and State developed by Robert Bellarmine and Francisco Suarez in the sixteenth-century. According to this view, Church and State relate to each other as soul to body in the hylomorphic conception, with the Church present in every part of the State as its animating moral principle. The *soul-body union* analogy is described in the following way by Thomas Pink:

> The Church ideally stands as soul to the state as body, united to form a single Christian community just as the union of the soul and body forms a single person. And so the soul and the body have their respective intellectual and corporeal ends that contribute to the good of the whole, but with the soul's ends being higher, so too Church and state each have their own areas of competence, spiritual and temporal, religious and human, over which each is sovereign, the spiritual good served by the Church being higher than the temporal good served by the state.[244]

This position seems to correspond well to Burke's opinion that 'in a Christian commonwealth the Church and the State are one and the same thing; being different integrant parts of the same whole.'[245] As Stanlis explains, 'Church and State are for Burke but two aspects of the

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she is also a part of Christ's Church, and bound, in all her legislation and policy, by the fundamental rules of that Church.' ⟨http://anglicanhistory.org/keble/keble1.html⟩ [accessed 3 March 2021].
[242] This society is modelled on the person of Jesus Christ, comprising the supernatural Eternal Word and the sacred humanity, the latter assumed from natural creation.
[243] Burke, *Reflections*, 202.
[244] Thomas Pink, 'Jacques Maritain and the Problem of Church and State' in *The Thomist*, 79, 1 (2015), 1-2.
[245] Burke, quoted in Harris, 'Burke and Religion' in *The Cambridge Companion*, 137.

same thing – God-given instruments to bring man to his highest spiritual and social perfection, through which man becomes united to the Godhead.'[246]

Leading man to his highest spiritual and social perfection through uniting him to God is, in Burke's view, achieved through Church establishment, and it is such a settlement that Burke champions:

I beg leave to speak of our church establishment, which is the first of our prejudices, not a prejudice destitute of reason, but involving in it profound and extensive wisdom. I speak of it first. It is first and last and midst in our minds. For, taking ground on that religious system of which we are now in possession, we continue to act on the early received and uniformly continued sense of mankind. That sense not only, like a wise architect, hath built up the august fabric of states, but, like a provident proprietor, to preserve the structure from profanation and ruin, as a sacred temple purged from all the impurities of fraud and violence and injustice and tyranny, hath solemnly and forever consecrated the commonwealth and all that officiate in it. This consecration is made that all who administer the government of men, in which they stand in the person of God himself, should have high and worthy notions of their function and destination, that their hope should be full of immortality, that they should not look to the paltry pelf of the moment nor to the temporary and transient praise of the vulgar, but to a solid, permanent existence in the permanent part of their nature, and to a permanent fame and glory in the example they leave as a rich inheritance to the world.

Such sublime principles ought to be infused into persons of exalted situations, and religious establishments provided that may continually revive and enforce them. Every sort of moral, every sort of civil, every sort of politic institution, aiding the rational and natural ties that connect the human understanding and affections to the divine, are not more than necessary in order to build up that wonderful structure Man, whose prerogative it is to be in a great degree a creature of his own making, and who, when made as he ought to be made, is destined to hold no trivial place in the creation.[247]

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[246] Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law*, 74.
[247] Burke, 'Letter to a Member of the National Assembly' in *The Works*, vol. 6, 38. 'Pelf' is an archaic word meaning some profit or spoils acquired in a dishonourable way.

In this striking passage, Burke explains that the country that he serves as a politician has a 'prejudicial' preference for Church establishment, not holding it up to criticism, but simply accepting it. He argues that this is not due to a lack of reason, but a reasonable confidence in the wisdom of the many generations who developed a settlement of the Church's permeation of the nation and its political realisation, and in those who have since sustained and defended such a settlement down the ages. When Burke speaks of the *Church*, he is referring to the whole community of the baptised, both lay and clerical, rather than to any particular denomination, for he speaks of that spirit which has 'built up the august fabric of states.'[248]

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[248] Burke's ecclesial sympathies have been much discussed by Burkean scholars. Conor Cruise-O'Brien claimed that Burke was a crypto-Catholic. There is evidence that he was educated at an Irish Catholic hedge school. Burke's mother was a Catholic, as was his wife, whom (it is widely believed) he married in a Catholic church in France. His cousin was (the now 'Venerable') Honora "Nano" Nagle, Foundress of the Presentation Sisters. His siblings grew up to practice Catholicism. He condemned the treatment of the Catholic Church and its hierarchy by the French revolutionaries and argued the case for the religious and cultural unity of Christian Europe. He partly made a name for himself championing the cause for greater civil rights and religious freedom for Catholics in the United Kingdom. Interestingly, Burke did not think that the same tolerance should be extended to Protestant sects or 'dissenters'. Such a reputation as friend of Catholics and adversary of the French Revolution did Burke make for himself that the pope wrote the following in a letter to him:

> 'We consider that our especial commendation and the testimony of our heart may be justly claimed by those who, in this time of apostasy and impiety, have exerted the force of their genius that they might write in defence of the cause of right… Amongst them you have stood out as one of the foremost, in that you have composed a famous work to overthrow and utterly destroy the fictions of the new philosophers of France, and have exhorted your fellow countrymen… to show indulgences to Catholics born in the realm of Great Britain – those Catholics who, buoyed up by the renown of their loyalty, have made themselves worthy of the whole nation lavishing its love and benevolence upon them, and have also shown that they are no hindrance to the tranquillity and security of the kingdom. This has taken place through your agency… therefore it is our wish that you should accept with joyful and cheerful heart our congratulations and praises, which have this especial object: that you should more and more exert yourself to protect the cause of civilization, and that you should moreover feel assured that an encouragement has been given to our high opinion of the illustrious King of Great Britain and the renowned British people, because of such noble arguments for liberty.'
> Pope Pius VI, *Letter to the Noble Man Edmund Burke*, 1793

In opposition to the characterisation of Burke as a crypto-Catholic, Burgess and Stanlis both claim that Burke was committed to Anglicanism, as evidenced by his explicit and ongoing defence of Church establishment in England. The two positions, however, are not irreconcilable. It may be that Burke was both a crypto-Catholic and an establishmentarian. Certainly, he did not identify Anglicanism with Protestantism, seeing the Church of England as part of the apostolic Church, as he once wrote, 'a man is certainly the most perfect Protestant who protests against the whole Christian religion.' Perhaps he endorsed the Anglican settlement as a true integralist constitution whilst also sympathising with the Catholic Church's claim to be more continuous with the religion of historic Christianity. This, indeed, might further explain Burke's championing of Catholic Emancipation whilst persistently arguing for Church establishment: it is plausible that he envisaged a time of Anglican-Catholic reconciliation, as he said, 'since heats are subsided.' If this is the case, this would bring him religiously and politically much closer to his Continental equivalents in early conservatism, Maistre and others. Burke, *Reflections*, 187; Conor Cruise O'Brien, in Burke, *Reflections*, 28-30; Burgess, *Edmund Burke's Battle*, 31-35; Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law*, 219-230; Edmund Burke, *A Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe, On the Subject of the Roman Catholics of Ireland*

Burke claims that the Church's ongoing 'consecration' of the State effects the raising of statesmen (who already 'stand in the person of God himself') who look on their role from a God's-eye-view, so to speak. According to him, the adoption of this perspective entails that such statesmen see their actions in the light of the destiny of their immortal souls, not looking to 'the paltry pelf of the moment nor to the temporary and transient praise of the vulgar,' but to the 'permanent existence in the permanent part of their nature.'

Burke believes that Church establishment has the social effect that 'sublime principles… [are] infused into persons.'[249] For Burke, man can achieve his ultimate finality only by such 'infusion'. This notion of the *infusion* of principles through participation in the Church is of the utmost importance, as we shall see presently in considering Burke's view that the Church establishes 'manners' by infusion. More than any other commentator, Stanlis has identified the importance of 'infused manners' in Burkean integralism, and he introduces the theme by considering the relationship of manners to laws:

> The essential relationship between the forms and spirit of Church and State is perfectly clear in Burke's political thought: Church and State are related in their purely social function as manners are to laws. Burke believed that all churches and states have their own particular forms, laws, and spirit, but that in general the State maintains the national laws and formal structure of society, whereas the Church, like the family, fosters its local manners and inner spirit.[250]

Stanlis explains here that the State is a settled territory with the moral unity of a particular people realised in 'formal structure', whereas the Church permeates this natural society fostering its 'inner spirit'. This is why Burke holds that 'consecration of the State by a state religious establishment is necessary' for 'free citizens' – according to him this consecration is the ongoing transformation of inner spirit among the citizenry which effects true liberty.[251]

Burke accommodates within his worldview a theory of progress, not conceived as the natural trajectory of humankind in increasing its capacity for self-determination, as the *philosophes* understood it, but as the effect of the operation of grace from which he judged

⟨http://www.ricorso.net/rx/library/authors/classic/Burke_E/Works_1887/Langrishe_1792.htm⟩ [accessed 19 January 2021].
[249] Burke, 'Letter to a Member of the National Assembly' in *The Works*, vol. 6, 38.
[250] Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law*, 222.
[251] Burke, *Reflections*, 190.

revolutionary Europe to be departing.[252] Burke presents this theme in *An Abridgement of English History* in which he argues that the Christian civilization of Europe was nothing more than the effect of the interior transformation of violent savages by the grace of Christian manners. This transformation, Burke argues, is traceable in the history of the conversion of European peoples. Stanlis explains Burke's view:

> In Burke's political philosophy Church and State together established in "the commonwealth of Christian Europe," and in Britain, the civil order, justice, and liberty which he held to be the highest social end of man, and which was revealed in history. Through "the known march of the ordinary providence of God," Church and State had raised Europe from the dark ages of pagan barbarism to the magnificence of Western civilization.[253]

As Stanlis notes, for Burke, the union of Church and State raised its members to a state of civilization only accessible through this societal 'consecration'. Burke defended such a settlement in his own day, because he conceived 'the social function of the Church – the refinement of civil manners – as the same in all ages.'[254]

This change by the interiorising of 'manners' Burke traces in his case study of the evangelisation of England:

> The Christian religion, having once taken root in Kent, spread itself with great rapidity throughout all the other Saxon kingdoms in England. The manners of the Saxons underwent a notable alteration by this change in their religion: their ferocity was much abated; they became more mild and sociable; and their laws began to partake of the softness of their manners, everywhere recommending mercy and tenderness.[255]

For Burke, the flowering of the social role of the Church was to be found in the chivalric code. As he saw it, chivalry marked the transformation of barbarian warlords into gallant

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[252] As Hailsham observes, 'the Conservative… holds to the Old Faith that man, apart from the grace of God, is not perfectible.' *The Conservative Case*, 15.
[253] Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law*, 228.
[254] *Ibid*. 199.
[255] Burke, 'An Abridgement of English History: From the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the end of the Reign of King John' in *The Works*, vol. 10, 282.

Christian knights. The ideal of the knight was not that of a man acting in greed and self-interest, but a defender of the weak who sought to civilize the lands under his dominion. Stanlis further explains:

> By raising good manners to the level of principle, chivalry taught men to defend weakness in every station of life, without inquiry as to moral status or regard to personal merit. As an institution chivalry illustrated perfectly Burke's conception of how religion and manners, apart from laws, sustain civilized social order. The whole history of the social function of the Church, as it related to manners, was contained in the conversion of the Germanic warrior and Roman soldier into the Christian knight, and finally into the gentleman.[256]

According to Stanlis, Burke understood the code of chivalry, by which the inner transformation of the Christian *in* the world was lived out, to provide a kind of catechesis for civil society, as that society was infused with the supernatural life in the Church. The transformation of the 'German warrior and Roman soldier into the Christian knight' was, in Burke's view, not something that could be effected by political change, further legislation, or new local customs. Such a transformation could only be accounted for by reference to something supernatural, as an effect of – as the Bible puts it – replacing hearts of stone with hearts of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26). Stanlis notes that, for Burke, the culmination of the process of the social operation of grace – a kind of social *progress* – was the emerging of the gentleman, both cultivated and kind, there at the service of others, having been transformed by *manners*.

In the Burkean schema, Church and State exist as two institutions inhering in a single society, and 'each institution is supreme in its own sphere; the Church in things spiritual and in social manners, the State in things temporal and in civil laws.'[257] Burke holds that human nature, without the transformative operation of the Church, does not possess within its own fallen condition the apparatus to fulfil even the requirements of the natural law, being as it is, 'subject to terrible illusions, weaknesses, and moral depravity.'[258] Certainly, as Stanlis notes, Burke acknowledged the 'power of man's unaided right reason to perceive the moral law,' but the perception of it does not necessarily entail its practical realisation. Furthermore, Stanlis comments that, for Burke, 'compared with the "great illumination blaze and

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[256] Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law*, 224.
[257] *Ibid*. 222.
[258] *Ibid*. 180.

effulgence of light so gloriously demonstrated by the Gospel," the glimmerings of natural reason were faint indeed.'[259] Stanlis proceeds to helpfully summarise Burke's position in the following passage:

> By adding to the natural powers of man the divine dispensations of God's grace, Christianity presented a far more intense, concrete, personal, and complete revelation of the moral law, and the practical means of its fulfilment. When the Natural Law was perceived only by individual reason, unaided by corporate religion, there was danger that men would construct a false antithesis between reason and faith, between works and contemplation and man and God; in short, there was danger that men would live under the shadow rather than under the body of the moral law… Burke's conception of man's rational and spiritual nature was centred in his Christianity, which at once paralleled and transcended the Natural Law.[260]

As Stanlis understands him, Burke believed that the full content of the moral law was included in a transformed way in the imparting of grace. By the supernatural life in the Church, man could possess the moral law in a way which was 'intense, concrete, personal, and complete,' as well as access the knowledge of the 'means of its fulfilment.' For Burke, this transformative action cannot happen for each individual in isolation due to our social nature, thus the need for 'corporate religion'. Consequently, in the Burkean schema, for supernatural religion to fulfil its social purpose, it has to be the politically established religion.

In Burke's view, the Church's consecration of the State imparts to its members an understanding of the moral law, not only taught from without, but assimilated in the interior transformation by 'manners'. This assimilation Burke traced in the historical transformation of barbarian warlords through chivalry, giving rise to the ideal of the Christian knight. It is obvious that Burke is using the word 'manners' to refer to something other than mere codes of conduct, etiquette, or even the natural virtues lauded by the Greek and Stoic philosophers. Manners, for Burke, refers to an interior conversion. Stanlis writes that Burke thought 'chivalry… the most powerful practical weapon the Church wielded in infusing sweetness and light into the untransformed souls of men.'[261]

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[259] *Ibid*. 180.
[260] *Ibid*. 180.
[261] *Ibid*. 199.

2.2.1.5 Summary of Burke's politico-religious thought

From Burke's theocentric worldview comes his belief that contingent reality is pregnant, so to speak, with natures which tend towards the end to which they have been preordained. Consequently, human nature also its own way of flourishing, the greatest natural means to which is life in civil society. Civil society, however, cannot function, nor can it achieve its purpose, without being politically ordered and governed. In turn, Burke holds the State to be ever guided and provided for by God. Through the State, God seeks to attain for its members the end for which they exist. According to Burke, it belongs to each people to discern, often implicitly and tacitly, the ways by which God's providence interacts with them. In other words, each nation, in civil and political life, prudentially responds to God's hand down the ages. This is why Burke looks to cultural cultivation and the acquisition of virtue rather than to abstract reasoning and trust in *a priori* principles. The kind of person one is – one's 'heart' – is more important than one's ideas when it comes to responding to God's providence. Burke identifies man's flourishing with such acquisition of virtue. What follows is a summary of the three areas of Burke's thought which flow from his theocentric and teleological worldview, namely law, natural religion, and integralism.

Law. Burke's view of the law of the State is inseparable from his conception of natural law, the particularisation of which he associates with God's providential care for the nation. In turn, Burke's view of law is theocentric, as Burgess explains:

> Burke's understanding of the natural law is of a law that is actively engaged throughout history in ordering societies towards their right ends wherever the precepts of the natural law is of a law are rightly adhered to in concrete circumstances. The common lawyers' belief in the natural law gives us an insight into why they were so keenly aware of the importance of history and the continuity of society, the chief reason being that the flourishing of right order requires time. Burke feared that a society which revered reason alone would seek to destroy the amassed wisdom which had been accrued over the course of ages. The instinct to conserve then is, at least in part, attuned to a theological belief in the providential ordering of society by God. Burke clearly expresses a belief in such providence, and this belief did not preclude

the importance of human agency in the divine plan. On the contrary, Burke believed humans to have a choice as to whether or not they adhere to God's law.[262]

As Burgess observes, Burke holds that natural law orders society towards its end, which is the flourishing of its members. State law, then, is the natural law 'rightly adhered to in concrete circumstances.' This is why, for Burke, abstract principles can never substitute immersion in the life of an existent society and the knowledge of its culture, customs, history, and law of the land. Burke believes that working out the applicability of the natural law to in particular community takes many generations. No set of abstractions can take the place of that existentially accumulated wisdom. Burke trusts in this accumulated wisdom because he sees God to be working *through* the nation, that it may fulfil the purpose for which His providence established it. This is the great difference between the Burkean and the revolutionary mind: for Burke, this national deposit of knowledge is a treasury from which to draw, not a cage from which to be emancipated.

A look at Burke's legal sources links his thought to that of Aristotle, Cicero, Aquinas, Fortescue, and Hooker. Burke is steeped in the classical realist tradition. He sees the State to be politically connected to God through the realisation of the natural law in State law and legislation. He understands the natural law to be a human participation in the eternal law, that is, God's own Divine Nature. In turn, law bestows upon the State a kind of sanctity, for law has the purpose of conforming man to God Himself.

In the Burkean schema, law has a religious end. It does not merely exist to restrain man, but has the positive role of subjugating man's appetites and passions to reason, as well as to his rational and morally upright affections. It is necessary that man be interiorly ordered to higher things, that he may fulfil in his own life the moral law, which has its end in closeness to God. The best *way* of achieving this end differs from society to society, and therefore Burke acknowledges flexibility in the moral law's applicability, whilst holding absolutely to the objective content of that moral law.[263]

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[262] Burgess, *Edmund Burke's Battle*, 24.
[263] This point of absolutism regarding the content of political science and legitimate forms of government and relativism regarding the application and realisation in particular societies of those objective principles, became an important theme in nineteenth-century Catholic social doctrine, which was likely influenced by Burke's thought:

> 'The Empire, the Monarchy, and the Republic. By giving one's self up to abstractions, one could at length conclude which is the best of these forms, considered in themselves; and in all truth it may be affirmed that each of them is good, provided it lead straight to its end – that is to say, to the common good for which social authority is constituted; and finally, it may be

Natural religion. Burke holds that human nature is inherently religious. Man is, as Burke puts it, 'by his constitution a religious animal'. Law's role of making man good is in fact, ultimately, to conform him to God's Nature. The existence of God is, for Burke, the ultimate explanation for all reality, and as question-driven creatures we seek this one supreme answer, in response turning to God in wonder, worshipping and adoring Him.

Burke observes that wherever man is, religion is found. Man has within him a religious impulse, and on this assumption, Burke holds that religion can never be excluded from the public square. According to him, all attempts at a secular settlement unavoidably result in *frustrated religion*.

Burke, whilst holding that the religious impulse is natural to man, and commending traditional non-Christian religious cultures for societally realising this religious impulse rather than suppressing or frustrating it (as he believes the revolutionaries of Europe seek to do), he nonetheless holds that natural religion can be found nowhere in an uncorrupted form. Natural religion expresses something of human nature, which Burke sees to be a nature that is inherently wounded. Natural religion exists in uncorrupted form only where it has been assumed and superseded by the supernatural life of grace. In turn, Burke advances the case for a politically established Church.

Integralism. According to Burke, by Church establishment the State is consecrated and rendered holy. This consecration makes of Church and State two distinct principles of one single society ordered towards attaining the end of redeemed human nature. Burke explicitly holds that Church and State are two dimensions fulfilling 'the ends for which

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added that, from a relative point of view, such and such a form of government may be preferable because of being better adapted to the character and customs of such or such a nation. In this order of speculative ideas, Catholics, like all other citizens, are free to prefer one form of government to another precisely because no one of these social forms is, in itself, opposed to the principles of sound reason nor to the maxims of Christian doctrine… In descending from the domain of abstractions to that of facts, we must beware of denying the principles just established: they remain fixed. However, becoming incarnated in facts, they are clothed with a contingent character, determined by the centre in which their application is produced. Otherwise said, if every political form is good by itself and may be applied to the government of nations, the fact still remains that political power is not found in all nations under the same form; each has its own. This form springs from a combination of historical or national, though always human, circumstances which, in a nation, give rise to its traditional and even fundamental laws, and by these is determined the particular form of government, the basis of transmission of supreme power.'

Pope Leo XIII, 'Au Milieu des Sollicitudes', 14-15 (1892) in *A Reader in Catholic Social Teaching*, edited by Peter A. Kwasniewski (Tacoma, WA: Cluny Media, 2017), 126-127.

society was formed… temporal prosperity and eternal happiness.'[264] Together they bring man to God.

Burke finds historical support for his integralist position in the transformation of Roman legionaries and Germanic barbarians into Christian knights. The *code of chivalry* was not a written code, and it was not a set of abstract principles regarding etiquette or conduct, but the interiorising of what Burke simply calls 'manners'. These *manners*, according to Burke, are not acquired by habit or custom, but *infused* into the members of a society which has been permeated by the supernatural life in the Church.

2.2.2   Joseph de Maistre (1753-1821)

Maistre wrote in French, but he was not French; he was of middle-class Italio-Savoyard descent. His family had been ennobled during his father's lifetime, and he lived his life as a lawyer and then as a courtier of the Kingdom of Sardinia. In the latter half of his life Maistre was sent as ambassador to the Russian Tsar. He was well-loved in the court of Saint Petersburg and the salons but gained a reputation as a Catholic proselytiser (which irritated both his King and the Tsar).

In early adulthood, Maistre had been sympathetic towards Enlightenment ideas and extensively read the *philosophes*. The French Revolution and the subsequent Reign of Terror had, however, horrified him. The events of his life gave him the benefit of distance to assess what was happening in the West, and what might happen. His analysis of the situation he beheld made an enormous impression on the early conservative, counter-Enlightenment movement.[265]

Maistre's work is expansive, from a critique of Francis Bacon in his *An Examination of the Philosophy of Bacon* to an analysis of the development of political constitutions; from a defence of the Spanish Inquisition to Platonic dialogues on the sociology of religious sacrifice; from attacks on the French Revolution to speculative studies in political philosophy. He was well-versed in civil and canon law, had studied to a proficient degree the writings of the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers, the Latin and Greek Church Fathers, the thought of Thomas Aquinas and Robert Bellarmine, Locke and Hume, the *philosophes*

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[264] Burke, 'Speech on Reform of Representation' in *The Works*, vol. 4, 149.
[265] For a comprehensive and scholarly biography of Joseph de Maistre, see Richard A. Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre: An Intellectual Militant* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988).

and the *encyclopaedists*, and had a life-long fascination not only with European history, but the history of all known nations.

Maistre's unrestrained style of writing, his graphic and gruesome accounts of violence, his uncompromising attacks on the Enlightenment, and the ferocity of his rhetoric, have caused some to characterise him as an extremist or fanatic, often comparing him to the ostensibly more moderate and romantic Burke. Behind Maistre's violent rhetoric, however, is a deep sensitivity to the human condition and a longing to rectify man's inherent volatility, to limit the darker expressions of fallen human nature.[266]

Maistre's practice of freemasonry and his enthusiasm for certain esoteric and even heretical writings, especially his fascination with Origen's soteriology as well as the secret tracts of hermeticists and Rosicrucians, does not sit comfortably with the received view of Maistre as a zealous defender of Christian orthodoxy. Maistre, however, saw himself as a defender of Christian orthodoxy and the civilization he called Christendom. Perhaps his is a personality too big for any rigid category into which we might be tempted to place him. It is, in any case, a common trait of conservative intellectuals that their interests are broad in scope.

In the following presentation of Maistre, I focus on three aspects of his thought, with a view to conveying the role of religion in his conservative worldview. First, I explore his philosophical anthropology, and how this philosophy fits into a wider worldview of what I call his 'sacrificio-Platonic ontology'. Second, I consider his view of history, the emergence of nations, and his view of providence as God's didactic engagement with His creation. Third, I explore Maistre's integralism.

2.2.2.1 Maistre's sacrificio-Platonic ontology

Maistre develops an Augustinian anthropology, conceiving of man as *disintegrated* due to his fallen state and his life of sin.[267] For Maistre, one of the effects of original sin is that we tend to underestimate the effects of original sin. The Fall entails not merely that man has some interior disorder which he must overcome by the cultivation of virtue, but rather the whole

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[266] It is worth recalling that the Jesuit priest Augustin Barruel's *The History of Jacobinism* was lauded by Burke. This book advanced a conspiracy theory that the Revolution had been orchestrated by a secret 'cabal' formed by an alliance of Jews and the Illuminati. Burke wrote to Barruel to express his admiration for the book; Maistre, on the other hand, dismissed it as a superficial and hysterical work of the imagination. See Garrard, *Counter-Enlightenments*, 48.

[267] For a clear analysis of Augustine's anthropology and psychology of fallen humankind, see Herbert A. Deane, *The Political and Social Ideas of St Augustine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 13-77.

cosmos has ruptured. Maistre's view is that man has been split in half; he will do that which is evil, and tell himself and others that he is good while he does it. Following the Atonement in Christ's sacrifice upon Calvary, Maistre holds that man has been elevated for a wondrous end, namely union with God. Yet, at the slightest alteration of circumstance, man willingly cuts himself off from God and reveals himself to be akin to a rabid brute. Maistre summarises this anthropology with his description of man as 'an incredible combination of two different and incompatible powers, a monstrous centaur.'[268] Man is two things at once, a noble creature with reason and free will, seeking his own good and that of others; *and* man is a brute, evil and unpredictable, who will destroy himself and his neighbour in a moment without warning.

The notion that man naturally desires to 'move into society' reflects what Enlightenment scholar Jack Lively calls Maistre's 'amiable Aristotelianism'.[269] This aspect highlights man's strictly social nature: there is no 'solitary, isolated individual' prior to his relational and communal existence.[270] In Maistre's anthropology, on the one hand we have man who knows not what he is without reference to the community, his very individuality depending upon his participation in the life of the community. On the other hand, we have man as the individual who sees the community as the means by which he satisfies his lust for *power*, achieving this to the degree he dominates and abuses those around him. According to Lively, 'this contradiction is, however, one which he consciously accepts and develops,' and ought to be considered a paradox rather than a contradiction, 'for his whole view of society is built on the notion of the moral schizophrenia of humanity.'[271] This is the key to understanding Maistre's anthropology: two opposing truths about man must be held together to properly account for the way he operates. As Lively puts it, man 'has both a good and an evil nature, a theomorphic and a theomachic nature, a dualism which was the inevitable consequence of his creation in the image of God and his fall from grace.'[272] Enlightenment optimism about human nature is judged by Maistre to be sheer naiveté, refuted by the events of the French Revolution itself. As Maistre writes in *The Saint Petersburg Dialogues*, it is original sin 'which explains everything, and without which nothing can be explained.'[273]

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[268] Maistre, 'The Saint Petersburg Dialogues' in *The Generative Principle*, 199.
[269] Lively, in Maistre, *The Generative Principle*, 10.
[270] *Ibid*. 10.
[271] *Ibid*. 10.
[272] *Ibid*. 10-11.
[273] Maistre, 'The Saint Petersburg Dialogues' in *The Generative Principle*, 196.

Lively explains that, for Maistre, 'man in harmony with his Creator is sublime, and his action is creative; equally, once he separates himself from God and acts alone, he does not cease to be powerful, since this is the privilege of his nature, but his acts… lead only to destruction.'[274] Maistre thinks that man, due to his fallen state, cannot by his own efforts truly be in harmony with his Creator. Maistre sees God, however, as ever seeking through the ages to lead man away from his path of self-ruination, as Lively elucidates:

> As Maistre sees man, therefore, he is doomed to perpetual frustration so long as he worships his own self-will. Born a rebel, he is yet an impotent rebel. He can revolt against the divinely ordained order of things; he can freely and voluntarily bring down destruction upon his own head; but in the end even this serves only to further the purposes of God.[275]

As Lively explains, God, according to Maistre, intervenes throughout history to draw man out of the tragedy into which his own sinfulness has plunged him, and yet sinful man prefers his own sinful plans. Man is rebellious, and his own plans end in further suffering. Even *this* God uses to bring about His own purposes, according to Maistre, which indeed is what he believes he has deciphered in the Revolution and the Terror: God is showing man what he looks like independent from divine grace.

The Revolution underpins much of Maistre's shocking reflections on the role of sacrificial killing, but it is important to make clear from the outset that he is neither sadistic nor violence-obsessed. Maistre is not a violent philosopher but a philosopher of violence, as Maistrean scholar Carolina Armenteros explains:

> Maistre was profoundly disturbed by bloodshed and highly sensitive to its status as a fundamental human experience. His correspondence leaves no doubt that he hated violence, far from revealing any sadism, Maistre's detailed description of the executioner's work and theoretical explanation of sacrifice was his way of unburdening himself of his innermost fears – realised en masse by the Revolution – and of expressing his deep concerns for human suffering.[276]

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[274] Maistre, 'Essay on the Generative Principle of Political Constitutions' in *The Generative Principle*, 170.
[275] Lively, in Maistre, *The Generative Principle*, 14.
[276] Carolina Armenteros, *The French Idea of History: Joseph de Maistre and his heirs, 1794-1854* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2011), 160.

As conveyed above, Maistre was deeply troubled by human suffering, especially the suffering of the innocent, and out of this he developed his theory of cosmic and religious sacrifice, which is his attempt to discern meaning in the immensity of suffering in the world.

Maistre sees the greatest obstacle to our flourishing to be the violence entailed by our fallen state. He advances the case that violence, especially violence towards the innocent, is an attempt to atone for guilt. He claims to see evidence for this everywhere in human experience. Denying or ignoring the fact of human violence, the suffering of the innocent, and its sheer immensity will not do. This suffering must be confronted and understood: we must peer into the depths of human nature to uncover the purpose of this suffering. Maistre believes he has done this, and by so doing has discovered also that fallen human nature does not possess the apparatus to rectify the tragic necessity for human suffering. Maistre does not celebrate violence as a means to realise his political vision, quite the opposite, he sees violence to be the major obstacle to realising a conservative settlement. Indeed, he believes that any counter-revolutionary, conservative society would have to be established non-violently for it to be conservative at all.[277]

Armenteros explains that, for Maistre, sacrifice 'was *the* primal, essential, and continual social activity.'[278] Sacrifice is the key to understanding his politico-religious worldview. For him, 'sacrifice explained social, historical, and moral progress with complete systematicness.'[279] Maistre, like Burke, saw the religious nature of humankind to be of primary importance for understanding human behaviour and ways of living. Burke approaches this natural religiosity through teleology and law, Maistre through the idea of sacrifice. For both, the denial of man's natural religiosity largely accounts for the frenzied character of the revolutionary, secular project. The logic which Maistre finds in sacrifice is explained by Owen Bradley:

> Human existence is of its nature imbalanced, excessive, disproportionate, ambivalent. This is what it is to have a body, blood, life. Thus body, life, and blood are spent to redress imbalance, excess, and disproportion. This moment of expenditure, however, must have its measure if it is to restore good order, and that is the social role of ritual.

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[277] See Joseph de Maistre, *Considerations of France*, edited by Richard A. Lebrun (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 77-82.
[278] Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 160.
[279] *Ibid*. 160.

Regardless of human intentions, however, the balancing continues. That human violence has its measure: this was Maistre's guiding idea on religion, law, history, and politics; more, it was his basic theoretical assumption that disorder has its logic and is thus capable of being understood.[280]

Maistre deems the *tragic existence of man* to arise out of his embodied condition. Maistre's view presupposes the Augustinian position on original sin, namely that it is of bodily origin in its transmission, with the operation of the soul being negatively affected by way of its correlative relationship with the body. In turn, the remedy comes through the body as well. Just as the tragic spiritual existence of man is established due to the tainting of the soul via the body, so too this is remedied by the ritualistic separation of body and soul in the act of sacrifice. Armenteros explains this view in the following way:

> This process produces a specific narrative. Man, having fallen and broken… after disobeying God, lives in the world in pain and sin, divided between the passions emanating from his soul and the duties dictated by his spirit. From the beginning, however, his sacrificial instinct has urged him to reunite with God, himself, and his kind, saving him from further degradation and remitting for the guilt of his blood with the spilling of innocent blood.[281]

As Armenteros explains, man's life of suffering comes from his separation from God, and this is symptomatically realised in his appetites and passions ruling over the higher operations of his spiritual life. Man strives, nonetheless, to reunite himself to God by way of sacrifice, offering innocent blood as something pure and pleasing to God in reparation for the guilty blood he carries in his veins. Maistre argues that every people has held it to be true that offering innocent blood expiates for guilt, writing that 'the grand words *superstition* and *prejudice* explain nothing; for a universal and constant error has never been able to exist.'[282]

The truest and highest sacrifice is human sacrifice, of which animal sacrifice is a pale imitation. Indeed, Maistre believes that this is the reason why in cases of animal sacrifice 'among the animals… those nearest to man by instinct and habit were chosen' and never

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[280] Owen Bradley, *A Modern Maistre: The Social and Political Thought of Joseph de Maistre* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 37.
[281] Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 182.
[282] Maistre, 'Soirées,' 5:125-26 in *Oeuvres*.

'non-intelligent or non-domestic animals like deer, snakes, fish, birds of prey, and so on.'[283] Of course, Maistre does not believe that any human blood is truly innocent, for it all carries the guilt of original sin, but the more removed the victim is from the sin for which his blood is the remedy, the better: sacrifice 'is efficacious in direct proportion to the innocence of the victim's blood.'[284] This, according to Maistre, has been at the heart of religious sacrifice down the ages.

Out of the 'universal truth' that innocent blood atones for guilty blood comes the 'proof' of Christianity's central mystery: the Atonement procured by the death of Christ:

> I know well that in all these considerations we are continually troubled by the wearisome sight of the innocent who perish with the guilty. But without becoming deeply involved in this most profound question, we can consider it solely in the light of the age-old dogma that *the innocent suffer for the benefit of the guilty*.
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> It was from this dogma, it seems to me, that the ancients derived the custom of sacrifices that was practiced everywhere and that was judged useful not only for the living but also for the dead, a typical custom that habit has led us to regard without astonishment, but whose roots are nonetheless difficult to discover.
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> Self-sacrifices, so famous in antiquity, come from the same dogma. Decius had *faith* that the sacrifice of his life would be accepted by the Divinity and that he could use it to balance all the evils that menaced his country.
>
> Christianity came to consecrate this dogma, which is perfectly natural to man although appearing difficult to arrive at by reason.[285]

Maistre writes that 'one would like to be able to contradict history when it shows us this abominable custom practiced throughout the world, but, to the shame of humanity, nothing is more incontestable.'[286] He continues, asserting that human sacrifice cannot be dismissed as

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[283] Joseph de Maistre, *Enlightenment on Sacrifices*, I 〈http://maistre.uni.cx/enlightenment_sacrifices.html〉 [accessed 13 April 2020]. Maistre makes this observation when remarking on the Israelite sacrifices of the Old Covenant, which were not human sacrifices, even though he maintains that human sacrifices are the true sacrifices of natural religion. The point is, of course, that he does not believe the religion of the Israelites to have been an expression of natural religion, but a supernatural religion revealed directly by God; they were forbidden from offering human sacrifices because they had been divinely 'set aside' for the purpose of providing the one truly innocent human sacrifice to end all human sacrifice.

[284] Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 162.

[285] Maistre, *Considerations*, 30.

[286] Maistre, *Enlightenment on Sacrifices*, II [accessed 13 April 2020].

an error or superstition, for 'it all results from the dogma of substitution, whose truth is beyond dispute and is ever innate in man.'[287]

Bradley notes that Maistre – always giving ample historical examples to support his claims – 'finds the habit of sacrificing children, wives, and strangers in Egypt, India, Greece, Rome, Carthage, Mexico, Peru, and Europe up to the eighth century;' and that is what is so scandalous: it is 'a universal tradition that is so appalling.'[288] What change takes place around the eighth century? Human sacrifices were 'put down by the divinely guided hand of immortal Charlemagne.'[289] In other words, Maistre believes that human sacrifice ceased when the temporal power as such was officially assumed into the Christian covenant with God, marked by the establishment of the Holy Roman Empire in the West. 'The immolation of human victims, the very idea of which makes us blanch, is natural, however, to natural man.'[290] According to Maistre, human sacrifices had not been stamped out on the arrival of a Christian political order because they were unnatural, but precisely because they were proper to natural man. Natural man, however, had been transformed and superseded by supernatural man: the Christian.

For Maistre, there is an ongoing struggle for the reintegration of human nature, and this is specifically a religious struggle. This struggle is between the Church and the unconverted world, a rivalry between the natural sacrifices of innumerable innocent victims and the one perfect and eternal sacrifice of the only truly innocent victim, Jesus Christ. According to Maistre, this supernatural sacrifice transforms those who unite themselves to it by means of the Eucharist, the bread and wine believed to become Jesus Christ whole and entire during the Christian sacrifice of the Holy Mass. As Armenteros puts it, 'when Christ died, his blood bathed the universe, purifying the cosmos.'[291] Fallen creation has now been touched by God in the Incarnation, and the process of reintegrating human nature has begun. The means for this reintegration is the Eucharist. By turning the human being the right way up, so to speak, he may be free from slavery to his appetitive and passionate impulses and led by his spiritual faculties to union with God, his true finality. The 'Crucifixion, re-enacted in the Eucharist, transforms the human body, calming the heart's impetuousness and uniting body, spirit, and soul.'[292] Like Burke, then, Maistre believes in a kind of moral progress, but

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[287] *Ibid.* II [accessed 13 April 2020].
[288] Bradley, *A Modern Maistre*, 44.
[289] Maistre, 'Sur le Délais' 5:452 in *Oeuvres.*
[290] *Ibid. 5:452.*
[291] Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 182.
[292] *Ibid.* 182.

it is one not based on the notion that such progress is the natural trajectory of humankind, but is a progress contingent upon social sacramentality.

Through reception of the Eucharist, Maistre believes that the Christian becomes identified with the sacrifice offered in the Holy Mass and extends Christ's sacrifice into the world, becoming himself the social replacement of the human sacrifices that Christianity has abolished. As Armenteros writes, 'the task of the Christian… is to make the future by partaking in Christ's sacrifice through the Eucharist and willing to be like the Lamb of God.'[293] The Christian is seen to become a living sacrifice, offered in Christ to God the Father, at once abolishing human sacrifice and yet also assuming, superseding, perfecting, and perpetuating it in a transfigured form. This is, in Maistre's view, the *special* purpose of those consecrated Christians in monasteries and convents: living sacrifices *par excellence*.[294] Maistre comments that it is for this role of extending Christ's sacrifice into the temporal sphere that the consecrated live a life of austerity:[295]

> Sometimes it is asked, of what use are these terrible austerities, which are also self-sacrifices, practiced by certain religious orders? It would be precisely the same thing to ask of what use is Christianity, which rests entirely on an enlargement of this same dogma of innocence paying for crime.[296]

For Maistre, to speak of the Christian making 'sacrifices' through acts of charity, penance, mortification, and so forth, is not to equivocate on the word *sacrifice,* but rather it is to express the metaphysical reality of the concrete act, namely the integration of the Christian's life into the self-offering of Jesus Christ to God the Father.

Much like Burke, Maistre believes that the only way to stabilise society and make the polity a place of peace, settling, and purpose, is to subjugate the passions and appetites to

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[293] *Ibid*. 181.

[294] For this reason, whilst he was horrified by the persecution of consecrated religious during the Terror, especially the 'massacre of the Carmelites' at Compiègne in 1794, he was not surprised that this was one of the effects of the 'satanical' Revolution. In his schema, it made sense that these 'living sacrifices' would be turned into the bloody human sacrifices of the new paganism. See Maistre, *Considerations*, 19.

[295] Traditional Christian teaching holds that the Church is so constituted as to be divided into two: clerical hierarchy and laity. These divisions have different but complementary apostolates; the role of the clerical hierarchy is to carry out priestly ministry to the Church's members, thereby sanctify the Church, whereas the role of laity is to sanctify the temporal sphere, and thereby bring the *world* into the Church. Consecrated life is not part of the clerical hierarchy of the Church, and has its origins in initiatives of the laity, although male members of religious orders may be ordained to the priesthood.

[296] Maistre, *Considerations*, 31.

reason. Maistre does not believe fallen man possesses within himself the means to do this. Man can demonstrate by the sacrifices of natural religion his frustration at being separated from God and fragmented within himself, but only by entering into the sacrifice of supernatural religion can a people be so changed as to form a real polity. For this reason, Maistre holds that every aspect of man's sociability must be imbued with supernatural grace, that the entire society may be offered as an unbloody sacrifice to God, as Armenteros explains:

> Maistre argued that sacrifice, rather than derive from the quotidian, invades it. The… individual who emulates Christ performs sacrifice every time he is just. This is why live sacrifices are unneeded in Christian societies, and why the abuse of sacrifice that characterised antiquity is largely unknown in modernity.[297]

What Armenteros conveys in this excerpt is that, for Maistre, a Christian society entails that its members, by living Christian lives, *are* the extension of the new sacrifice. This new sacrifice is deemed truly efficacious because the victim to whom all must unite themselves is truly innocent.

At times the identification of the Christian with the sacrificed Christ may require the intensification realised in martyrdom, as Armenteros comments:

> Christian sacrifices differ from all other forms in being voluntarily dolorous and thereby supremely efficacious. The Christian victim strives to actually *become* the Christ in the act of martyrdom. Unlike… in ancient sacrifices, the Christian victim is a willing one, and in desiring not only death itself but the many deaths of suffering s/he is… capable of overcoming evil.[298]

In the Maistrean analysis, martyrdom is only the most extreme expression of the 'sacrifice of self' proper to the Christian life. Human sacrifice cannot be vanquished, for it is a law of human nature. Such sacrifice can only be assumed and superseded, and for this reason it is 'retained and rectified by Christianity.'[299] Bradley puts it succinctly: 'Christian morality has thus certified sacrificial reversibility, the payment of innocence for guilt, but has corrected it

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[297] Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 171.
[298] *Ibid*. 169.
[299] Bradley, *A Modern Maistre*, 44.

by replacing the sacrifice of others with the sacrifice of oneself.'[300] This is what Maistre means when he says that 'under the empire of this divine law, the just (who never believes himself to be so)… examines himself, he purifies himself, he makes over himself effort that seem to pass humanity, to obtain finally the grace of *returning what he has not stolen*.'[301]

Maistre wants to understand the bloodshed of the Revolution and the Terror. He seeks to do this through the prism of sacrifice as a cosmic truth and a law of human nature. With the supernatural life defeated for the establishment of a secular settlement, what is procured is a reversal of the sacramentalisation process, and the return of 'natural man'. Natural man must offer natural sacrifices, that is, human victims. Maistre acknowledges that the re-emerging natural man may not know or believe that this is what he is doing, but to this Maistre replies with his oft-repeated maxim: 'the French Revolution leads men more than men lead it.'[302] He powerfully expresses this observation in the following lamentation:

> The holy laws of humanity crushed underfoot; innocent blood covering the scaffolds which covered France; men powdering and curling bloodstained heads; the very mouths of women stained with human blood.
>
> Here is the *natural* man! It is not that he does not bear within him the indestructible seeds of truth and virtue: his birthrights are imprescriptible; but without divine nurture these seeds will never germinate or will yield only damaged and unwholesome fruits.[303]

As Armenteros puts it, with supernature banished, 'humanity turns ferocious… and violent revolution becomes the supreme antisacrifice.'[304]

Armenteros explains that, for Maistre, we are all born sick –his belief that original sin 'explains everything' – and we are healed by grace. For this reason, she argues that Maistre saw the Revolution as a process of making man sick again:

> Throughout his works and correspondence and until his death, he wrote of rebellions, professions of adherence to atheism, *philosophie*, or even religious scepticism in the language of fever, delirium, and convulsion. The ravaging illness, the violent

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[300] *Ibid*. 44.
[301] Maistre, 'Soirées,' 5:349 in *Oeuvres.*
[302] Maistre, *Considerations*, 5.
[303] Maistre, *Enlightenment on Sacrifices*, II [accessed 13 April 2020].
[304] Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 164.

abnormality brought on by the loss of spiritual control over the body, allows the sentient principle seated in the blood to take over the whole human being.[305]

According to this view, in the reception of grace the Christian has, according to Maistre, fulfilled the need for ritual sacrifice. By grace's *healing* effect, the lower faculties of sensory appetite and passion have been subjugated to the higher spiritual powers, reason and will. This spiritual possession of self by the Christian allows for the *elevating* effect of grace to integrate the Christian (who is now integrated within himself) into Jesus Christ, as He in turn is offered to the Father in perpetual and perfect sacrifice. Secularism, by banishing the social operation of grace, reverses the supernatural process of healing, subordinating man's rational life to appetite. In turn, man is pulled down from his integration into the divine life of God. This reversal of the effects of grace does not remove the natural impulse nor the moral imperative to offer sacrifice. The sacrifices, however, become confused, frustrated, sick, and lose all efficacy, for they are *natural*, and according to Maistre unredeemed human *nature* is confused, frustrated, sick, and impotent.

It is tempting to think that Maistre adopted Enlightenment optimism about human nature, merely transposing this optimism from belief in 'Reason' to belief in grace. Maistre accepts, however, that even a polity that is utterly confessional and publicly Christian will still be situated in a fallen world, against which grace is always struggling. He does not believe that crimes, injustices, nor even the need for executions, will ever disappear. He does, however, believe that such executions will not be religious sacrifices. What deeply disturbs Maistre is the prospect of a return to natural sacrifice: the sacrifice of human victims. It is worse than this, however, for Maistre does not believe that pre-Christian man was the same sort of creature as post-Christian man; the former never possessed grace, whereas the latter possessed it and rejected it. According to Maistre, only post-Christian man is truly *satanic* in the strict sense.[306] For this reason he does not believe that the frenzied killings of revolution are true natural sacrifices, but the frustrated natural impulse expressing itself diabolically, in what Armenteros calls 'antisacrifice'.

It is in the light of Maistre's anxiety about the return of human sacrifice that we can understand his reflections on the social role of executioner. The following passage has famously been cited to demonstrate Maistre's gruesomeness:[307]

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[305] *Ibid.* 165.
[306] See Maistre, *Considerations*, 41-48.
[307] See Isaiah Berlin, in *Ibid.* xxvi-xxix.

Who is this inexplicable being, who, when there are so many agreeable, lucrative, honest and even honourable professions to choose among, in which a man can exercise his skill or his powers, has chosen that of torturing or killing his own kind? This head, this heart, are they made like our own? Is there not something in them that is peculiar, and alien to our nature? Myself, I have no doubt about this. He is made like us externally. He is born like all of us. But he is an extraordinary being, and it needs a special decree to bring him into existence as a member of the human family – a fiat of the creative power... Hardly is he assigned to his proper dwelling place, hardly has he been put in possession of it, when others remove their homes elsewhere whence they can no longer see him. In the midst of this desolation, in this sort of vacuum formed around him, he lives alone with his mate and his young, who acquaint him with the sound of the human voice: without them he would hear nothing but groans... The gloomy signal is given; an abject servitor of justice knocks on his door to tell him he is wanted; he goes; he arrives in a public square covered by a dense, trembling mob. A poisoner, a parricide, a man who has committed sacrilege is tossed to him: he seizes him, stretches him, ties him to a horizontal cross, lifts his arms; there is a horrible silence; there is no sound but that of bones cracking under the bars, and the shrieks of the victim. He unties him. He puts him on the wheel; the shattered limbs are entangled in the spokes; the head hangs down; the hair stands up, and the mouth gaping open like a furnace from time to time emits only a few bloodstained words to beg for death. The executioner has finished. His heart is beating, but it is with joy: he congratulates himself, he says in his heart 'Nobody breaks men on the wheel as well as I.' He steps down. He holds out his bloodstained hand, the justice throws him from a distance a few pieces of gold, which he catches through a double row of human beings standing back in horror. He sits down to table and he eats. He goes to bed and he sleeps. And on the next day, when he wakes, he thinks of something totally different from what he did the day before. Is he a man? Yes. God receives him in his temples, and allows him to pray. He is not a criminal. Nevertheless no tongue dare declare that he is virtuous, that he is an honest man, that he is estimable. No moral praise is appropriate to him, for everyone else is assumed to have relations with human beings: he has none. And yet all greatness, all power, all subordination rest on the executioner. He is the terror and he is the bond of human association. Remove this mysterious agent from the world, and in an instant order yields to chaos: thrones fall,

society disappears. God, who has created sovereignty, has also made punishment; he has fixed the earth upon these two poles: For the poles of the earth are the Lord's, and upon them he hath set the world.[308]

When we read this passage our reaction may be to shudder, and that is the response Maistre wishes to effect in his reader. For Maistre, the fact that we respond with shock and horror to this description of the killing of human beings demonstrates the depth of the supernatural transformation of Christian nations. It is not evident that the same reaction would have been provoked in a sixteenth-century Aztec, for example, whose culture was largely based upon the celebration of similar killings. The executioner is not a venerated priest, indeed 'no tongue dare declare that he is virtuous, that he is an honest man, that he is estimable.' For Maistre, the pariah status of the executioner tells us something about the Christian social order. As Bradley explains:

> The horror of society towards the executioner demonstrates the height of its moral development. The existence of the executioner both in society and ostracised from it, both central to it and on its margins, shows that the ending of a man's life by another is not a part of the normal relations of the society's members, as it is in revolutionary societies.[309]

The executioner represents the Christian reversal of natural sacrifice. As explained, the sacrificial principle is that spilt innocent blood expiates for living guilty blood. The victim of the executioner, however, is not an innocent victim, but a criminal. Such a killing is not a sacrifice at all, but a social mechanism for retributive and restorative justice. The executioner is not *offering* a victim, nor could such a victim be a worthy sacrifice according to the sacrificial principle. Rather, the executioner is an icon of the legal order and, counterintuitively, he indicates the bloodlessness of a Christian society. Douglas Hedley writes:

> For Maistre, punishment is not an arbitrary fact about human society but reflects a spiritual law. I think that this Platonic dimension of Maistre's thought can be seen in

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[308] Maistre, 'Soirées,' 4:32-3 in *Oeuvres.*
[309] Bradley, *A Modern Maistre*, 65.

his emphasis upon the mirroring of eternal justice upon earth, however obliquely. The executioner represents order amidst disorder. For all the horror of his acts, they are not… the expression of brute power.[310]

The political settlement that Maistre envisages is based upon a Christian Platonism, which sees the world as a fallen, fragmented, and disordered reflection of the perfect divine order. Into this fallen world which the Deity has entered, establishing the possibility of transforming it into a *true* reflection of the divine order by the operation of grace. In this fallen world, 'mirroring of eternal justice' will require directive and coercive means, and however misplaced are his presuppositions, one thing is clear for Maistre: power is not arbitrary, but determined by a 'spiritual law' which must be obeyed. Hedley further explains this notion:

> For Maistre, the existence of society at all presupposes the victory of *justice*, however imperfectly realised, over sheer power. The institution of capital punishment is a shadow of the eternal and immutable divine law which lies at the basis of human association and society… [F]or the Platonic Maistre God is the transcendent source of earthly and temporal justice and order.[311]

As Hedley describes, if a functioning society can exist at all, however imperfectly, then already there is a free association between people gathered together for a *good* end, rather than the subordination of ultimately dissociated individuals under a purely coercive power for some instrumental or efficient reason. Such establishment of a truly human society can be measured in comparison to the divine order to which it is seeking to conform itself, that is what is at the heart of Maistre's Platonism.

The darkness of fallen human nature, against which grace is always struggling, requires that grace receives the cooperation of the political power's coercive means. Maistre, then, is not in any way utopian in his desire for the establishment of a Christian social order. He has no doubt that in a fallen world there will always be thievery, rapes, murders, and injustices of every kind, but he also believes that the social response to the darkness of the human heart will differ in kind to that of a non-Christian society. Rather than the killing of human beings as a celebrated religious sacrifice of the innocent to expiate for the guilt of the

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[310] Hedley, 'Enigmatic images of an invisible world' in *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*, 131.
[311] *Ibid*. 132.

community, the killing will be of the guilty, to restore justice after the tragic failure of one of Christ's members to unite himself – by becoming good – to the sacrifice of Christ.[312] Far from Maistre being a sadistic thinker, his whole theory of sacrifice is advanced to argue for a Christian political order as the ultimate way to minimise violence and suffering, and protect the innocent through the sacramentalisation of the polity.

2.2.2.2 The nation and the role of God's didactic providence in the thought of Maistre

Like all of the early conservatives, Maistre does not mean by 'constitution' a written document, but rather the established *way of life* of a people distinguishable from other peoples by *national character*.[313] It is necessary to further consider Maistre's view of nations and constitutions, as well as his understanding of civilizational development; from there I will be in a position to present his view of the political role of divine providence.

I have already shown the depth to which Maistre believes that the need for religious sacrifice is *written on our hearts*, a primordial and inextinguishable requirement in human nature to offer a victim to God. He expands the notion of 'truths in human nature', universal but diversely particularised, to the whole realm of *traditional beliefs*. Maistre believes that what is essential to the flourishing of human nature will be found in all communities, essentially the same but diversely expressed (just like the practice of sacrifice). He simply refers to these as 'traditional beliefs', and holds them to be of divine origin, as Lively puts it: 'they are the outcrops of that submerged collective mind which, rather than the individual reason, is the true voice of God.'[314] The 'traditional beliefs' Maistre defends play a role in his thought analogous to that of *prejudice* in Burke's writings, and at times Maistre opts for the Burkean term, referring the 'useful prejudices adopted by the national mind.'[315]

Romanticism regarding 'traditional beliefs' was common among eighteenth-century writers, and led both Bonald and Lamennais to think that universally held beliefs embodied

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[312] Maistre's thoughts on this topic were clearly shaped by his experiences as a member of the *Penitents Noirs*, a Catholic confraternity whose purpose was to keep vigil at the cell of any criminal who was to be executed the following day, praying and encouraging the prisoner not to despair, and also to ensure a Christian service and burial would be provided after the execution.

[313] Occasionally in his writings Maistre attempts to develop a complex semi-historical, semi-mythological explanation for the origins of nations based upon the Biblical account of the Fall, the classical Golden Age tradition, and a novel interpretation of the Deluge story. An examination of this romantic current is beyond the scope of this volume; I must limit myself to the specific question of the role of religion in Maistrean political thought. For a brief overview of Maistre's political mythology, see Lively, in Maistre, *The Generative Principle*, 14-17.

[314] *Ibid*. 16.

[315] Maistre, 'Study on Sovereignty, in *The Generative Principle*, 108.

private revelations from God granted to the great leaders of humankind prior to the race's dispersion at the destruction of the Tower of Babel.[316] Maistre, agreeing with writers such as Hooker, Bossuet, and Burke, believed that traditional beliefs and customs, particularised variously among all peoples in their cultures and institutions (their particular instantiation being part of the respective national character), were signs of God's providence realised in nationhood, an application in history of the natural law. For this reason, Maistre holds that by studying traditional beliefs, their particularisation for a particular people, and in turn national *constitutions*, containing the treasury of practical wisdom received down the ages, one could decipher the divine mission of this or that people, the special role unique to each nation in the overall providential meaning of history. 'Every nation, he urged, has its own particular traditions, its own character, its own mission.'[317]

Besides the classical senses of 'revelation', that is, God and his law revealed in the 'books' of *Holy Writ* and of *Nature*, there is for Maistre a third sort of revelation, a revelation of God's will in time. The will of God makes itself known in a general sense through God's providential care of peoples, whose national realisation is a kind of communication of God in history. For Maistre, explains Lively, 'traditional beliefs and systems are sacrosanct, not just because they are useful, but because they do in a very literal sense embody the revealed wishes of God.'[318] According to Maistre, the various customs, laws, religious practices, institutions, social arrangements and so forth of primitive peoples, originating in obscurity, are nurtured by God's providence, bestowing both meaning and reason on events otherwise impossible to understand. Such meaning and reason are only found in hindsight, and even then, only partly. This process gives rise to a national body, whose constitution *is* the bringing forth of those obscure principles from seed-like state to full bloom.

Maistre holds that a rationalistic, and therefore truncated, conception of human reason has led to the mistaken belief that one can determine political legitimacy and sovereignty (the legitimate power to make laws) by looking to some moment in time, without reference to the formation and development of the nation, its culture, and its multifaceted political settlement:

> He, who has not the power even of making an insect or a blade of grass, believed that he was the immediate author of sovereignty, the most important, sacred, and fundamental thing in the moral and political world, and that, for example, such and

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[316] Lively, in Maistre, *The Generative Principle*, 15.
[317] *Ibid*. 19.
[318] *Ibid*. 15.

such a family reigns because such and such a people has willed it; while his is surrounded by incontrovertible proofs that every sovereign family reigns because it is chosen by a superior power. If he does not see these proofs, it is because he closes his eyed or scrutinises too closely… He believed that he could constitute nations, that is to say, in other words, that he could create the national unity by virtue of which one nation is distinguishable from another.[319]

One can see from this passage that Maistre is reacting against what he perceives as the eighteenth-century tendency to conceive reality, especially political realities, according to a mechanistic metaphor. He argues that the State is an *organic* reality, rather than a *mechanistic* one, and that since we cannot make organic realities, such as an 'insect or a blade of grass,' as we can a machine, we ought not to think ourselves capable of making a political settlement in this way either. For Maistre, we cannot be the authors of that of which we ourselves are a part; rather, God is the author of history and the national stories it contains. The belief that we can author nations with written documents marks – according to Maistre – a foolish and ill-fated attempt to usurp the place of God.

In the opening lines of *The Generative Principle*, Maistre states his view of what a constitution is:

> One of the gravest errors of a century which embraced them all was to believe that a political constitution could be written and created a priori, whereas reason and experience agree that a constitution is a divine work and that it is precisely the most fundamental and essentially constitutional elements in a nation's laws that cannot be written.[320]

It is clear from this passage that Maistre holds a constitution not to be a written document, but a settled way of life, arising out of God's providential care for a specific community, a people born together, a *nation*. It is assumed in the French Revolution, and those advancing ideas associated with it, that a nation can come forth from man's reason in formulaic propositions in a written document. For Maistre, by this assumption the eighteenth-century turned reality on its head. In his view, man's reason is shaped by, and arises out of, a community with a

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[319] Maistre, 'Essay on the Generative Principle of Political Constitutions' in *The Generative Principle*, 171.
[320] *Ibid.* 147.

distinct culture, and a multi-layered ability to convey – both explicitly and tacitly – truth in ongoing communal formation.

By reducing a nation's constitution to written formulae, incalculable aspects of the nation are excluded from its members' self-understanding:

> So blind are men that if tomorrow some constitution-mongers came again to organise a people and to constitute it with *a little black liquid*, the crowd would again lose not time in believing in the promised miracle. Once more it would be said, *Nothing is lacking*; *all is foreseen*; *all is written*; whereas, the very fact that all had been foreseen, discussed, and written would demonstrate the worthlessness and insubstantiality of the constitution.[321]

According to this passage, one who believes he has conceived everything has surely conceived almost nothing. We cannot imagine a position more radically different and opposed to that of the French revolutionaries than that of Maistre. They believed that a constitution was a human and written work, independent from and unconditioned by history, being universal and based upon principles valid for all. Maistre believed that a constitution was a divine and unwritten work, arising slowly out of the story of a particular people, rooted in their culture, customs, legal traditions, ancient institutions, specific to them, a way of life always evolving and adapting through discussion, authoritative decision-making, and tacit development down the ages.[322]

It would be a misreading of Maistre to interpret him as saying that nothing is universal. Maistre believes in a universal law of God, known by natural reason and by divine revelation, but this is received, implemented, and realised differently for each nation. In his view, traditional beliefs appear different for each nation, but at a deeper level all contain the same universal truths, only received diversely according to the many cultures of the world. 'Man,' Maistre writes, 'in spite of his fatal degradation, bears always the evident marks of his divine origin, in that every universal belief is always more or less true.'[323] According to him, the universal law of God is in our hearts, so to speak, as something comparable to the notion

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[321] *Ibid.* 160-161.

[322] As Armenteros comments: 'Conservatives, heirs of a tradition as old as ancient Rome, tended to claim that constitutions are inscribed in the history and social structures of nations, and that no country can import a foreign constitution without doing violence to its own.' Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 119.

[323] Maistre, 'The Saint Petersburg Dialogues' in *The Generative Principle*, 214.

of *synderesis*, that purely natural human capacity, referred to by the *schoolmen*, to apprehend or intuit the primary content of the unchangeable moral law. This is why he asserts that the 'universal truth will always show itself.'[324]

Maistre deeply admired the English Constitution and praised Burke for his defence of it. Maistre recognised that this constitution was essentially a medieval product: a sacral monarchy, an established Church, a functioning aristocracy of lords temporal and spiritual, a parliament of 'knights of the shire', and impartial courts based on a guild system of 'inns'. For Maistre, however, perhaps more important was the *social* constitution of England:

> We are still told of written constitutions and constitutional laws made a priori. It is impossible to conceive how a rational man can believe in such chimeras. If any scheme was carried through in England to give the cabinet a formal constitutional status by law and thus regulate and circumscribe rigorously its privileges and powers, together with the precautions necessary to limit its influence and prevent it from abusing it, the state would be undermined.
>
> The real English constitution is the public spirit, admirable, unique, infallible, and above praise, which leads, conserves, and protects all – what is written is nothing.[325]

In this excerpt, Maistre prioritises society over statecraft for understanding national constitutions. It is this that leads him to consider the importance of language, a dimension of national belonging which is possessed by all a nation's members. Enlightenment *philosophe* Étienne Bonnot de Condillac had suggested that many social problems could be remedied by subjecting all language to philosophic correction.[326] Condillac was essentially transposing Enlightenment assumptions in political thought to the realm of language, namely that *Reason*, independent of context, history, shared cultural commitments and so forth, could purify and bring to perfection something historically conditioned, contextual, and particular. Maistre held that 'language could not be created a priori or perfected by the wit of man or philosopher.'[327]

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[324] *Ibid.* 214.

[325] Maistre, 'Essay on the Generative Principle of Political Constitutions' in *The Generative Principle*, 149-150.

[326] An idea reintroduced, though differently, by certain analytic philosophers in the twentieth-century.

[327] Lively, in Maistre, *The Generative Principle*, 15.

Here we can identify a quasi-egalitarian current in Maistre, and one commonly found throughout conservative thought. Whilst not downplaying the importance of governmental sovereignty and authority, Maistre proposes that that to which one should attend, in seeking to understand the State, is what happens at the level of civil society. Those 'bottom-up' principles shared by all the polity's members should be one's focus, foremost among which is language. Maistre holds that it is through language that national identities are formed. [328] It is almost the very definition of a nation that it comprises a people distinguished from other peoples by their tongue.[329] Language is not imposed by a particular section of society, but a prerequisite for belonging to that society, ever shaping its culture and historical direction.

Maistre holds that there is something deeply mysterious about language. The conveying of intelligible truth, the ideas in the human mind, by the spoken word, is the bringing of truth into time. Language is the concretisation of truth in time through speech. Indeed, for Maistre, all human language is a fragmented possession of the perfect unified language which is the Word in the divine life of God. Every distinct language is, then, a national possession of the Divine Logos.[330] All who possess something of language have made their own a portion of the wisdom of God. This is one of the reasons why Maistre so despised the view of Condillac, namely that the language of the ordinary man was not to be trusted, and that only language purified by the educated classes, philosophically scrutinised and cleansed, was true language. Again, for Maistre, Condillac (just like the *philosophes* in political matters) was seeking to place the mind of man where in truth only the mind of God is to be found.

Due to the common and unexamined possession of language by all, to varying degrees, according to Maistre, the moral intuitions of the uneducated are largely to be trusted. The uneducated man's unexamined language expresses moral prejudices and unexamined assumptions which Maistre holds are generally trustworthy. So too, the truly and profoundly educated man is the man who has learned enough to know that his knowledge is in fact very limited, and therefore is also largely to be trusted. The dangerous person, for Maistre, is the person situated between these two: the *slightly educated* person. This person has learned

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[328] See Joseph de Maistre, *The Pope: Considered in His Relations with the Church, Temporal Sovereignties, Separated Churches, and the Cause of Civilization*, translated by Aeneas McDonell Dawson (London: C. Dolman, 1850), xvii-xviii.

[329] There are of course rare examples of nations based on something other than language for national identity. The Swiss, for example, are identified by their shared Alpine culture rather than a single language. Such cases, however, are exceptions.

[330] This view of the *mysticism of language* is presented in Maistre, 'The Saint Petersburg Dialogues' in *The Generative Principle*, 205-210.

enough to convince himself that he knows something, but not enough to see that this something is very little. Such a person, with a very impoverished conception of the span of reality, is quickly driven to stand in judgement over the world which he does not understand, but believes himself to have comprehended in its entirety. He judges that he *knows* reality, and therefore he can *judge* reality. He does not, however, actually know reality. This is what Maistre means by his relentless criticisms of 'individual reason'.[331] The *slightly educated* person understands little besides his *ideas* about the reality that he does not well understand. He does not return from those ideas back to the reality of which they are abstractions, abstractions to which he anxiously and unsuccessfully seeks to conform the world. The *slightly educated* person, in other words, is a natural rationalist. The uneducated man and the truly educated man see themselves, in Maistre's view, as members of the same community; the *slightly educated* man sees himself as part of an '*Elect*'.[332] As Lively presents Maistre's position, 'it was not the Elect who could hear this inner voice of conscience, but the unsophisticated, all those unstained by excessive rationalism – and this was a state within all man's capacities.'[333]

It is by this notion of the union of uneducated and educated man that we can understand Maistre's view of the origins of the State. He sees the origins of the political power to be invariably violent and generally foundered in a dethroning of some individual or family with a greater claim to political legitimacy. For this reason, in his view, it is a mistake to look back to the origins of some royal line, or to the claim of some people to some land, in order to discern legitimacy. Legitimacy, according to Maistre, will not be found at *some point in time*, but is accumulated *over time*. As Bradley puts it, 'because all beginnings are low and violent, politics cannot be a matter of purity but only of a gradual purification through

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[331] Maistre, 'Study on Sovereignty, in *The Generative Principle*, 110.

[332] This is a point which has been popularised in recent times by biologist Bret Weinstein. He notes that when asking the following question to someone with a substandard education, 'Are whales fish?', the person will generally say *yes*, since he supposes that a fish is an animal with fins that lives in water, and therefore a whale must be a fish. On asking the same question to a highly educated person, who analyses the question carefully, generally he will also respond with *yes*, since he judges that the term 'fish' is a loose category for animals which share a certain living condition, namely they live an aquatic life, which is why scaled fish, unscaled fish, non-skeletal animals like jellyfish, and exoskeletal creatures like shellfish are all fish. Weinstein comments that only the standard university graduate, the *slightly educated person*, will tend to answer 'No, they are mammals'. This person, whilst believing himself to be demonstrating his learning, in fact mistakenly judges 'fish' to denote a genus of animals, rather than a reference to a condition shared by many genera and species. See *Third Order Thinking (Or: Is a Whale a Fish?)* ⟨https://epiphanyaweek.com/2018/08/03/third-order-thinking-or-is-a-whale-a-fish/⟩ [accessed 3 March 2021].

[333] Lively, in Maistre, *The Generative Principle*, 18.

distancing from origins.'[334] Maistre holds that, in looking at the genesis of political settlements, one will find 'very few sovereignties able to justify the legitimacy of their origins.'[335] This is why, in Maistre's view, it is so necessary to see the *hand of God* in the origins of this of that temporal power (for in general the bare historical facts present scandalous acts and usurpation) and try to see legitimacy as a status procured over *time*; the alternative is to seek the overthrow of every established temporal power for the sake of 'clean beginnings'.[336] For Maistre, it is necessary to see history through the prism of providence, as it brings a people from seed-like form to a state of civilizational flourishing:

> It is always necessary for the origin of sovereignty to appear as being outside the sphere of human control; so that the very men who appear to be directly involved are nevertheless only circumstances. As for legitimacy, if it seemed ambiguous in its beginning, God has explained himself through his prime minister in the affairs of this world, *time*.[337]

What we witness in history are *effects* of God's divine purpose for humanity, as God brings about a settlement of civilization, the legitimacy of which is brought about by the process itself, rather than by the moral or constitutional acceptability of some particular event.

It is through the ongoing *common culture* of the uneducated, and the raising of this into a *high culture*, that a civilization develops. In opposition to Rousseau, Maistre holds civilization not to be something grafted artificially onto *true natural man*, but rather civilized man is what man truly is.[338] To say otherwise may be compared to saying that an acorn is the true and proper state of an oak. Civilization, however, is not something possessed only by the educated, but enjoyed by all, over which none can stand in absolute judgement. This flourishing of a community is partly what bestows legitimacy upon it, including upon the

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[334] Bradley, *A Modern Maistre*, 115.

[335] Maistre, 'Essay on the Generative Principle of Political Constitutions' in *The Generative Principle*, 161.

[336] Newman makes a similar observation: 'Earthly kingdoms are foundered, not in justice, but in injustice. They are created by the sword, by robbery, cruelty, perjury, craft, and fraud. There never was a kingdom, except Christ's, which was not conceived and born, nurtured and educated, in sin… What monarchy is there but began in invasion or usurpation? What revolution has been effected without self-will, violence, or hypocrisy?' John Henry Newman, *Sermons on Subjects of the Day* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1902), 242.

[337] Maistre, 'Essay on the Generative Principle of Political Constitutions' in *The Generative Principle*, 161.

[338] This is a point eloquently argued in Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed*, 110-130.

political arrangement through which it is realised. Maistre quotes with approval Burke's phrase: 'art is man's nature.'[339]

The interplay of common and high culture in the development of a civilization is what brings to fruition those raw elements in a nation, such as language, family ties, cult, and so forth, establishing a recognisable national character. This, we can say, is a process of formation by which a people acquire self-consciousness as a nation, in preparation for national *discipleship*. For Maistre, it is only when a nation becomes a Christian disciple that, as a moral whole, it can know the true mission for which it came into being. Just as the mission of the Apostles and their successors is to make 'disciples of all nations,' so the mission of *discipled nations* is to build together the territory of Christendom. In Maistre's view, then, the distinction between nations is important for the unity of nations rather than their disunity. This unity, however, is only procured by participation in a transcendent society which both permeates and assumes the nations of the world whilst leaving them intact, this society being the Church. The unique mission intended by God for each nation does not lead, in the Maistrean schema, to competitive self-interested nations. Rather, each nation, without losing its distinctive character, must make its contribution to the supernatural felicity of all humankind.

Commenting on the Maistrean vision of nations as it is found in *The Pope*, Maistre's final work, Armenteros states the following:

> Such concern that France be healthy so that Europe might be so too contrasts sharply with federalist and republican ideas of a homogenizing Europe. The Europe of Kant and Constant unified subjects who were "culturally undifferentiated and 'uniform'" and fulfilled identical political roles. It was a Europe true to Enlightenment absolutism, an egalitarian international polity premised on an unmediated relationship between individuals and the state. Compare Maistre's Europe, led by different nations at different historical times, intrinsically historicising, religiously animated, culturally pluralist, and politically and intellectually dependent on the overall well-being of the nation that governs its mind. It was an ecclesiological rendition of Herder's cosmopolitan Europe. Mindful of recent French governments' treatment of the popes, *Du pape* portrays the Church – against Galican theology – as the natural moderator of European temporal sovereignties across time. Book 1, in fact, contends not only that

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[339] Maistre, 'Study on Sovereignty, in *The Generative Principle*, 98.

the medieval church was politically autonomous from kings, and the ultimate judge of their politics; but that papal infallibility is the corollary of such arbitration and autonomy.[340]

Here, Armenteros compares the unity of European nations as presented by Maistre to that of Enlightenment thinkers, Immanuel Kant and Benjamin Constant. According to Armenteros, the vision presented by such thinkers was one of a federalist union of nations, constitutionally identical to one another, forming something more like regions of a single mega-State (rather than autonomous nation States), the basic cell of which would be the voting individual, rather than a *complexus* of smaller societies within nations, both natural and synthetic. Maistre's *counter-Enlightenment* vision for Europe is one of great diversity, multi-layered, whose unity depends on prioritising one nation over others at different periods on account of the organic civilizational achievement of that nation. In his view, nations must recognise that their proper purpose does not arise in isolation from each other nor from their unity alone, but is bestowed by their union with the single supernatural society of the Church, which both transcends nations and is intimately bound up with their constitutions. Maistre holds that the Church's head, the pope, is always the final legitimate judge of temporal matters precisely because his office does not arise out of the temporal reality but has been established by extrinsic means.

This *permeation* of the nation and its constitution with the presence of the Church is what Maistre at times calls the 'religious principle' and is, in his view, the primary conservative power, without which the nation will corrode:

> The religious principle, already so strong because of what it effects, is still stronger because of what it prevents, through the respect with which it surrounds everything it takes under its wings. If a pebble is consecrated, that immediately becomes a reason for keeping it from those who might mislay or misuse it… If therefore you wish to *conserve* all, *consecrate* all.[341]

The 'religious principle' transforms the nation, elevating it to the supernatural life of a Christian disciple, leaving no aspect of its members' lives unchanged. Maistre makes the case that this is not only a permeation, but an assumption of all that providence has done to

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[340] Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 123.
[341] Maistre, 'Essay on the Generative Principle of Political Constitutions' in *The Generative Principle*, 176.

prepare the nation for discipleship, consecrating it and rendering it sacral. As he puts it, 'the religious principle is in essence creative and conservative.'[342] If the nation's consecration does not take place, then the constitution – the settled way of life – will become viewed as no more than the effects of human innovation, unfixed and disposable at the will of man who produced it. In turn, for Maistre, the alternatives available to a nation are consecration or ongoing revolution.

According to Maistre, the national character and the 'religious principle' animating it emerge together, the former being conditioned by the latter. The nation contains within itself a religion of natural piety, based on a belief in God's care for *this* community. The Church comes to consecrate this natural religion, and by this consecration animate the nation as a disciple. For the State to banish religion from the public arena, then, is to declare that the State does not arise out of the nation, and is not characterised by the pieties of its members, but rather the State *authors* the nation, reconstituting it at will. According to Maistre, this is nothing less than usurping the place of God as author and providential guardian of the nation. In Maistre's view, this perversion of the proper relationship between State and nation ultimately leads to the State claiming for itself rights of worship in the place of God, thereby deifying itself, and making every aspect of civil life its jurisdiction. Maistre summarises his position in the following striking passage:

> "Depart from us, God! Must we forever tremble before priests, and receive from them whatever instruction they care to give us? Throughout Europe, truth is hidden by the smoke of incense; it is time that it emerged from this fatal cloud. We shall no longer speak of you to our children; it is for them, when they become men, to decide if you are and what you are and what you ask of them. All things displease us, because your name is written on all things. We wish to destroy everything and to re-create it without your help. Depart from our councils of state, our schools, our homes; we shall be better off alone, reason will be a sufficient guide. Depart from us, God!"
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> How has God punished this abominable delirium? He has punished it as he created the world, by a single phrase. He has said: LET IT BE – and the political world collapsed.

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[342] *Ibid*. 176.

This is how the two proofs join to convince even the least farseeing minds. On the one side, the religious principle presides over every political creation; and on the other everything crumbles once it withdraws.[343]

Here, Maistre is describing in his shrill idiom the process of revolutionary secularism. He suggests that God's permitting of such a revolution against the 'religious principle', and the effects of this process, is its own punishment. The life of consecration properly 'presides over' every aspect of political life, nothing of which can survive its banishment.

In the background of Maistre's concerns for the nation, and the relationship between nations, is his view that divine providence operates down the centuries to teach each nation, that each may fulfil its particular mission. Let us turn, therefore, to the idea of providence for a better understanding of the role it plays in the Maistrean concept of nationhood. The Christian view of divine providence is well presented by Martin D'Arcy in the following passage:

In the Christian dispensation Providence is looked upon as both universal and particular. As particular it means that every individual is cared for by God, even to the hairs of his head, or as St Paul describes it, that all things cooperate for the good of those that love God. As universal, it means that though history is made by the cooperation and clash of human wills, God works in and through it, so that His purposes are fulfilled. This is the idea of Providence which has prevailed in the West and wherever Christianity has penetrated, and it lies behind the attempts of various Christian thinkers in the past to sketch a providential view of history.[344]

Maistre was certainly such a Christian thinker, attempting to sketch a providential view of history, and of the recent revolutionary events which had so disturbed his life. He saw God working in and through events during his lifetime and sought to decipher the true purposes of God in all he witnessed.

Maistre is not an historian in the strict sense. 'There is the same evidence before the historian and the Christian writer… [but] one finds an explanation in terms of empirical

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[343] *Ibid*. 180.
[344] Martin D'Arcy, *The Sense of History: Secular and Sacred* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1974), 134.

observation and human nature, the other sees the working of Providence.'[345] Maistre is a Christian theorist of historical events; he does not draw from history the notion of providence, but rather providence is the precondition for how he understands the unfolding of history, especially for what he wants to say about nations. He deems himself able to discern the mission of nations because providence enables him to see nations as purposive. To use an analogy: by looking at a sword, one can know it is a sword, and therefore know its general purpose. To know the general purpose of swords, however, is not to know the *particular* purpose of *this* sword. *This* sword may have been made to be carried by a king, or to be carried by a general; it may be a combat weapon or intended for ceremonial use only. It is impossible to know the *particular* purpose unless the swordsmith communicates this. For Maistre, to know what a nation is, as a distinct moral whole, a people gathered of the same tongue and culture, seeking the same moral end of the flourishing of its members, is not to know the purpose – what he calls *mission* – of this or that nation. This mission must be taught to the nation by God as he reveals it in his providential care and guardianship down the ages. Maistre sees providence to be profoundly didactic. As one commentator, Elcio Vercosa Filho, puts it: 'the provident God is humanity's teacher, the true educator of mankind.'[346] Armenteros summarises Maistre's view of providence:

> For Maistre history was a moral force, the vehicle of Providence, the site for the accumulation of experience, and the tool for discovering what humanity actually is… Maistrean Providence is a provider of knowledge that bestows radical freedom by revealing its ways to humanity.[347]

It may be difficult to understand how Maistre could look at the violent events of the Terror and see these as lessons taught by a loving God. Filho explains this in the following way:

> [God's] driving back of devious mankind to the ways of the divine presupposes a free decision on the part of man, an acceptance of God's holy sovereignty… That this coming back originates in man's free obedience to God's call, in his free acceptance

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[345] *Ibid*. 135.
[346] Elcio Vercosa Filho, 'The pedagogical nature of Maistre's thought' in *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*, 196.
[347] Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 2.

of providential education, is indicated by a classic term in both Jewish and Christian theological (but also Platonic, with a different meaning) traditions: it is metanoia, repentance, conversion and return (epistrophé) to God through pain and penitence.[348]

As Filho comments, in his abandonment of God man discovers what he is without God. God leaves man to depend on himself, that he may learn this lesson and freely turn back to God. In the ninth dialogue of the *Saint Petersburg Dialogues*, Maistre compares the severity of God as providential educator to that of a surgeon wounding and inflicting pain on the patient in order to save his life. Filho further comments: 'perhaps [this is] *the* most classical image of the divine educational action, one that suggests that divine chastisements form a kind of *therapsiquê*, a therapy for the sinning soul.'[349]

Seeing history through the prism of providence allows for a vision of 'man and his world… *from the point of view of God*.'[350] Indeed, one aspect of Enlightenment '*philosophism*' which Maistre deems so offensive is the attempt to establish a 'God's point of view' by human reason alone, excluding the interpersonal relatedness with God which alone can invite one to share such a viewpoint:

> His critique of the titanic character of many of the claims of the philosophical enlightenment is directed to the ambition of attaining some kind of divine view of man and the world in purely philosophical, that is, systematic terms, with no room for mystery or indetermination (i.e. with no room for Providence understood as divine action), as modern philosophy, specially its politics and philosophy of history, had continuously tried to do, an attitude that for Maistre would mean that man is striving

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[348] Filho, 'The pedagogical nature of Maistre's thought' in *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*, 199-200.

[349] *Ibid*. 202. Maistre is, in effect, transposing a traditional Christian ascetical teaching into political commentary. According to such teaching, God, in stages, purifies the 'senses of the body' and 'senses of the soul' of the pious Christian, inflicting great suffering by the withdrawal of corporeal and spiritual consolation in order to free him from reliance on such things, eventually bringing him to a state of mystical union. Maistre sees a similar process in the suffering of Europe under the tide of revolution. He sees God to be bringing the Christian nations back to Himself by the cleansing path of suffering: 'the great purification must be accomplished.' Maistre, *Considerations*, 14; This mystical and ascetical teaching is presented in depth in John of the Cross, 'The Dark Night' in *The Collected Works of St John of the Cross* (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1991), 353-460; and in a more systematic fashion in Adolphe Tanquerey, *The Spiritual Life: A Treatise on Ascetical and Mystical Theology* (New York: Desclee & Co., 1930), 305-453.

[350] Filho, 'The pedagogical nature of Maistre's thought' in *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*, 195.

to replace God, to deify his own vision, and not to be uplifted to God's perspective (to be *deified* instead), as he is expected to do when his grasp is "captured" by the divine text.[351]

As Filho explains above, Maistre holds that philosophic attempts to determine the direction of history are futile. For example, it certainly was not clear to those who proclaimed a new social order based upon *liberté, égalité,* and *fraternité* that it would lead to widespread incarceration (and killing), inequality, and social fragmentation. For Maistre, the world is not like a machine, operating like clockwork, the rules of which one can learn, and the progress of which one can foresee. The world, for Maistre, is the *relation* between God and humanity. History is properly understood as the story of this relationship.

To Maistre there was something of the Gnostic heresy in the assumption that elite philosophic knowledge afforded one the mental apparatus to both grasp and author the direction of history. As Bradley puts it, 'it was precisely the Enlightenment's overly narrow understanding of order that Maistre considered Gnostic.'[352] From the Maistrean perspective, history is the story of a relationship that we are *all* experiencing, known not by abstract principles but by interpersonal relatedness with God.

The idea of providence is part of a wider teleological view of history, a view which sees the world as pregnant with purpose and meaning, and ordered towards a particular end. God brings it to this end not as a puppet master, but through secondary causation and the free agency of his rational creatures.[353] A divine plan for the created order need not imply a deterministic conception of the world, such a plan may in fact be seen as the precondition for any freedom.[354] The notion of human freedom within cosmic purposiveness is essential to the Maistrean worldview. According to Maistre, we may reject the end for which God has made us, but the suffering which follows from this is deeply didactic, and is therefore utilised by God so as to return us once more to a state of liberty.

Having offered these overviews of nationhood and God's didactic providence, it is now apposite to consider the application of the latter to the former, seeking to understand God's providential action in and through nations in the Maistrean schema. In the *Considerations on France*, Maistre asserts the following:

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[351] *Ibid*. 196.
[352] Bradley, *A Modern Maistre*, 115.
[353] See D'Arcy, *The Sense of History*, 134.
[354] It is difficult to see in what sense there is freedom where there is no end for which to act; objects arbitrarily changing in a purposeless space until their extinction can hardly be said to be free.

Every nation, like every individual, has received a mission that it must fulfil. France exercises over Europe a veritable magistracy that it would be useless to contest and that she has most culpably abused. In particular, she was at the head of the religious system, and not without reason was her king called most Christian… And so, since she has used her influence to contradict her vocation and demoralise Europe, we should not be surprised if she is brought back to her mission by terrible means.[355]

According to this passage, nations have specific missions which belong to them. France, in Maistre's opinion, is preeminent among European nations, holding this position because of its special mission, namely to sanctify other nations as 'head of the religious system'. Maistre believes that France has been raised by God in his time for this special role, but has chosen rather to abuse its status, thereby contradicting her vocation and demoralising Europe. Nonetheless, the mission of rendering Europe holy, presiding as the head of Christendom, cannot be taken from France. If France has rejected the vocation for which providence has prepared it, providence must bring France back to its vocation like a surgeon operating on a sick body, inflicting pain and suffering to achieve health.

Maistre explains that in the Old Covenant, God had such a special relationship with only one nation, which alone had a divine mission; this was the nation of the Israelites. All other nations had no particular vocation and had a purpose only insofar as their histories were bound up with that of the Israelites. Maistre is a Christian thinker and holds, therefore, that a new universal Covenant with God has been established through Jesus Christ. Now, every nation is either an actual or potential *disciple*, and therefore each has a divine mission. Every nation, in a way particular to each, must receive and spread the Christian system, raising every territory on earth into the life of the Church. Maistre will finally argue in *The Pope* that the assumption of the world into the supernatural society of the Church will place the pope in his rightful place as judge over the nations, as Armenteros explains:

Du Pape's mission is to disclose the historical role of the sovereign pontiff, to tell the story of Christianity – or of Europe, since for Maistre the two are one – through the history of the popes. Hopefully France will be thereby reminded of its agelong

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[355] Maistre, *Considerations*, 9.

calling, and become again the zealous defender of the faith it was once appointed to be – instead, one presumes, of the papal jailer.[356]

Maistre sees the Church not as a private association, like a club, but a true society comprising spiritual and temporal dimensions – priestly and lay – and therefore holds any nation that has received the Gospel to be a part of that society. This is why Armenteros can claim that, for Maistre, Christianity and Europe are one entity. By understanding the historical role of the pope, as judge of the nations inasmuch as he is judge of the Church, each nation may come to understand its proper role within the mission of the Church. France may once again become the zealous champion of the Faith, rather than an enemy of the Church.

Although Maistre is mostly concerned with France, he at times focuses his attention on the vocations of other nations in God's providential plan for humankind. In the *Essay on the Generative Principle*, Maistre suggests that England has a special role to play – during the revolutionary upheavals of other nations – in the preservation of the ancient idea of a constitution, and also of the old university system where civilization continues in concentrated form, to be later presented as a model for other nations when Maistre's eagerly anticipated restoration of Christendom takes place.[357] Elsewhere, Maistre describes the way he believes providence has so used the anticlericalism of the Revolution to begin the process of returning England to the fold of the Catholic Church:

> The tyranny that, against all justice and decency, chased thousands of priests from their country was no doubt the most revolting imaginable; but here as before, the crimes of the French tyrants became the instruments of Providence. It was probably necessary that French priests be displayed to foreign nations; they have lived among Protestant peoples, and this coming together has greatly diminished hatreds and prejudices. The considerable emigrations of clergy, especially French bishops, to England, appears to me a particularly remarkable event. Surely, words of peace will have been spoken and projects for reconciliation formed during this extraordinary meeting.[358]

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[356] Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 122.
[357] See Maistre, 'Essay on the Generative Principle of Political Constitutions' in *The Generative Principle*, 166.
[358] Maistre, *Considerations*, 19.

Maistre is trying to see how even direct attacks on the priesthood of the Catholic Church may be used by providence to advance God's mission of making all nations into disciples. Maistre is especially concerned about this, as he believes that it is through the return of the Church of England to union with the pope that the wider protestant world will return as well.[359]

Undergirding Maistre's analysis is the supposition that out of every evil God brings some good, which is thought to be God's justification for permitting such evil. Armenteros puts it this way:

> [Maistre] had come to believe that evil, selfish human intentions may, when manipulated by Providence or transformed by natural law, have historical results quite salutary for human destiny. Such intentions, indeed, can hasten spiritual progress and the historical return to God.[360]

As Armenteros explains, individuals with malign wills may seek to diverge from the path which leads to union with God and the proclamation of the Gospel, but they do not see that their own malevolence is part of the greater providential scheme of history. By such evils, God can touch the hearts of many and return them to spiritual union with himself. This expansion of the Christian life is the purpose of all that Maistre advances, it is the ultimate reason for the missioning of nations.

As noted, to Maistre's mind, France is preeminent among the nations in the undertaking of spreading Christianity. Indeed, he believes that the Revolution took place partly to return the clergy of this nation to a life of holiness, that its mission may be fulfilled:

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[359] See *Ibid*. 19. One might decipher Maistrean principles unfolding in the example of England's history: The Hanoverian rulers of Great Britain and Ireland initially had their claim to legitimacy contested by Rome, with the popes offering their support to the Stuarts, the pretender house. Legitimacy was acquired with *time*, however, and the claim of Charles 'the Bonnie Prince' Edward Stuart to the throne of the United Kingdom was not recognised by Pope Clement XIII at the death of Charles's father in 1766. It would have been difficult for a devout Catholic like Maistre to see the hand of providence in the delivering of Great Britain and Ireland into the hands of a protestant dynasty, or in the unwillingness of the Pope to recognise the claim of a Catholic prince. Just over a decade later, however, the French Revolution sought to destroy the French clergy and aristocracy, traditionally the two guardians of the Catholic Faith, many of whom found refuge and protection in Georgian England. This was made possible because the relationship between the British royals and the papacy was no longer one of direct or explicit hostility (though nor was it warm), and both institutions were seeking to prevent the spread of revolution across Europe. There is a touching description by Chateaubriand of the treatment by the English of such *émigrés*; he notes that Londoners would stop in the street to salute a passing French priest. Chateaubriand also praises the 'true Christian charity' with which the Anglican clergy received exiled French clerics. See François-René de Chateaubriand, *Memoirs from Beyond the Tomb* (London: Penguin Classics, 2014), 116, 199.
[360] Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 194-195.

'No one will deny that the priesthood in France needed to be regenerated… it appears to me that wealth, luxury, and a general inclination towards laxity had caused a decline of this great body.'[361] Maistre even makes the case that God, as the ultimate author of all earthly supremacy, transferred the command of temporal power to the forces of the Revolution as a means to purify and 'save' France: 'All life, all wealth, all power was in the hands of the revolutionary authority, and this monstrous power, drunk with blood and success, the most frightful phenomenon that has ever been seen and the like of which will never be seen again, was both a horrible chastisement for the French and the sole means of saving France.'[362]

As I have remarked, Maistre believes that there are two principal reasons why France has a certain seniority among nations in his own age. First, the French language (during his lifetime) is the *universal language*, that is, the language of the courts of Christian rulers. Second, France, he believes, possesses a zeal for proselytism unfound among other nations. If, then, the nation States of the world are going to be united to the Church as Her temporal power, they will be led to this by a France that has been purified by the penance and mortification heaped upon it by the Revolution:

> Providence, which always proportions the means to the end, and which gives to nations as to individuals the necessary organs for the accomplishment of their goals, has given the French nation precisely two instruments, two *arms*, so to speak, with which it stirs up the world – the French language and the spirit of proselytism that forms the essence of the nation's character. Consequently, France constantly has both the need and the power to influence men.[363]

Again, Maistre's basic point is that history is purposive. God so orchestrates things, working in and through the free action of rational agents, to bring about his purpose for humankind, always providing the means to attain the desired end, even if sense cannot be made of his providence in the midst of events. In the case of France, providence is purifying what is at the 'essence of the nation's character', that it may fulfil its mission.

Maistre never makes a case for a return to how things were in pre-revolutionary France, nor does he make an idealistic plea for a restoration of the way of life belonging to some other past age. 'He never, unlike his romantic readers, advocated a return to medieval

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[361] Maistre, *Considerations*, 18.
[362] *Ibid*. 16.
[363] *Ibid*. 20.

political forms.'[364] Maistre is looking to the future, to a post-revolutionary age, which he believes must be rendered sacral, and he judges that the nations of the world, as always, called to discipleship, must discover their role in this future mission. Maistre believes that, in a Europe uprooted and ripped apart by rebellion, the fabric of human associations will decay if there is not a 'moral and spiritual revolution' to correct the Revolution of his own age which he repeatedly calls 'satanic'.[365] 'If there is no moral revolution in Europe, if the religious spirit is not reinforced in this part of the world, the social bond will dissolve.'[366] For this reason, throughout his works Maistre repeatedly calls for the unification of the baptised, the end of schisms and the acknowledgement by all Christians of the universal authority of the pope. He believes that modernity *is* a revolution against Christianity, and the baptised must be united to withstand and overcome this assault. Maistre asserts that unbelievers 'no longer treat Christianity as an inconsequential human error, but hunt it like a mortal enemy: it becomes a fight to the end, a war to the death.'[367]

Armenteros writes that Maistre's works 'portray a world where the Providential will directs historical activity, and where vicissitudes of ignorant intent under divine guidance – the spiritual services that the unrighteous or simply spiritually unenlightened render unwittingly to God and society – further the spiritual salvation of whole nations and civilizations by history.'[368] Like Burke, Maistre conceives of history through a kind of theory of progress based not on technological innovation, expansion of rights, or greater accessibility to material goods, but on the glorification of God. Maistre sees the whole of reality in religious terms.

For Maistre, it is essential that man understands himself to be fundamentally ignorant, lacking knowledge of himself and what the future holds, if he is to take a providential view of his condition. Only this self-knowledge will enable man to accept guidance from his Creator. In the Maistrean schema, social violence largely stems from man's belief that he can be in control of reality. Man must discover that his role is that of subject, rather than master. Man cannot be in control, nor can he know the direction of history, he can only abandon himself to God in the knowledge of his own ignorance.

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[364] Bradley, *A Modern Maistre*, 115.

[365] The association of liberalism and modernity with the satanic became a motif of nineteenth-century Catholic social doctrine. See Pope Leo XIII, 'Libertas Praestantissimum', 14 (1888) in *A Reader in Catholic Social Teaching*, 58-59.

[366] Maistre, *Considerations*, 21.

[367] Maistre, 'Essay on the Generative Principle of Political Constitutions' in *The Generative Principle*, 179.

[368] Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 197.

In mainstream Catholic social doctrine, the State – the political organisation, arrangement, and realisation of civil society – is of divine origin, that is, it is intended by God as the Author of nature (for the ultimate purpose of being, as a political community of the baptised, the *temporal power of the Church*) because without the State man cannot attain his proper flourishing.[369] Maistre goes further, advancing the case that in a secondary, but extremely important sense, God is the Author of *particular* constitutions. Maistre holds that God, as providential educator, gathers each nation for its especial political realisation, bestowing upon it a mission peculiar to it as it receives the Gospel.

Maistre holds that only once in history was there a true national constitution in written form, and this was given directly by God to Moses as the Decalogue.[370] These commandments are understood to summarise the primary imperatives of the natural law.[371] For Maistre, a constitution *is* the particular, circumstantial, and historically conditioned realisation of the natural law for this or that people, that is why the traditional beliefs and prejudices which bind it together are *apparently* different everywhere, but *essentially* always the same.[372] To the Israelites the natural law was taught directly in propositional form; the natural law was known from without, so to speak. For the people of the New Covenant, the baptised, the law is known from within, as what is written on the human heart by nature is illumined and lived by grace. In the Maistrean schema, the deepest work of providence, then, which in fact blurs the distinction between universal and particular providence, is the interior movement of grace, or indeed its withdrawal.

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[369] 'Just as the founder of the universe established two great lights in the firmament of heaven, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night, so too He set two great dignities in the firmament of the universal church..., the greater one to rule the day, that is, souls, and the lesser to rule the night, that is, bodies. These dignities are the papal authority and the royal power.' Pope Innocent III, *Letter to the prefect Acerbius and the nobles of Tuscany* (1198).

[370] Maistre, 'Essay on the Generative Principle of Political Constitutions' in *The Generative Principle*, 162.

[371] See Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, 100, 1.

[372] The law is the same for all peoples, but realised differently due to the particularity of this or that people. For example, in many cultures it is acceptable for women to have their breasts uncovered in public, but in European and Anglo cultures this has traditionally been frowned upon. This is because the public displaying of breasts does not violate the imperatives of the sixth and ninth commandments in some cultures but would do so in others. In the Maistrean analysis, such little differences of natural law application and realisation are multi-layered, complex, and innumerable, and together contribute to shaping the unique national character of this or that people, and the civilization in which peoples participate. Cultural differences dispose each nation for its unique mission, as a discipled nation, in the salvation of humanity.

Any nation can, however, resist God's providential action, and the mission to which He calls that nation. For this reason, the true constitution of a nation can only arise out of the union of its members with God:

> Since every constitution is divine in its origin, it follows that man cannot do anything unless he relies on God, in which case he becomes an instrument. This is a truth to which the whole of humanity has constantly rendered the most striking witness. If we refer to history, which is experimental politics, we shall see there continually the cradle of nations surrounded by priests and hear a constant call to God for help in human weakness.[373]

According to Maistre, as each constitution has God as its ultimate Author, humankind – particularised in national characters – must abandon itself to God's providential care as God's 'instrument'. God, in turn, ever forms these nations, bestowing upon them their proper vocations. Indeed, the nations, so claims Maistre, partly arise out of the intercession of priests before God, and God's providential response to their sacrificial mediation.

The case has recently been made by Thomas Crean and Alan Fimister that it is the role of the sacerdotal power to establish the rule of the political power, writing that 'since temporal power cannot be simply legitimate unless subordinated to the spiritual, the spiritual power must in some way establish it.'[374] Such establishment is not only at the historical origins of a constitution, but rather the constitution is *legitimately* established in an ongoing way by the spiritual power via the union of Church and State in a single liturgical polity.[375] As Maistre puts it:

> The coronation of kings springs from the same roots. There has never been a ceremony or, more properly, a profession of faith more significant and worthy of respect. The finger of the pontiff has always touched the brow of the new sovereign…

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[373] Maistre, 'Essay on the Generative Principle of Political Constitutions' in *The Generative Principle*, 162.

[374] Thomas Crean and Alan Fimister, *Integralism: A Manual of Political Philosophy* (London: Eurospan, 2020), 80.

[375] This is indicated in an explicit way in the Coronation ceremony of English monarchs, who are each consecrated by the priestly power, at which point they are deemed true rulers. For an account of the integralist meaning of the English Coronation ceremony, see Aidan Nichols, *The Realm: An Unfashionable Essay on the Conversion of England* (Oxford: Family Publications, 2008), 42-49.

it is sufficient to insist on the general and universal opinion which invokes the divine power in the establishment of empires.[376]

Here, Maistre expresses his admiration for the office of temporal authority and power but submits that it derives its legitimacy from the priestly power. What Maistre draws out here is a double-use of the term, 'divine power', for there is the divine power of providence, always at work down the ages, but there is also the divine power of the Church on earth, into which providence incorporates whole nations, that they may fulfil their vocations as members of the Church.

Implicit, though at times coming to the foreground, in all that Maistre has to say about providence and nationhood, is his belief that grace – God's sharing of his own divine life – is always operating in some way. Maistre sees grace working down the ages so as to bring about the designs of God, not as the work of a divine puppet-master, but through the grace-filled free agency of nations and their members. Whether it is the 'prevenient grace' of the unbaptised or the sinful, preparing them for discipleship, or the 'sacramental grace' of the devout, or the didactic suffering of humankind via the withdrawal of grace, for Maistre, grace is always a part of the account of history.

In his schema, there is no such thing as *pure human nature*. Grace, for Maistre, is not something 'built on top' of nature, so to speak, as if nature is something complete in itself. This anthropological conception is explained in a striking passage in Filho's essay, an essay which argues elsewhere that Maistre's works can be understood to be continuous with that of the Renaissance Christian humanist tradition, a point Filho re-emphasis here:

Approaching concrete, historical man from the perspective of dogma and revelation is actually seeing him as it were from the point of view of God, all theories of prophetic insight and inspiration put aside. For if man is made in God's image, and if he furthermore is commanded to perfection by the actualisation of his likeness to the divinity, one can conceive of no such thing as pure humanity or humanity as such. All that is human is of God's concern. This is why one may venture to say that Maistre's

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[376] Maistre, 'Essay on the Generative Principle of Political Constitutions' in *The Generative Principle*, 162-163.

humanism, like all true humanism, is God's humanism, for, according to this vision, only God has a true concern for man or for the truth that lies within him.[377]

The point here is that Maistre, as I have said, criticises certain Enlightenment thinkers for adopting a God's 'point of view', not because they are wrong to do so – that is precisely what we are *meant* to do, according to Maistre – but because they purport to have done this by their own intellectual efforts. This Maistre deems to be folly. Humankind must adopt a divine point of view, according to Maistre, but do so by accepting God's invitation to *share* this point of view, since it is the *point of view of God* which has been unveiled in God's covenantal revelation, and which God infuses into souls by grace.[378] The sharing of God's point of view is not, as Filho explains, an extraordinary charism (like prophecy, for example) but is normative to the Christian since he is by definition 'commanded to perfection by the actualisation of his likeness to the divinity', that is, by the life of grace. As Filho explains, in the Maistrean view there is 'no such thing as pure humanity or humanity as such', for one can only understand 'concrete, historical man', which means his existential particularisation in national communities, by reference to God's didactic providence and the operation of his grace down the ages.

In the Maistrean vision, human nature cannot be what it truly *is* without grace, but remains an insubstantial and frustrated phantom of its true substance. So too, without grace, even natural human institutions cannot be what they are meant to be to bring about human flourishing. For Maistre, without grace there is no *true* State. In turn, Maistre holds that the State, to be what it is, must unite itself with the instrument of grace on earth, becoming, as it were, the temporal principle in the life of the Church. This alone gives true legitimacy to the State, and there is no *true* State without this. The political power, having been *consecrated* by

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[377] Filho, 'The pedagogical nature of Maistre's thought' in *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*, 196.

[378] Aquinas states the following regarding the reason for the devil's fall from grace:

> 'He desired resemblance with God in this respect—by desiring, as his last end of beatitude, something which he could attain by the virtue of his own nature, turning his appetite away from supernatural beatitude, which is attained by God's grace. Or, if he desired as his last end that likeness of God which is bestowed by grace, he sought to have it by the power of his own nature; and not from Divine assistance according to God's ordering.'

The sin of Satan, according to Aquinas, is that of seeking to make his own by nature what can only be a gift of grace. In the same Question, Aquinas argues that this sin is the epitome of pride. Supernatural beatitude is precisely the fullness of sharing *God's point of view* – literally 'sharing God's happiness'. This renders clearer Maistre's insistence that the Enlightenment must be understood as 'satanical', for according to Maistre, the Enlightenment project comprises claiming by nature what alone comes by way of grace. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, 63, 3.

its union with the Church, can abandon itself to divine providence, trusting in the work of grace, and be led to its proper end, or rather, the end proper to its members. This is Maistre's position, as he conveys clearly in the following excerpt:

> No human institution can last if it is not supported by the hand which supports all things, that is to say, if it is not specially consecrated to Him in its origins. The more it is penetrated by the divine principle, the more durable it will be. How curiously blind are the men of our age! They boast of their enlightenment and are totally ignorant, since they know nothing of themselves. They know neither what they are nor what they can do. A boundless pride leads them continually to overthrow everything they have not themselves made; and to bring about new creations, they cut themselves off from the principle of all existence.[379]

This passage, perhaps more than any other single extract, summarises Maistre's theocentric conservatism. No human institution, he tells us, can last if it is not consecrated to God. Indeed, the longevity of human institutions, and that includes those of State, corresponds, according to Maistre, to the degree to which they are permeated by the 'divine principle', that is, by God's grace. Here, in this passage, Maistre again raises the problem of the *slightly educated*. The intellectually lowly and the intellectually great – if they are truly intelligent, knowing the littleness of their knowledge – would never, in his opinion, believe themselves capable of adopting 'God's point of view' by the efforts of reason alone. Those who seek to do so 'know neither what they are nor what they can do,' because they do not comprehend that their entire worldview is downstream from, and dependent upon, the Christian worldview they wish to repudiate. They advance a cause of repudiation because, in Maistre's view, they do not understand their civilizational inheritance; they have not sat at its feet, so to speak. In this passage Maistre links together three faults of those who 'boast of their enlightenment': ignorance, 'boundless pride', and a disposition to 'overthrow everything they have not themselves made'. In the mind of Maistre, these facets of the proponents of revolution are deeply interdependent, stemming from the loss of the true 'God's point of view'; in turn they have 'cut themselves off from the principle of all existence'.

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[379] Maistre, 'Essay on the Generative Principle of Political Constitutions' in *The Generative Principle*, 170.

2.2.2.3 Integralism in the thought of Maistre

Directly considering Maistre's integralist political philosophy, found most clearly in his final work, *The Pope* (1819), will allow for an understanding of his position on the dual authorities of the spiritual and temporal powers, how he uses received tradition in an innovative and inventive way, what he deems to be the ill-fated alternative to an integralist settlement, and the options he offers the world emerging out of the Enlightenment. Maistre is a thinker who is not inventing new principles, but rather applying anew the principles of an ancient theological, moral, and political tradition which he deems wholly relevant to modernity. As Bradley puts it, 'whilst Maistre indeed shares the common elements of Catholic traditionalism, it is what he does with those elements that makes him unique.'[380]

Up to this point, I have been content to speak of 'Church and State', but this terminology is rarely used by Maistre, who almost entirely refers to the *spiritual* and the *temporal* powers. The reason for this is well explained by two modern authors, Crean and Fimister:

> Rather than speak of "Church and State" as two perfect societies, it is… more exact to say that there is but one perfect society, the Church or city of God, in which two powers, spiritual and temporal, are hierarchically arranged. The very word "State", suggesting as it does a complete society corresponding adequately to man's natural end, appears in fact fatally misleading.
>
> *Within* the one perfect society, we can speak of a temporal society or commonwealth which is made up of the same members, and hence is materially co-extensive with the Church, though formally distinct from her. This temporal society is Christendom and the realms of which it is composed. These may be described as extrinsically perfect societies, in that as long as the Church resides within them with the fullness of her rights, they possess perfection: but it is a perfection which in order to possess they must submit to the higher power which transcends them. Conversely Christendom exists within the Church in that it exists only by this very ordering of the temporal power to the Church's spiritual power. Considered apart from this spiritual power, it is not a distinct perfect society, but as impossibility. Christendom may therefore be defined as the temporal aspect of the city of God.[381]

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[380] Bradley, *A Modern Maistre*, 231.
[381] Crean and Fimister, *Integralism*, 21-22.

The authors here are using the term 'perfect' in the technical sense to mean a society which contains within itself all the means necessary to attain its own ends. Such a society may be contrasted with the family, which, whilst a true society, and inherently depended upon by civil society for the latter's perpetuity, nonetheless cannot attain the ends for which it exists, namely the health, education, and material well-being of its members, without participation in a wider conglomeration of families and other societies, such as schools and businesses. Crean and Fimister, in a typically conservative manner, criticise the notion of 'Church and State' as a reduction of a concrete reality to abstractions. The Church cannot achieve its mission without assuming the State, since the State is merely the political organisation and ordering of the nation, the *discipling* of which is the purpose of the Church's mission. So too, according to Crean and Fimister, the temporal flourishing of the citizenry cannot be achieved by the State, since existentially the human condition makes such attainment an 'impossibility'. The State and the Church only exist as separate entities in the abstract; in reality they are 'materially co-extensive'. In turn, Crean and Fimister present the notion of a single society, comprising two orders, clerical and lay, giving rise to two powers, spiritual and temporal. The Church comprises priests and layfolk, bishops and nobles, primates and kings, popes and emperors. The role of the former is to seek for the laity and for themselves the life of grace and eternal beatitude; the role of the latter is to order society for its earthly well-being, in such a way as to not hinder, but rather positively assist, the spiritual power in its apostolate. The proposed effect of this union of powers is the assumption of the temporal sphere into the supernatural life of the Church. Just as Christianity teaches that human nature was assumed by the Eternal Word at the Incarnation, effecting two distinct natures in the one person of Jesus Christ, so too the temporal world is rendered sacral through its assumption in the laity into the one corporate person of the Church. The categories of 'Church and State' misleadingly lead to identifying the Church with the priestly hierarchy. For Maistre, as I shall present shortly, the Church is to be understood as the *faithful*, clerical and lay, both 'orders' seeking to fulfil – according to their distinct apostolates – the imperative of the divine mandate to make disciples of all nations.[382]

This view of the Church as a single society governed by two powers is essential for understanding Maistrean political thought. In *The Pope*, Maistre states that the infallibility of

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[382] Describing the Church as comprising two 'orders', priestly and lay, is Maistre's preferred terminology. See Maistre, *The Pope*, xi.

the Church's teaching on matters of faith and morality, expressing itself most explicitly in the dogmatic statements of the pope, is nothing other than the spiritual corollary of the sovereignty of temporal rulers.[383] Just as a king may pass a law, deeming himself to possess the final word on the realisation and application of natural and positive law for *his* people, and fully expect this law to be obeyed in his lands and for lawbreakers to be punished, so too, the pope may make doctrinal pronouncements and expect their content to be believed by the baptised, and for dissenters to be punished. Indeed, for Maistre, there can be no union of the powers unless the holder of temporal power recognises the infallibility of the wielder of spiritual power, and the latter recognise the sovereignty of the former.

> Maistre explains his position:

> No human society can exist without government, nor government without sovereignty, nor sovereignty without infallibility; and this last privilege is so absolutely necessary, that we are obliged to suppose infallibility, even in temporal sovereignties (where it is not), on pain of beholding society dissolved. The Church requires nothing more than other sovereignties, although it possesses an immense superiority over them, inasmuch as infallibility is on the one hand *humanly supposed*, and on the other *divinely promised*.[384]

Maistre's point in this excerpt is that the political ordering of society would unravel were each citizen to decide for himself whether he assented to, and in turn obeyed, this or that law. As Maistre sees it, governments cannot exist without sovereignty, that is, the legitimate right to make laws, and such sovereignty cannot exist if the law of the land may be perpetually called into question, and freely disobeyed, by each individual as he participates in society. Maistre, therefore, thinks that an *analogue* of infallibility is presupposed in the sovereignty of governments. The pope, in his claim to infallibility, claims nothing more for the spiritual power than some corresponding principle already acknowledged in the temporal power.[385]

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[383] *Ibid*. 1-9.

[384] *Ibid*. 108.

[385] The Catholic Church's teaching on papal infallibility did not receive a dogmatic definition until 1870, fifty-one years after the publication of Maistre's *The Pope*. This definition, formulated with numerous caveats and qualifications, probably did not go as far as Maistre would have had it:
> 'We teach and define that it is a dogma Divinely revealed that the Roman pontiff when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, by the Divine assistance promised to him in

For Maistre, the two powers should be understood to correspond (whilst recognising that the spiritual power exists for an immeasurably higher purpose), a king being seen as a '*temporal bishop*' and the Emperor as the '*temporal* sovereign pontiff'.[386]

Maistre defends the papal claim to possess power to absolve a people of their temporal allegiance, and to recognise as legitimate the claim of another if doing so does not violate the constitution of that nation:

> The sovereign pontiff… in absolving subjects from their oath of fidelity, would do nothing contrary to Divine right. He would only profess that sovereignty is a divine and sacred authority, which cannot be controlled by any other than an authority which is also divine, but of a superior order, and specially invested with this power in certain extraordinary cases.[387]

By 'Divine right', Maistre does not mean the notion of unlimited and absolute royal power as endorsed by, for example, King James I of England (as we shall see later, Maistre is largely concerned with limiting temporal power, not with its expansion). Maistre is only remarking that the temporal power – that which makes a nation a State – is of divine origin. In his view, were a temporal power to become tyrannical it would require a power also of divine origin, but of a 'superior order', to absolve the citizenry of their allegiance. By this line of argument, Maistre wants to demonstrate that this political claim of the papacy does not undermine temporal sovereignty, but affirms it, since it advocates that only one power on earth may absolve people of their temporal allegiance, a mechanism Maistre insists the spiritual power is always most hesitant to use. By the same argument all revolutionary movements are declared by him to be forbidden. The pope may absolve the people from their allegiance to a tyrannical government, but the people may not absolve themselves. Far from such a position restricting the liberties of the citizenry, for Maistre, viewing the events following the French Revolution, protecting the nation against revolution is the surest way to conserve the liberties

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Blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed that his Church should be endowed in defining doctrine regarding faith or morals, and that therefore such definitions of the Roman pontiff are of themselves and not from the consent of the Church irreformable. So then, should anyone, which God forbid, have the temerity to reject this definition of ours: let him be anathema.'
Decrees of the First Vatican Council ⟨https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/ecum20.htm⟩ [accessed 10 March 2021].
[386] Maistre, *The Pope*, xxii.
[387] *Ibid*. 124.

of its members. Post-revolutionary political settlements are notoriously draconian, requiring the utilisation of a mass police force, a secret police, and often martial law, to achieve basic social and political stability, largely because the events which have established the revolutionary government in power have set the precedent that the public may absolve themselves of their political allegiance when they see fit.

Maistre's argument, that temporal governments are strengthened rather than weakened by the pope's power to absolve people from allegiance to tyrannical rulers, is made more explicit in the following passage:

> The popes have struggled sometimes with sovereigns, never with sovereignty. The very act by which they loosed subjects from their oath of allegiance, declared sovereignty inviolable. The popes instructed the people that no human power could touch the sovereign, whose authority was only suspended by a power wholly divine; so that their anathemas, far from ever derogating from the strictness of Catholic maxims on the inviolability of sovereigns, had, on the contrary, no other tendency than to give them now sanction in the eyes of the people.[388]

Maistre, then, is building a case that sovereigns ought not to fear the power of the spiritual order, since nothing could better defend their sovereignty. Temporal rulers, therefore, in the post-revolutionary age, ought to unite themselves to the spiritual power as the only means to stop the revolutionary cycle into which the world has been thrown by the French Revolution.

Before analysing Maistre's own distinctive integralism, more should be said about what he understands by 'spiritual' and 'temporal' powers. As stated, Maistre sees the Church to be formed of hierarchy and Christendom, sacerdotal and lay aspects of a single corporate person. The laity enjoy 'the singular honour, which they have by no means sufficiently appreciated, of constituting (humanly speaking) the Catholic Church *in the world*.'[389] Indeed, this union of two powers in a single society is the civilization which Maistre simply calls 'Europe'. As Armenteros puts it, for Maistre, 'Europe was born on the day a pope crowned an Emperor.'[390]

Christian civilization is not theocratic. The subordination of the temporal power to the spiritual does not entail political rule by priesthood. Rather, in such a settlement there are two

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[388] *Ibid*. 128.
[389] *Ibid*. ix (italics mine).
[390] Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 142.

spheres of authority, one of which is higher, and therefore the lower must order itself not only to achieve its own ends but those of the higher power. Nonetheless, the higher power is not to usurp that which properly belongs to the lower. Indeed, one of the unique features of (to use a modern term) *Judeo-Christian* civilization, according to Maistre, is that whilst it has, as a standard, recognised the higher purpose of the priesthood, it has done so in such a way as to safeguard that which belongs to them as well as that which belongs to the laity:

> Every nation of the universe has accorded to its priesthood more of less influence in political affairs; and it has been proved to demonstration, "that of all civilized nations, none have attributed less power and privilege to their priests, than the Jews and the Christians."[391]

Again, Maistre is not advocating a theocracy. As he points out, often in the history of nations, the ministers and priests of religion have possessed more political power than the political ruler, and in some nations there has been no distinction at all.[392] The Israelites, however, always had kings, judges, and elders alongside a tribe of priests and a Temple of sacrifice. The Christians always had their emperors, kings, and nobles as well as an order of priests offering the Eucharistic sacrifice in churches. Maistre holds that the clear distinction – without separation – of 'throne and altar', maintaining clearly what pertains to which, is unique to the civilization which gave rise to Europe.

In the Maistrean schema, the priestly hierarchy, and especially the universal and immediate authority of the pope, imparts to the State a knowledge and surety about the end for which its members exist which it otherwise could not possess. In turn, Maistre sees the 'Reason' of the proponents of Enlightenment, by which they claim the social order must be rearranged, as a counterfeit magisterium. According to Maistre, the true *Reason* which the world needs, is the teaching of the Catholic Church, as Armenteros explains: 'Given the identity Maistre posits between pope and church, papal omnipresence and omnicognizance signify the ecclesiastical suffusion of the world with reason.'[393]

Like Burke, Maistre appears to see the relationship between the two powers to be comparable to that of soul and body according to the hylomorphic model. The soul, which is

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[391] Maistre, *The Pope*, 179. In this excerpt Maistre is quoting from Nicolas-Sylvestre Bergier's *Traité historique et dogmatique de la vraie religion* (Paris, 1780).
[392] Pre-1959 Tibet and post-1979 Iran are obvious examples.
[393] Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 126.

said to possess the power of reason, infuses the whole body with reason, by way of being substantially conjoined with it. So too, in Maistre's integralism, each society takes on a liturgical character, ordering its members towards their beatific end as revelation becomes *embodied* in the daily lives of the baptised. It ought not to be a surprise that we find this theme in Maistre, since, as I shall explore below, he was an intellectual disciple of Bellarmine, who explicitly advanced a soul-body metaphor for understanding the relationship between the temporal and spiritual powers.[394]

In the face of revolution and the toppling of ancient powers, Maistre does not see, as Burke saw it, the unravelling of political sovereignty and the rise of anarchy, but rather he foresaw a coming age of totalitarian power. As he puts it, 'the greatest problem Europe has to solve is, "How is sovereign power to be restrained without being destroyed?"'[395] Maistre, seeing the disappearance of basic liberties, and the intrusion of government into every aspect of civil society following the French Revolution, wants to propose a model for how ongoing change and social evolution can take place without turmoil and upheaval. As Maistre sees it, having the Church as an accepted moral authority that can check governments, which are themselves understood as the temporal aspect of the Church, will provide a mechanism for restraining and limiting governments in such a way as to both conserve and generate liberties in the lives of the people. A recurring theme in Maistre is that rapid change by unrestrained powers is almost always accompanied by widespread killing, and as we have seen, Maistre is deeply concerned with the limiting of social violence. With the Church 'dispensing sovereignty', in the sense of the temporal power receiving legitimacy in its consecration through union with the spiritual power, whatever transition the nation and its political life is undergoing, it is envisaged by Maistre that the social liberties of its members will more likely be preserved.

Armenteros explains that the arguments in *The Pope* are rooted in the debates which surrounded the papal interdict on Venice of 1606, in which Bellarmine contested the position of Paolo Sarpi that every subject was bound to obey his sovereign temporal ruler in any and all circumstances.[396] 'Bellarmine asserted, quite radically, the universal right to active and

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[394] 'The temporal and the spiritual authority in the Church are not disconnected and separate things, as two political kingdoms, but are connected so as to form one body; or rather they present themselves as the body and soul in a man, for the spiritual authority is like the soul, and the temporal like the body.' Robert Bellarmine, 'On Laymen or Secular People' in *On Temporal and Spiritual Authority* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2012), 85.
[395] Maistre, *The Pope*, 118.
[396] Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 139.

passive resistance to unjust laws and unjust sovereigns, secular and ecclesiastical.'[397] Bellarmine's works were studied and extensively annotated by Maistre.[398] It is from Bellarmine that Maistre receives 'the idea that the popes are temporal sovereigns only through other sovereigns.'[399]

In Maistre's view, the power of temporal sovereigns ceases to be chaotic and tyrannical because such power is assumed into the life of the Church, becoming the Church's temporal aspect, being ordered by the content of revelation which is otherwise either unknowable or uncertain. The Church must 'restrain sovereignty with divine reason.'[400] Temporal powers, by their own authority, govern over that which pertains to temporal ends, but Maistre holds that if they do so in such a way as to do violence to spiritual ends then the spiritual power may withdraw from them their temporal legitimacy. What arises out of this model is a vision for the universalising of Christendom, as all temporal power is assumed into the life of the Church for the felicity and liberty of humankind. Armenteros explains:

> Maistre… uses this argument of exceptional ecclesiastical provision in times of crisis to envision an expanding Christianity capable of ensuring the proper application of international law, and with it constitutional sovereignty over free subjects, to all humanity. As he sees it, the law limiting sovereignty that the church implements on exceptional occasions, and that European sovereigns should voluntarily obey, makes the European political model exportable worldwide. *Du pape* historicizes the argument, made twenty-two years earlier in *De la souveraineté du people*, that the European king owes his uniquely universalising sovereignty to his submission to a divine constitution. The difference is that the church now embodies this constitution… and that Europe's future expansion will be coterminous with Christianity's.[401]

This passage requires some unpacking, which is worth doing as it well summarises the post-revolutionary vision presented by Maistre. The Church, with its infallible knowledge of the moral law may, by negative judgements, ensure the proper application of law throughout the world, as all temporal sovereigns submit to its authority. The pope will not do this by *direct*

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[397] *Ibid*. 139.
[398] See *Ibid*. 139.
[399] *Ibid*. 140.
[400] *Ibid*. 141.
[401] *Ibid*. 141.

action, as the knowledge the Church possesses by revelation is general and universal, whereas the knowledge of the temporal powers of nations is particular and diversely applied. The Church will, however, make sacrosanct negative pronouncements which any temporal law or legislation may not contradict. This constraining character of the Church's moral teaching on the action of temporal governments generates a freedom for humankind, for which there is otherwise no obvious safeguard, according to Maistre.

Maistre proposes his model as not only desirable for those nations which are historically Christian, but for all nations, especially as he insists that the assumption of nations into the life of the Church in no way deleteriously affects the established character and culture of those nations:

> The pope, and even the Church together with him, may be deceived in regard to everything that is not dogma or fact connected therewith; so that, on everything in which are interested patriotism, affections, customs, and, to say all in one word, national pride, no nation ought to dread the pope's infallibility, which is applicable only to objects of a higher order.[402]

As Maistre explains, the pope may make infallible doctrinal statements of a general nature on questions of morality, which affect the direction of a nation's law and legislation, but that is not where Maistre sees the deeper life of the nation. The nation is first and foremost civil society, with all its customs, traditions, culture, and patriotic feeling. Whereas in his earlier work, *On the Sovereignty of the People*, Maistre thinks more in terms of 'Church and State', the union of two constitutions, one earthly and one divine, in *The Pope* he sees the Church as a living corporate person with no constitution separate from its embodiment in the life of nations. The future of Christianity and the future of nations is the same future. To Maistre, Christianity is not primarily a set of doctrinal abstractions, but the historical process of redeeming human nature, which includes nations and their diverse political arrangements.

Maistre asserts that the popes have a good record of respecting local liberties, both ecclesiastical and temporal:

> The Holy See has always given proof of the greatest condescension towards all the churches; frequently even, and almost always, it has gone beyond their wants and

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[402] Maistre, *The Pope*, 106.

desires. What interest could the pope have to give needless vexation to the nations united in his communion.[403]

Maistre's localism and focus on the importance of nations is a recurring theme. Seeing Napoleon's violent attempt to universalise the principles of the French Revolution, which Maistre sees as a counterfeit revelation, Maistre wants to propose to a post-Enlightenment world a vision of distinct sovereign nations. These diverse nations he wishes to see in fraternal union with one another via their assumption into the life of the Church, rather than seeking to expand or dominate one another. Maistre is, on the whole, deeply anti-imperialistic, which is another facet of his preoccupation with the limitation, rather than expansion, of powers.[404]

Looking for the central historical argument of *The Pope*, Armenteros makes the following observation:

> *Du Pape*… contributed to the literary re-Christianisation campaign that followed the Terror. For if there is one historical argument to *Du Pape*, it is that the pope has made Europe; that Europe was born and formed at the same time as Catholic Christianity; that the pontiff may now be laden with "unjust chains"; but that he stands on the threshold of a new age , when he will assume a leading role; and that his lay followers can help him play it by presenting him with "weapons all the more useful for having been forged in the camp of the rebellious."[405]

According to this passage, the pope has *made* Europe, just as the consecration of a royal by a bishop makes him into a king. Europe *is* the union of temporal and spiritual powers, the assumption of nations into the life of the Church by their union with the supreme pontiff. For Maistre, the papacy and authority of the Church in Europe look in a sorry state at the onset of modernity. There is a new era emerging out of the eighteenth-century, which looks to be deeply hostile to the Christian religion, and it is the role of the pope, and by extension the clerical hierarchy, not to turn back the clock, so to speak, but to spiritually conquer this new epoch. That aspect of the Church which *is* the converted world, namely the laity, must place itself at the service of the hierarchy to achieve this conquest.

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[403] *Ibid*. 102.
[404] See Ibid. 143, 171.
[405] Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 116.

Interestingly, such a concordat between layman and priest is not ordinary to the dynamism of the Church, according to Maistre. Clearly, for Maistre, the Church is made up of two 'orders', lay and clerical, whose members respectively fulfil distinct and complementary roles for the Church's mission.[406] But *within* the Church there is a certain combativeness between these two orders which Maistre deems necessary under normal circumstances, a confrontational dynamic, the continuation of which the Revolution has made impossible. According to Maistre, since *apostate Europe* is in revolution against the principle which first made it, educated laity who have remained faithful to the Church's doctrine and practice must come to the aid of the persecuted priestly order.[407] Whilst it is true that the two orders of the Church are deemed correlative, inasmuch as the laity depends on the priestly hierarchy for its sacramental sanctification, and the hierarchy on the laity to extend the jurisdiction of the Church into the world, without which the priestly ministry of the hierarchy is sterile, nonetheless between these two orders there ordinarily exists a tension. The Revolution has targeted the respective apostolates of both orders, expelling and killing uncooperative clergy and privatising the Catholic religion, the public establishment of which is the laity's role to effect. In such extraordinary times it has 'become necessary' to form an 'alliance' between the priestly and lay orders of the baptised society.[408]

What, according to Maistre, accounts for the tension that he holds ordinarily subsists between the Church's two orders? Armenteros argues that this theme is due to Maistre making his own an Enlightenment motif. In her view, Maistre's anti-absolutism, advocating that the two powers perpetually check one another, is rooted in a 'relativism modelled on Montesquieu.'[409] Armenteros's position is unconvincing, and in fact Maistre plainly rejects Montesquieu's approach.[410] Rather, it is more plausible that Maistre is reintroducing into modern discourse on the future of Europe a much older view of the relationship between powers, first clearly articulated in Pope Gelasius's dyarchical theory, presented in his letter of the year 494, *Duo Sunt*.[411] Maistre is working within this older tradition of Catholic social thought, drawing also from Augustine and Aquinas, much of whose essential and pertinent

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[406] Maistre, *The Pope*, xi.
[407] *Ibid*. xi.
[408] *Ibid*. xi.
[409] Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 154.
[410] See Maistre, *The Pope*, 191.
[411] See Pope Gelasius I, *Famuli vestrae pietatis* ⟨https://thejosias.com/2020/03/30/famuli-vestrae-pietatis/⟩ [accessed 12 November 2020].

content Maistre received indirectly through his studies of Bellarmine. Armenteros herself acknowledges that the content of *The Pope* is greatly indebted to Bellarmine's writings.[412]

The dyarchical view was later expressed anew in the 'doctrine of the two swords', expounded in Pope Boniface VIII's 1302 bull, *Unam Sanctam*.[413] According to Boniface, the supreme pontiff possesses two swords, a spiritual sword and a temporal sword. These swords refer to those in the possession of Peter – said to have been the first pope – which Jesus Christ said would suffice (Luke 22:38). When Peter drew the sword of temporal coercion, however, he wielded it poorly, and the work of his violence was undone by Jesus Christ, who forbade Peter from using this sword (Matthew 26:53). By this, Peter and his successors were taught that whilst they possess two swords, the spiritual sword they may wield directly, by themselves and through their priestly hierarchy, the other sword, the temporal sword, they cannot directly wield competently (as popes), and therefore must wield it by entrustment to the other order of the Church, namely the laity.

According to Catholic teaching, humankind has one absolute final end, namely the beatific vision of God, guidance towards which being the *ultimate* purpose of the Church on earth. It is not obvious, therefore, why the powers have been separated and shared between two orders. *Why, since there is one absolute final end, was the fullness of power to bring humankind to that end not given to one ruler only to wield directly?* Gelasius answers that had the fullness of both spiritual and temporal power been given to the incumbents of the papacy to wield directly, being fallen and sinful like everyone else, there would have been nothing to prevent such power from totally corrupting them.

Whilst the temporal sword may not be used by the pope directly, it nonetheless belongs to him, and *with good reason* – for example, in the case of apostacy or tyranny – he may take it from one temporal sovereign and give it to another in accordance with the constitution of the polity over which that sovereign holds power. On the other hand, if the pope does not have good reason, or if it is the pope who has become heretical or a tyrant in the spiritual order, his own temporal sword, which resides in the hand of another, may be turned against him.[414] This dynamic of the spiritual and temporal powers checking one another limits the authority and extent of control for both. It is important to grasp that this understanding of the relationship between the two powers is the key subterranean presence in

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[412] See Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 123-127.
[413] See Pope Boniface VIII, *Unam Sanctam* ⟨https://www.papalencyclicals.net/bon08/b8unam.htm⟩ [accessed 13 November 2020].
[414] The life of Holy Roman Emperor Otto III makes for an interesting study of the use of the temporal sword to check papal matters specifically in order to secure the survival of the Papacy.

Maistre's thought, lest we be tempted to think the arguments in *The Pope* amount to advocacy for a worldwide papal theocracy, an accusation Maistre defends himself against:

> *What can check the pope?* I will answer, EVERYTHING – the canons, the laws, the customs of nations, sovereigns, the great tribunals, national assemblies, prescriptions, representations, negotiations, duty, fear, prudence, and, above all, opinion, which rules the world.
>
> Thus let me not be made to say that I would, THEREFORE, *make the pope an universal monarch*. Assuredly I desire nothing of the kind, whilst I am nowise astonished to hear this THEREFORE always ready argument when all others are wanting. But as the very serious faults certain princes have been guilty of against religion and its chief by no means derogate from the respect I owe to temporal monarchy, the possible offences of a pope against this same sovereignty will not hinder me from acknowledging it for what it is. All the powers of the universe set limits to one another by their mutual resistance.[415]

We see from this passage that Maistre upholds the traditional doctrine on the union of spiritual and temporal powers, arguing for the superiority of the spiritual, and advancing a case for the subordination of the temporal to the spiritual. This does not mean, however, that Maistre wishes to see the pope performing as 'universal monarch', with temporal rulers merely acting as the pope's representatives over the nations. A temporal ruler is checked by the constitution of his land, by the various forms of government at play, by precedent, local allegiances, assemblies and parliaments, the desire to maintain good relations, and so forth, and above all, the spiritual power of the Apostles' successors. So too, the pope is checked by the Church's own law, by the lay order, the temporal rulers, local and national feeling, and a whole *complexus* of emotions, loyalties, rights, and duties on which negotiations turn. Far from Maistre responding to the Revolution by advancing a case for unlimited power of kings and bishops against 'the people', he believes it is the Revolution which heralds an age of unrestrained power through the world's emancipation from the life of the Church.[416] He sees a coming age of unchecked sovereigns extending their range of control to areas of civil life

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[415] Maistre, *The Pope*, 105.
[416] For an interesting analysis of the use of the phrase 'the people' by the French Revolution's advocates, see Roger Scruton, 'Man's Second Disobedience' in *Philosopher on Dover Beach* (South Bend, Indiana: St Augustine's Press, 1998), 203-206.

hitherto unimaginable, and a de-missioned priesthood falling into further decadence and becoming purposeless. Facing this prospect of an age of totalitarian regimes and a weak and persecuted Church, already prefigured in the rise of Napoleon, Maistre wants to affirm the principle that the 'powers of the universe set limits to one another by their mutual resistance.' According to Maistre, it is because Europe was born out of two powers that it is free. By losing one of these powers, namely the higher power, there is no longer a power to restrain the temporal power, which is now set to claim everything as its own. As I shall present below, for Maistre, the temporal power detached from the spiritual power is no longer the *temporal power* at all, which is a relative term, but has become the dominion of the demonic.

According to Maistre, the harmonious relationship between the spiritual and temporal powers that has existed at various times throughout Western Christendom, and of which he gives many examples throughout *The Pope*, marked a peace and amity generated by underlying tension and the constant presence of threat. We can use the image of a bridge over water, a single object standing quietly and unmoving; this appearance of constancy, robustness, and stability is the effect of two sides ever pushing against one another with tremendous force. This tension from the mutual checking of powers actually generates liberty by securing the principle of subsidiarity, as what happens at the lowest social level meets with the lowest possible opposition from the other power. As Armenteros puts it, 'Maistre's theory of liberty that *Du pape* discloses is the idea that political liberty is born of the struggle between throne and altar.'[417] Maistre calls for the union of nations with 'the authority of the Holy Father', that the nations may be *discipled* and become what they are *meant* to be so as to fulfil the mission unique to each, but he also presents how such a union will give rise to *necessary* tension.[418] He admits that this seems 'paradoxical', but is also confident that the truly 'learned' will understand him.[419]

Maistre has taken up the Gelasian notion that the division of temporal and spiritual powers is necessary due to the malignity of human nature, and has further intensified the anthropological pessimism in which this position is rooted. For Maistre, it is insufficient that priest and layman possess different powers to preclude them from morally corrupting by the possession of all power, rather the swords must be wielded in such a way as to have priest and layman ever point them at each other. For Maistre, the improvement of man does not only come by way of restraint, but from threats of punishment.

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[417] Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 144.
[418] Maistre, *The Pope*, xvi.
[419] *Ibid*. xvi.

Abandoning the dyarchical settlement which, according to Maistre, *is* European civilization, will plunge the once Christian nations into ongoing revolution and totalitarianism:

> Complaint has justly been made of the exaggeration which would have the sacerdotal order withdrawn from all temporal jurisdiction; we may with equally good reason complain of the contrary exaggeration, which pretends to withdraw the temporal power from all spiritual jurisdiction.
>
> Generally speaking, injury is done to supreme authority by seeking to emancipate it from the various checks which have been established, less by the deliberate action of man, than by the imperceptible influence of customs and opinions; for the people, deprived of their ancient guarantees, are thereby driven to seek others, stronger in appearance, but always infinitely dangerous, for this reason, that they are entirely founded on theories and reasonings *a priori*, by which men have been constantly led astray.[420]

According to this passage, the priestly and lay orders of the Church must not withdraw from one another but must continually check each other. What arises out of this is security for these very authorities. The alternative to such a dynamic of tension and checking within the single society of the baptised polity – the actual terms of which are established by the 'customs and opinions' within each nation – is the toppling of such powers. Then the people, seeking to secure their liberties and way of life, will seek strong but dangerous forces driven by ideology. As with much of Maistre's writing, his arguments and warnings might seem shrill, even hysterical, but events in the twentieth-century have provided them with a plausibility they did not possess during his lifetime.

One commentator, Emile Perreau-Saussine, has lucidly emphasised this liberty-focused aspect of Maistrean integralism:

> The deconfessionalisation of the state is often presented as a step in the development of "modernity", as a liberation from obscure and infertile times. The idea of Progress and the advent of individual autonomy is seen as going in tandem with what is called the "secularisation" of the public sphere. However, considerations of this type are

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[420] *Ibid*. 174.

somewhat one-sided. For we forget too quickly that revelation imposed constraints on the confessional state that protected its citizens' security. By insistently recalling the content of the evangelic message, the Church checks, hinders and thwarts iniquitous designs and policies that lack the most elementary demands of justice.[421]

Perreau-Saussine contests the popular coupling of liberty or progress with secularism, and argues that the union of spiritual and temporal powers in fact protected security and liberties we have since lost in the process of secularisation. He continues:

> This point has become especially familiar to us since the advent of totalitarian and atheistic regimes, whose barbarism and anti-Christianity were inseparable. The secularisation of the state opened to it a field of unlimited action.[422]

This brings us to a point from which we can deal with Maistre's view of liberty directly. He has a twofold theory of liberty, addressing exterior and interior liberty. Armenteros explains: '*Du pape* claims that civil and political liberty are products, first of freedom from the passions and, second, of the order that is born of the continual opposition between spiritual and temporal sovereigns.'[423] As we shall see, these two forms of freedom, political freedom procured by the union and struggle of spiritual and temporal powers, and moral freedom from the interior tyranny of insatiable appetite, are two kinds of liberty inseparable in the Maistrean schema. Armenteros remarks that, for Maistre, 'no nation or institution can be free if the individuals composing it are not emotively emancipated.'[424]

Maistre's holds that the Christian polity is one of freedom. The union of the spiritual and temporal powers hinders political encroachment, allowing for social participation to take place through subsidiarity, generating liberties all the way through civil life. This union of powers invites the operation of divine grace into political life, healing the population and freeing them from slavery to their appetites. The Revolution, according to Maistre, in overthrowing this order is in fact an attack on liberty. As the Revolution spreads it places

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[421] Emile Perreau-Saussine, 'Why Maistre became Ultramontane' in *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*, 157-158.
[422] *Ibid*. 158.
[423] Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 155.
[424] *Ibid*. 144.

humankind in bondage both to the unconverted State, and to unquenchable appetite as the moral law is vanquished. This is why Maistre calls the Revolution 'essentially *satanical*.'[425]

Maistre is operating within an ancient Christian tradition of seeing the unconverted world as the principality of Satan.[426] (Matthew 4:9; John 14:30) This view can be summarised as follows. The world was given by God to humankind, but due to sin humankind has put itself under the jurisdiction of Satan, who in turn claims all human souls by virtue of human life being conceived in sin. Human nature, then, is contractually under Satan's jurisdiction. Man may be removed from this diabolical dominion by making him into a 'new creation' (2 Corinthians 5:17). Baptism is the mechanism for this removal, as Maistre comments: 'everything depends on the mutual contact of water and man, accompanied by certain sacramental words.'[427] Baptism is believed to alter the substance of human nature, making the individual a recipient of grace and identifying him with the person of Jesus Christ. This change places the baptised in Jesus Christ's kingdom, which does not have its origin in this world, but assumes into itself whatever in this world is redeemed (John 18:36). Jesus Christ's kingdom on earth *is* the Church in both its temporal and spiritual aspects. The Church's purpose is to displace the principality of Satan through baptising, thereby making disciples of all nations. Jesus Christ has promised that the gates of Satan's dominion will not withstand this assault by the Church, which is a visible community recognised by having the pope as its foundation, with whom all the Church's members must be in communion (Matthew 16:18). According to this Christian worldview, there is an ongoing moral war between the kingdom of Jesus Christ and the principality of Satan.

Maistre sees the French Revolution – and indeed all revolution – to be Satan's attempt to destroy the Church, that he may regain spiritual territory for the damnation of those whom he deems legally his.[428] Just as, for Maistre, the call for '*liberté*' is really the arrival of a new kind of bondage, so too, the call for secularisation really marks the onset of a new kind of religion, or *anti-religion*. In a similar vein, Scruton remarks:

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[425] Maistre, *The Pope*, xxiii.

[426] For a clear exposition of this view, see Thomas Pink's three-part essay, *Vatican II and Crisis in the Theology of Baptism* ⟨https://thejosias.com/2018/11/02/vatican-ii-and-crisis-in-the-theology-of-baptism-part-i/⟩ [accessed 12 September 2020].

[427] Maistre, *The Pope*, 103.

[428] See Maistre, *Considerations*, 80.

The hatred of the Church should be seen, I believe, as the hatred of a new priesthood for the old. The Church was less an obstacle to the work of Revolution, than a rival in its quest for the possession of men's souls.[429]

Here, Scruton, in keeping with Maistre's view, interprets the French Revolution in essentially religious terms, as a battle over the destiny of souls.

Maistre does not see in the Revolution the emergence of a secular Europe, but an apostate and diabolical Europe, as Perreau-Saussine comments:

For Maistre, the revolutionary state is not indifferent or incompetent in religious matters. Since human and social reality is at bottom religious, the affirmation of the neutrality of the state in religious matters can only be a lie that masks anti-Catholic religious bias.[430]

Perreau-Saussine argues that, for Maistre, the so-called secular or religiously neutral State is in fact a deeply religious polity, neither indifferent nor incompetent in such matters. Indeed, a truly secular State cannot exist, since a political community is a conglomeration of people whose nature is 'at bottom religious.' According to Perreau-Saussine, the declaration that the State had been secularised was really the announcement that the Church had been supplanted and replaced with a new religion. No sooner had the Revolution toppled the Church from its political and social role, and the State proclaimed secular, than the Revolution itself was deified, with this expressed in paraliturgies and pseudo-sacraments, as Scruton writes:

Robespierre's Festival of the Supreme Being – in which, when all was revealed, the Supreme Being was seen to be mystically identical with the Revolution itself – was no eccentricity of an isolated fanatic. It was the culmination of a movement which expressed itself throughout the war against the Church. The advance of the Revolution saw not the abolition of the feudal order (which had long since disappeared), but a re-infoedation of the people, with the State as universal lord.[431]

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[429] Scruton, 'Man's Second Disobedience' in *Philosopher on Dover Beach*, 200.
[430] Perreau-Saussine, 'Why Maistre became Ultramontane' in *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*, 150.
[431] Scruton, 'Man's Second Disobedience' in *Philosopher on Dover Beach*, 202.

The culmination, according to Scruton, of the war on the Church which was the Revolution, was the identification of the State with the Supreme Being. The perfect inversion of Christianity is here realised, in which the creature is understood to be the Creator, with the State – now the 'universal lord' – claiming everything for itself. In the previous subsection I considered Maistre's view that God's providence should be seen as at work in the Revolution and, as Perreau-Saussine notes, 'that the Revolution is a result of God's intervention does not exclude the possibility that the Revolution is also the work of the devil.'[432] In the Maistrean analysis, via the Revolution the State has ceased to be the temporal aspect of the Church, has become an anti-society retreating from Jesus Christ's kingdom, and has re-established itself as a territory within Satan's principality. The zenith of this process is the declaration that Satan's own unholy dominion *is* the Supreme Being.[433]

The social liberty produced by the union of – and tension between – the spiritual and temporal powers is a liberty made possible by the social operation of grace which is procured by that very union. This social operation of grace generates a moral liberty without which political and social liberty is impossible. It is from these assumptions that Maistre develops his '*Christian or slave*' view of the human polity: the Christian polity is one of freedom; the satanic State is one of slavery.

Maistre observes that slavery was normative to human societies prior to the arrival of Christianity. This brings us to the root of his Augustinian anthropology: Maistre is convinced that there is no true polity without the social operation of grace. Armenteros comments on Maistre's view:

> Everywhere and at all times before Christianity appeared, slavery was considered to be "a piece necessary to the government and to the political state of nations." No

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[432] Perreau-Saussine, 'Why Maistre became Ultramontane' in *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*, 150.

[433] Like in his theory of providence, Maistre appears to be transposing into political analysis a recurrent motif of Catholic mysticism, namely that certain persons especially loved by God may undergo the agony of diabolical affliction in reparation for sin. If an individual person may suffer this extraordinary spiritual trial, it is plausible that the *corporate person* of the nation may also suffer something analogous. According to Maistre, France, a nation especially loved by God, has undergone diabolical affliction for the sins of all Europe. Some examples of canonised and beatified people whom many believe experienced demonic obsession or possession are Giles of Portugal (1185-1265), Nicholas of Tolentino (1246-1305), Colette of Corbie (1381-1447), Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), Mary Magdalene de'Pazzi (1566-1607), Alphonsus Rodriguez (1532-1617), and Mariam Baouardy (1846-1878). An analysis of this phenomenon can be found in Amédée Brunot, *Mariam "The Little Arab": Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified (1846-1878)*, translated by Jeanne Dumais (Oregon, Eugene: The Carmel of Maria Regina, 1984), 51-64.

philosopher or legislator thought of condemning it. The intuition that "*man is too evil to be free*," and that it is therefore not possible to govern a nation where civil liberty reigns everywhere "*without extraordinary succour*," ensured the endurance of people's ownership of one another.[434]

As Armenteros explains, prior to the evangelisation of nations, slavery in society was deemed necessary for sustaining political life and a functioning government. Man is evil, and therefore were he to possess political and social liberty whilst still a slave to his interior appetites, political life would come to an end and the national community would be plunged into chaos. In Maistre's own words:

> Whoever has studied sufficiently this unfortunate nature, knows that *man in general*, if left to himself, *is too wicked to be free*. Let each one examine the nature of man in his own heart, and he will understand that, wherever civil liberty shall belong to all alike, there will no longer be any means, *without extraordinary aid*, of governing man as national bodies.
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> Hence, slavery was constantly the natural state of a very great portion of mankind, until the establishment of Christianity; and, as the good sense of man in general perceived the necessity of this order of things, it was never opposed either by laws or arguments.[435]

According to this passage, whilst a slave in his interior life, man cannot be free in his political life. Furthermore, man does not possess within himself the means to be emancipated from the interior tyranny of his own disordered desires. Human nature requires '*extraordinary aid*' – something given to his nature from without. Without this extraordinary aid, which comes through the 'establishment of Christianity', the majority of the population experience interiorly liberty from their appetites only by being afforded no *social* liberty, that is, by being slaves to masters who prevent them from acting as they wish. The masters believe themselves to be free, but they are slaves to *their* appetites; however, since they are few, they do not produce anarchy and chaos, but tyranny.[436]

Maistre further conveys his view in the following passage:

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[434] Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 143.
[435] Maistre, *The Pope*, 238-239.
[436] Plato develops a similar argument in *Republic*, 576b-580c.

It would be superfluous to prove at length what none are ignorant of, *that the world, until the time of Christianity, was always covered with slaves, and that the sages never blamed the custom*. This proposition cannot be shaken.

But at length the Divine law appeared upon the earth. It at once took possession of the heart of man, and changed it in a manner calculated to excite the never-failing admiration of every true observer. Religion, at its very commencement, laboured above all things, and unceasingly, to abolish slavery; and this no other religion, no other legislator, no other philosopher, had ever ventured to undertake, or had ever dreamt of. Christianity, which acted by Divine power, for this reason also acted gently and slowly; for all legitimate operations, of whatever kind they may be, are always imperceptibly carried on. Wherever there is noise, tumult, impetuosity, destruction, etc., it may be relied upon that crime or folly is at work.[437]

In this extract, Maistre again affirms that mass slavery was the norm until the arrival of 'religion', by which he means Christianity. This religion brought with it a principle which 'took possession of the heart of man'. Christianity, acting with this heart-possessing divine power, brought slavery to an end by moral transformation, not by uprising and upheaval. Christianity did not *tumultuously* and *impetuously* overthrow the slavery system, but acted 'gently and slowly'. In Maistre's view, the most revolutionary social transformation in history took place without a revolution.[438]

The transformation of a slave society into the civilization of Christendom is attributed by Maistre entirely to the *supernatural grace* brought by the Church, led by the pope:

The great bulk of mankind is, then, *naturally* in a state of serfdom, from which it cannot be extricated otherwise than through *supernatural* means. Together with slavery, there can be no real morality; without Christianity – in other words, no operating, powerful, converting, regenerating, conquering, improving Christianity. It

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[437] Maistre, *The Pope*, 240.
[438] Other authors, especially Hilaire Belloc, have noted the moderation and graduality with which, in Western Europe, the slave or serf became the peasant, the peasant the free man, and the free man the esquire or gentleman. See Hilaire Belloc, *The Servile State* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 31-56.

belonged, therefore, to the sovereign pontiff to proclaim universal liberty; he has done so, and his voice has resounded through the world.[439]

Maistre again asserts here that the *natural* state of humankind *is* slavery. If man wishes to be free, his nature must undergo a change by transformation in the *supernatural* life of grace. Social and political freedom is an effect, according to Maistre, of moral freedom, which humankind is unable to possess without supernatural transformation. This interior transformation concurrently brings about social transformation, the former nonetheless being logically prior to the latter. This transformation is what Maistre really means by *evangelisation*, namely the redemption of human nature, which includes the civil society and political life natural to that nature. In turn, for Maistre, evangelisation is *integral evangelisation*.[440]

Grace, by reversing the effects of original sin and raising humankind to share 'God's point of view', liberates man from the captivity in which he is conceived. According to Maistre, the retreat from grace which characterises modernity will eventually universalise the old slavery of the masters, and change nations into anti-societies directed by passion, with the masses led this way and that by appeals to their appetite from those also led by appetite. 'Such nations,' Armenteros comments, 'are plunged in a "*vicious cycle*" where vice is a duty, and immorality the necessary corollary of servitude; and which they cannot exit through their own efforts.'[441]

In the Maistrean analysis, grace has eliminated slavery by making it unnecessary. By withdrawing from grace, humankind has again made slavery necessary. To Maistre, this new slavery, universal slavery to appetite, is a kind far more terrible than any which has hitherto existed. Since a polity consisting of such appetitive slaves cannot subsist, this will be yet another factor that necessitates an age of totalitarian regimes, away from which Maistre hopes to drag Europe before it is too late. If man wishes to escape this coming captivity, he must return to the union of spiritual and temporal powers by inviting the Church back into political life. Maistre insists that post-Revolutionary Europe will only undergo 'more commotions,

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[439] Maistre, *The Pope*, 243.
[440] Recently there has been increasing discussion about methodologies in evangelisation which can accommodate the wider political and social mission which the Church traditionally claims to have. For an analysis of the concept of 'integral evangelisation', see Nichols, *The Realm*, 126-160; for a more comprehensive study of this topic by the same author, see *Christendom Awake: On Re-energising the Church in Culture* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999).
[441] Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 143.

and good order will not be thoroughly established until either slavery or religion be restored.'[442] Europe, according to Maistre, has before it the choices of Christianity or slavery: 'the wills of men must be either purified or enchained; there is no medium.'[443]

Maistre's view is that social liberty is procured by self-government not in such a way as to dissolve the need for political government, but rather to make true political life possible. This is described in the following way by Armenteros:

> Christianity freed human beings from the tyranny of other human beings in order to subject them to a law… that perfects them morally and spiritually, and of which European sovereignty is only the political derivation. Importantly, Christianity does not so much relieve humanity of authority – for human beings must always and everywhere be governed – but subdues humanity by elevating it, and by teaching it to govern itself.[444]

According to this model, political life, via the union of spiritual and temporal powers, ceases to be the control of a community for the benefit of a few who pursue the indulgence of their disordered desires, and instead becomes a moral unity of self-governing members who together seek the end for which they were created, each with different roles within the polity. In Maistre's own words:

> It must not be imagined that the Church or the pope – *they are all one* – has no other view in declaring war on slavery than the political improvement of mankind. This power aims at a still higher object – the perfecting of morality, of which political perfection is merely an emanation.[445]

Maistre acknowledges that the move away from slavery and towards freedom is desirable in itself, but notes that the Church does not merely pursue a better political condition for nations; rather, its purpose is to make man good. A political life of free people is simply the effect of this moral transformation.

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[442] Maistre, *The Pope*, 240.
[443] *Ibid*. 244.
[444] Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 143.
[445] Maistre, *The Pope*, 242.

Maistre holds that the directive and coercive operation of the pope, bishops, and other members of the hierarchy towards temporal sovereigns rendered such rulers moral:

> Never did the popes and the Church in general render a more signal service to the world, than in repressing among princes… the violence of a passion which is terrible even in men of a gentle disposition, but which, in fiercer characters, passes all description, and will always make sport of the holiest laws of marriage, wherever it finds itself at ease. Love, when it is not tamed to a certain degree, by extreme civilization, is a ferocious animal, capable of the most horrible excesses.[446]

Here Maistre gets to the core of what he understands to be *interior slavery*: humankind is ensnared by passion through insatiable sexual appetite. Those political rulers who are so yoked cannot govern themselves, and in turn cannot govern a nation. Capable of being conscious of little else besides the quenching of their cravings, they order all to their own advantage, rather than to the good of those over whom they have power, and thus they become oppressors. Maistre holds that the antidote to this is 'extreme civilization', by which he means social transformation by grace. Only through such a transformation, according to him, will the 'holiest laws of marriage', such as the proper conditions of carnal relations, be respected.

Maistre sees the pathway to interior slavery to be the unfettering of sexual appetite.[447] For him, it is primarily through this vanquishing of sexual restraint and the customs which protect what he deems to belong to marriage, that a culture is established 'which characterises a barbarian age.'[448] Indeed, one reason he so insistently upholds the Latin Christian practice of clerical celibacy is that, in his view, it has a didactic character. Clerical celibacy witnesses

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[446] *Ibid*. 150.

[447] This can also be considered from a neuroscientific perspective. The frontal lobes of the human brain are not found at the same size in proportion to the rest of the brain in any other animal species, with the ventrolateral frontal cortex area (part of the prefrontal cortex) being unique to human beings. The frontal lobes are responsible for executive function, being connected with decision making, risk evaluation, temper and other impulse control, and personality expression. A growing body of research indicates that uncontrolled sexual appetite, especially connected with pornography addiction, leads to *hypofrontality*. *Hypofrontality* is the decreasing of blood-flow to the prefrontal cortex causing an increase of 'grey matter', and is linked to a number of serious behavioural disorders. See *Unwiring & Rewiring Your Brain: Sensitization and Hypofrontality* ⟨https://www.yourbrainonporn.com/tools-for-change-recovery-from-porn-addiction/rebooting-basics-start-here/unwiring-rewiring-your-brain-sensitization-and-hypofrontality/⟩ [accessed 10 September 2020].

[448] Maistre, *The Pope*, 152.

to the possibility of being liberated from interior rule by sexual appetite, but more importantly it shows that such liberation is proper to holiness.[449]

Maistre holds that unfettered sexual appetite, effecting the interior enslavement of humankind (a disordered passion distinctive from, say, a gluttonous attitude towards food, or excessive laziness, due to the intensity of pleasure which accompanies sexual activity), leads to political and social slavery:[450]

> Wherever slavery prevails, there can be no true morality, because of the inordinate empire of man over woman. Although in full possession of her rights, and mistress of her actions, she is already too weak against the seductions by which she is everywhere surrounded. What then must not her position be when her will even can no longer defend her? The very idea of resistance will vanish, vice will become a duty, and man, gradually degraded by the ferocity of gratification, will no longer be superior in point of morals to the voluptuaries of Asia.[451]

According to Maistre, as he presents his view in this passage, there is no true moral life in a State with slavery. If women are owned by men, men will have those women quench their sexual appetites, deeming those women not persons but property to be used.[452] It is Maistre's opinion that, in his own age, women possess social rights and autonomy previously unseen, and yet he believes that this has coincided with an eroding of civilization and the morality undergirding it which has hitherto protected women from returning to their pre-Christian sexual status. Maistre foresees a post-Revolutionary age in which the accumulated social protections of women from sexual exploitation will have been vanquished. Soon, he believes, women will have only the strength of their wills to resist being returned to their previous slave state of sexual property for the satisfaction of men's desires, and their wills shall be insufficient. For women, 'vice will become a duty', and by this defilement of women, men

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[449] See *Ibid*. 153, 245-255.

[450] This theme can also be found in Augustine of Hippo, *City of God* (London: Penguin Classics, 1984), 41-45.

[451] Maistre, *The Pope*, 242.

[452] Recently, the historian Tom Holland, in *Dominion: The Making of the Western Mind* (London: Little Brown, 2019), has presented an account of the sexual treatment of slaves in the pre-Christian West, the disappearance of which he attributes wholly to the rise of Christianity. See also the discussion on this topic by Holland in *Christianity gave women a dignity that no previous sexual dispensation had offered: Tom Holland* (https://scroll.in/article/953904/christianity-gave-women-a-dignity-that-no-previous-sexual-dispensation-had-offered-tom-holland) [accessed 12 September 2020].

will become slaves to their own appetitive impulses, returning the whole of society to a barbarian condition.

Maistre calls this coupling of social and moral enslavement of the sexes a 'vicious cycle', presenting how he believes it will be fully realised:

> It is possible to point out the cause of this degradation, which can only be combated by a supernatural principle. Wherever our sex is able to command vice, there can be no true morality nor real dignity of manners. Woman, who is all powerful over the heart of man, returns to him in full measure the perversity she receives at his hands; and nations grovel in this *vicious cycle*. Out of which it is impossible for them to escape by any strength inherent in themselves.[453]

Here Maistre asserts that this process of moral degradation can only be remedied by grace, what he calls 'a supernatural principle'. The Revolution has, according to Maistre, started the process of destroying the civilization he calls *Europe*, a civilization he deems to be a moral achievement. The discarding of the Christian moral framework of this civilization, which he believes elevated women, will once again subordinate women to men, and men will then 'command vice'. Post-Christian man will use post-Christian woman to quench his appetite, and she will return 'to him in full measure the perversity she receives at his hands'. This cycle will humiliate the nations. If the nations wish to escape this doom of sexual enslavement, they must not look to some 'strength inherent in themselves', but to a 'supernatural principle' which comes from without. According to Maistre, the nations of Europe have before them the options of Christianity or slavery.

Maistre writes that woman 'is all powerful over the heart of man'. Therefore, according to him, Christianity transformed men by ennobling women:

> The most effectual means of improving man is to raise and ennoble woman. Towards this end, Christianity alone tends and labours without ceasing, and with infallible success – success which is only limited more or less, according to the kind and number of the obstacles which may thwart its action… Woman is more indebted than man to the Christian faith. She derives from it all her dignity. The Christian woman is really a *supernatural* being, inasmuch as she is raised and upheld by religion in a state

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[453] Maistre, *The Pope*, 242-243.

that is not *natural* to her. But by what immense services does she not pay for being thus ennobled![454]

Maistre believes that Christianity has transformed the relations between the sexes by transforming the social role and significance of woman, bestowing upon her a dignity which, in his view, she has never possessed outside the Christian nations.[455] He believes that woman, being so elevated and transformed by grace, 'is all powerful over the heart of man' and therefore can lead him to overcome his passion. Christian woman teaches Christian man to live not as a slave to his own appetitive impulses, but as a free man. This, as Maistre puts it, is the immense service she pays for being so ennobled.

Maistre is working within an ancient anthropological model, whose themes are found in Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, the Biblical Scriptures, the Church Fathers, the Scholastics, and others since, of seeing freedom to be primarily an interior condition. Freedom, according to this broad philosophical tradition, is principally deliverance from insatiable and unfettered appetite. Such interior liberation, it is believed, does not *destroy* the life of emotion, appetite, and passion. Rather, these are subordinated to, and integrated with, a will made strong by virtue, which in turn is in harmony with a reasoning faculty cast in the virtue of prudence. One's operations, then, are the fruit of deliberation and choice, rather than being driven by untamed impulses. In this view, social and political liberties are simply the effects of, and made possible by, interior moral liberty. By reframing liberty as emancipation from exterior political, social, customary, and also interior constraints, Maistre saw Enlightenment liberalism identifying as freedom what he identified as slavery.

The Church, according to Maistre, has a universal mission to free the nations from moral and, in turn, political slavery. The 'Reason' of the *philosophes* is, to him, a counterfeit revelation because it attributes to the inner life of man, which is historically and culturally conditioned, circumstantial, uncertain and contingent, a universality which alone belongs to the revelation of God's inner life. The Enlightenment, by claiming universality and the power to bestow freedom, promises to deliver what it does not possess. It will therefore fail to bring

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[454] *Ibid*. 243.

[455] Certainly, the cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary gave to womanhood, motherhood, and marriage a significance peculiar to the Christian religion and the cultures that received it. The content of this cult, among other things, is that the mother of Jesus Christ, still body and soul united, reigns over the whole universe, has always been free from any kind of sin, mediates graces merited by Jesus Christ for the spiritual and moral perfection of the baptised, constantly intercedes for the Church and its members, and sporadically appears on earth with special messages from God.

freedom and will thrust humanity into an epoch of totalitarian regimes over servile States. Maistre holds that Christianity alone can give to humanity a universal knowledge and power which can unite all nations whilst leaving their unique cultural differences intact, binding all peoples and simultaneously making them all free. Armenteros describes Maistre's apostolic schema in the following way:

> Temporal monarchies are suited only to the peoples among whom they grow unprompted; whereas the ecclesiastical monarchy possesses a reason so universal, and an internal structure rendered so cohesive by the peculiar nature of its monarch, that it can help govern and unite all peoples. Because humanity is naturally Christian, Christian government is "the only government that is convenient to men of all times and of all places."[456]

What Armenteros explains here is that government is part of the constitution – the settled way of life – of the nation which it orders. It is suited to *that* people, and not transferable. The political knowledge of such an institution is also particular, suited to *this* or *that* people.[457] On the other hand, there does seem to be an innate human inclination to unify all of humanity, as historical political pacts and treaties, as well as the widespread attraction to liberalism, indicate. This unity of all peoples can only come about, according to the Maistrean schema, by maintaining the distinctions between human communities whilst realising a certain internal, spiritual unity. By temporal governments uniting themselves with the universal spiritual government of the pope, this unity of humanity may be procured whilst conserving national distinctions. Repeatedly, Maistre makes the claim that Christianity is 'natural' to humankind, and yet he also recurrently insists that Christianity is distinct from all other religions by being exclusively *supernatural*. What Maistre means by the naturality of Christianity is that human nature is wounded and incomplete, and the role of the grace brought by Christianity is in part to complete human nature, which is not what it is meant to be because of sin. In turn, for Maistre, man is not in possession of his proper nature without supernature. Since human beings differ nationally, culturally, ethnically, and so forth, but all share the same nature, they are all equally in need of grace to be what they ought to be. For

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[456] Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 126-127.

[457] We cannot assume that, because the parliamentary, aristocratic, and monarchical system of England has worked for so long among the English, it is therefore appropriate to all nations; nor should we think that the very stable absolutist royal system of Bhutan, for example, could be replicated everywhere else.

Maistre, the only solution is the conserving of the particularity of nations whilst simultaneously universalising the Church, and the former will only be possible with the latter. In this way the supernatural, whilst remaining universal, becomes *particularised* in the lives of people and the stories of nations.[458]

The relationship between the particular and the universal which so preoccupies Maistre helps to explain his fixation on the Latin language. He holds that the universal constitution which he believes *is* the Church, mandated to become embodied in all temporal constitutions and assimilate them into itself, must possess a universal tongue with which to convey itself to all nations whilst leaving their vernaculars (in which he partly roots national identity and distinction) intact. The preservation of an ecclesiastical language, then, is inseparably connected to Maistre's vision for an integralist conservative settlement. Maistre believes that were the Church to abandon its sacred language it would simultaneously thwart its mission to make disciples of all nations, becoming a mere private association within them, understanding itself only with the language of the land.[459]

'With [the loss of] Latin, Europe loses its memory, its culture, its aesthetics, its spirituality.'[460] With these words Armenteros sums up Maistre's view that Christian civilization cannot be separated from its sacred tongue. As Maistre sees it, if the Church of the new era is to take up once again the mission of uniting the spiritual and temporal powers, that it may render the nations sacral, it must hold to its language. Armenteros comments:

> In the future Europe will expand – not through subjugation of nations by nations, but
> through the ministry of the Church. Inevitably, this imminent historical upheaval will
> be accompanied by the resurrection, and this time eternal life, of Latin.[461]

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[458] This view was later espoused by Vladimir Solovyov (1853-1900): 'The life of the Church is half-way between the divine and the natural… In the universal Church, i.e. in the family of all nations and in the general all-human brotherhood, there must be international priesthood united in the common *father* or universal high-priest, for the unity of a family depends upon having the same father. Brothers are one not of themselves, but merely as the sons of one… Division into nations and states is the actual condition of the Christian world. From the religious point of view it is indisputable that this division cannot be the final and predominant form of life for mankind, but must be subordinated to a higher principle, although national freedom and political spheres of activity should be preserved… When clearly and consciously by a free moral effort of the national spirit we put ourselves into the relation of true sonship to the universal fatherhood, then only will the perfect all-embracing brotherhood of all nations, living by love and free unanimity, become possible. It is the ideal and the future of the universal Church and at the same time our true national ideal.' *A Solovyov Anthology*, edited by S. L. Frank (London: The Saint Austin Press, 2001), 102-104.
[459] See Maistre, *The Pope*, 110-111.
[460] Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 146.
[461] *Ibid*. 146.

As Armenteros explains, Maistre believes that the Church has a mission to expand Europe, which he identifies with that union of spiritual and temporal powers which to him *is* Christendom. This expansion, according to Maistre, is the only way to prevent the ongoing attempts by nations to subjugate one another. Such violence is, for him, the unavoidable consequence of the nations' fragmentation away from a Christian social order, by which they unlearn their unique respective missions in the providential meaning of history. If the Church is to accomplish this pacifying 'ministry' of expanding Europe, extending Christian civilization to every part of the world, it must not forget the supernatural reason for its existence. According to Maistre, the Church's self-knowledge will be lost if it loses the sacred language of its sovereign's Rite, the 'eternal life' of the pope's liturgical voice.

In the Maistrean analysis, the mission of the pope after the Revolution is inseparably linked to his liturgical language. By opting for the vernaculars of those nations which it must reunite in 'European fraternity', the Church would declare that it is not a divine society coming from without, but a natural society arising from within their political jurisdictions, like any club or private association, and may be regulated as such.[462] The Church, by this vernacularisation, would instruct the nations that it does not come for their union and redemption, but is derived *from* them, possessing no such divine and universal power. Ultimately, with the loss of Latin, the Church would proclaim its contentment with the Revolutionary settlement of subordinating the spiritual to the temporal power. In such a settlement, the temporal power would be so detached from the life of the Church as to become the 'secular State', which Maistre identifies with the satanic order. The Church, by losing its language, would tacitly absolve itself of the duty to evangelise, concurrently conveying its willingness to accommodate – and subordinate itself to – the principality of Satan. Thus, for Maistre, the Roman Church's mission and language are conserved together, or they disappear together. On this theme, Armenteros comments:

> Universal and freedom bestowing, the church is the civil constitution that has made European society, and that is now poised to reunite the continent. Its candidacy to make of the whole earth a free Christian community is also assured – if only it may preserve a universal language in which to preach, and craft a world civilization.[463]

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[462] *Ibid*. 145.
[463] *Ibid*. 145.

Armenteros emphasises that, for Maistre, the Church *is* the constitution that has made Europe. Europe is the assumption of nations, with their natural constitutions, into the supernatural constitution of the Church, whilst leaving them all distinct and intact. The Church may fail to accomplish this transformation of nations if it loses its sacred tongue, without which it will declare itself a natural institution with no such transcendent power.

Armenteros comments that, for Maistre, Latin is the language in which the Church must 'preach'. To be clear, Maistre does not advocate literal preaching of sermons in a language unintelligible to the masses. Rather, the point is that Latin is part of Maistre's broader view of evangelisation, what I have referred to above as 'integral evangelisation'. The 'evangelium', as it is presented in *The Pope*, encompasses the making of nations into Christian polities. Armenteros explains:

> For him, evangelisation is less an informative activity than a mission accomplished through "preaching accompanied by music, painting, solemn rites, and all the demonstration of faith without discussion." The Christian spirit is best nurtured with the values and traditions that ecclesiastical institutions encode, and that Latin transmits. That the *vulgus* does not fully understand them does not matter too much, since moral and spiritual development proceeds not so much through intellective understanding of spiritual things… as through the living, feeling, and acting out of spiritual truths.[464]

Maistre does not deny that evangelisation may refer to the Christian conversion of this or that individual. For him, however, evangelisation is a broader project of 'baptising' civil society, culture, and the political order. With a typically anti-rationalist attitude, Maistre does not see the Christian life as primarily comprising, say, the memorising of catechetical answers or specific articles of faith, even if that has its place. Rather, he sees Christian formation principally to be the gradual habituation of a devotional life within a Christian society: the existential living of 'traditions that ecclesiastical institutions encode, and that Latin transmits.' In the face of the rationalist assumption that evangelisation takes place when all is understood, formulated, explicitly comprehended, and vernacularized, Maistre sees

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[464] *Ibid.* 147.

evangelisation arising out of habit, devotion, pious feeling, sacral culture, mystery, and awe.[465]

The preservation of Latin, according to Maistre, will not only help to safeguard the Church from giving up its mission and accommodating a Revolutionary settlement, but may also prevent the Revolution from entering the Church's hierarchy. If the priestly order were to adopt revolutionary ideas, Maistre believes this would be by way of an Ecumenical Council.[466] At the beginning of *The Pope*, he states his concern that revolutionary ideas may make their way into the Church's teaching and practice due to a misplaced romanticism which aims to 'recall us to the first ages' of the Church.[467] Maistre saw that revolutionary egalitarianism, conjoined with enthusiasm for sundering the spiritual and temporal powers, could spread under the guise of a false ecclesiastical renewal centred on rediscovering the spirituality of the early Christians. Maistre worried that such a Council, by the promotion of this early-Church centred romanticism, would bring the Revolution into the Church, corrupting its teaching and liturgy.[468]

According to Maistre, if the Church is to be renewed, this will not be by wiping the slate clean in an attempt to recapture the life of the early Church, but by a new commitment to its ongoing tradition and by the moral reform of the Church's members.[469] He therefore argues that an ever-growing archaeological view of the Church must be abandoned and replaced with that of the Church as a *living* and *eternal* corporate person:

> 'It would be better to say, perhaps, that in one sense the Church never grows old. The Christian religion is the only institution which knows no decay… in things essential it is always the same.'[470]

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[465] Recently the case has been made by Stephen Bullivant that the Catholic Church has increasingly come to see a prayerful and devotional life as an *effect* of good catechesis. His research challenges this assumption. The findings of Bullivant's studies indicate that evangelisation was generally deepest, and most long-lasting, where catechesis was perhaps average, or even substandard, but where a very rich devotional life, with reverent Masses, and also frequent vigils, litanies, processions, prayers to saints, and pilgrimages were part of the local culture. The *effect* of such a devotional culture was a deep and stable, if not easily formulated, spiritual life in which the Faith was *known* and *lived* organically, and retention of the Faith was high. See Stephen Bullivant, *Mass Exodus: Catholic Disaffiliation in Britain and America Since Vatican II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 102-113, 156-171.

[466] Maistre, *The Pope*, 10.

[467] *Ibid*. 22.

[468] *Ibid.* 22.

[469] *Ibid.* 22.

[470] *Ibid.* 22.

Due to his concerns about the possible seeping of the Revolution into the Church's clerical hierarchy, Maistre believes that the Church must hold fast to Latin, the abandonment of which would mean losing an important medium by which the Church accesses its own tradition.[471]

According to Maistre, the Church alone can stop the cycle of perpetual revolution into which the French Revolution has thrust the world: the priestly hierarchy must sanctify and lead the laity in a counter-revolution. It is necessary to examine what exactly counter-revolution looks like according to Maistre. To his mind, it is only by this reactionary movement that a post-revolutionary conservative settlement may be achieved.

It is important to recall that Maistre is a theorist of the limitation of social violence. What he sees in the Revolution is the eruption of social violence, which he believes is the inescapable consequence of the temporal world rejecting the only truly redemptive sacrifice of Jesus Christ, perpetuated unviolently by Christian priests. In Maistre's analysis, combining the loss of the true religious sacrifice with the emancipation of irrational appetite effects the transposing of the religious impulse and the need for expiatory slaying onto frenzied passion, and this gives rise to mass social violence. This is a process Maistre believes he has witnessed in the Terror. If this violence and chaos is Revolution, then counter-revolution is the opposite of this, as Bradley comments:

> Rather than a revolution in reverse, a shift from left-wing to right-wing violence, the counter-revolution can only be the reverse of a revolution. Restoration can only be a passage from violence to order, from sickness to health, vice to virtue.[472]

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[471] In the mid-twentieth century the Catholic Church held an Ecumenical Council, the Second Vatican Council, many of the effects of which seem to correspond to the concerns of Maistre, including opting for a vernacular liturgy, an apparent prohibition on Latin liturgical celebrations in most countries, a 'development' of the Church's doctrine on the relationship between Church and State (seemingly advocating their separation), and a reframing of doctrine and practice which sought inspiration from the early Church, referred to as the '*ressourcement*' approach. Leo Jozef Suenens, a Belgian prelate who was influential at the Council, and is widely considered to have been a progressive, stated that 'Vatican II is the French Revolution in the Church'. Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI), generally deemed more conservative, wrote of one of the Council documents, *Gaudium et Spes*: 'The text… represents, on the part of the Church, an attempt at an official reconciliation with the new era inaugurated in 1789.' *Principles of Catholic Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 381; for the Suenens quotation, see Marcel Lefebvre, *Open Letter to Confused Catholics* (Kansas City: Angelus Press, 2001), 100.

[472] Bradley, *A Modern Maistre*, 220.

The forces of revolution cannot be opposed by further revolution. Rather, for Maistre, the methods of counter-revolution are peaceful restoration of civil life, the nursing back to health of longstanding social institutions, and a return to virtue.

Chapters Nine and Ten of *Considerations on France* are devoted to Maistre's view of 'counter-revolution', and the central themes are: first, counter-revolution is not a sentimental return to 'the way things were', but a *restoration* of embodied perennial principles in the newly established post-Revolutionary context;[473] second, counter-revolution can be understood to be such inasmuch as it is non-violent.[474] Just as with Maistre's theory of sacrifice, we see that his integralist conservatism, advancing a counter-revolution centred on the invitation of grace back into the temporal sphere, and led by the instrument of grace, the Church, is a position deeply concerned with the conquering of social violence. The integralist settlement for which he argues, that of the union of spiritual and temporal powers in a combative posture of tension, is advanced to thwart both political and ecclesiastical abuses of power, and therefore curtail the generation of violence. For Maistre, the Revolution was a movement of repudiation, and therefore inherently violent; its self-understanding was based on what it sought to destroy. The counter-revolution of the conservatives, on the other hand, must be a movement of affirmation, and therefore inherently peaceful.

Armenteros notes that Maistre is opposed neither to change nor to freedom, but rather to violent change and what he deems to be new forms of captivity masquerading as liberties:

> [Maistre proposes] a model for the achievement of political change, and of political freedom, through the application of a Christian ethic of governmental restraint. Contrary to what is often supposed of Maistre, he was not opposed to political change or freedom. But he intended that they be attained gradually, legally, and bloodlessly within the framework of existing institutions. His insistence that the Roman Catholic Church dispense sovereignty was an attempt to use Christian reason to secure political freedom in Christian societies.[475]

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[473] As John Rao notes, 'Maistre realised that the Revolution, in a deeper sense, had begun long before 1789… He was heartbroken by the fact that most legitimists entertained the simple-minded view that everything before 1789 was good and that the Revolution could be suppressed through uninformed police action alone.' *Removing the Blindfold: Nineteenth-century Catholics and the Myth of Modern Freedom* (Kansas City: Angelus Press, 1999), 13.

[474] Maistre, *Considerations*, 77-105.

[475] Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 139.

This passage well summarises the Maistrean schema for counter-revolution. For Maistre, the spiritual and temporal powers must be reunited in the one society of the Church. Only this reunification will redeem the post-Revolutionary age, preventing it from becoming an epoch of totalitarian tyrannies. Contrary to the popular image of him, Maistre both accepts change and seeks to defend freedom. It is violent change and false freedoms which he condemns, and holds that change understood as moral progress is inseparably linked to the social reception of grace. Maistre calls for a conservative counter-revolution of peace and order, established through a concordat of the two orders of the Church and led by the pope, reminding his readers that 'the pontifical power has always been eminently conservative.'[476]

2.2.2.4 Summary of Maistre's politico-religious thought

There are, I believe, three facets of Maistre which together provide the key to understanding his conservatism. First, Maistre is driven by his sensitivity to human suffering, especially that which is inflicted by avoidable violence, and therefore he is largely preoccupied with the question of how to limit social violence, as evidenced by his writings on sacrifice. Second, Maistre, like Burke and other early conservatives, was concerned that longstanding and hard-won civil liberties were being destroyed in the wake of modernity, and therefore much of what he writes is an attempt to account for such liberties with a view to defending them. Third, Maistre is a Christian mystic. By this I do not mean that Maistre possessed extraordinary charisms like those sometimes reported of holy men and women, such as levitation, ecstatic trances, or the wounds of the stigmata. Indeed, his brother, Xavier de Maistre, said of Joseph's religious devotions that they 'went like the most perfect chronometer,' and he expressed surprise that this did not 'lead to dryness'.[477] Perhaps for onlookers, Maistre appeared to only 'go through the motions' of religious observance, but his writings, and the fact that a great many people converted to his religion under his influence, indicate the enjoyment of a deep interior life. One might say that Maistre was a mystic in the truest sense, that is, he was a Christian who understood everything in relation to the ultimate end for which human life exists according to the Christian worldview, namely spiritual union with the Triune God. I propose that these three aspects of Maistre, taken together, enable us to understand his thought properly.

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[476] Maistre, *The Pope*, 130.
[477] Xavier de Maistre, in *Le Correspondant* (Paris), 10 December 1902, 918. Cited in Bradley, *A Modern Maistre*, 191.

What follows is a summary of Maistre's politico-religious thought, sketching the areas already covered from a bird's-eye-view, so to speak, in order to present Maistrean conservatism as a single intellectual structure. I begin with his theory of sacrifice, how this forms a pathway into his broader understanding of providence and the life of nations, and finally how this worldview reaches its political realisation in Maistre's unique integralist conservatism.

Sacrifice. As Maistre understands it, human nature is disintegrated due to sin, and as a consequence man, awkwardly placed in the created order because of his interior chaos, is ever in the process of trying to emancipate himself from this order, from that 'supple chain' which links him to the 'Supreme Being'.[478] Indeed, man is inclined to identify liberty with such emancipation. This process leads to extreme moral frustration. This frustration, what Lively calls 'moral schizophrenia', arises from the carnal passions' revolt against the life of reason and true freedom of the will. Due to unrestrained passion, man's higher faculties are subordinated to his lower faculties, placing him in a state of interior bondage to insatiable appetite. Such a life is one broken off from that 'supple chain', and as a consequence man discovers himself as alienated from God. The antidote to this moral sickness is found in the venom. That is to say, sin arises from the soul's union with a body divided against it; to expiate for the consequential guilt, the innocent must have body and soul separated in an offering to God, the Being to whom man is morally accountable. According to Maistre, such religious sacrifice, based on what he believes to be a universally held principle that spilled innocent blood expiates for the guilty blood of the living, is the religious and moral basis of all human civilization.

The notion that the spilled blood of the innocent expiates for the guilty blood of the living leads to a cult of sacrifice which, according to Maistre, simply fails to achieve its purpose, namely that of reconciling man to God. What is witnessed in religious sacrifice is the natural religious impulse, whose proper expression is *human* sacrifice. Such sacrifices, however, never actually effect expiation for the guilt which arises from man's interior disorder. Maistre holds that by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, a truly innocent and worthy sacrifice has been offered to God: the requirement to sacrifice has been satisfied. This perfect sacrifice on Calvary is believed by Maistre to be offered over and over until the end of time, not symbolically but literally, in the Church's Eucharistic offering. By participating in this sacrificial offering, the baptised become so identified with the victim, that the whole of the

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[478] Maistre, *Considerations*, 3.

discipled society becomes an unbloody offering to God, establishing a social order of integrated religious peace, rather than one of frustrated religious violence. As Maistre sees it, the Revolution was a rejection of this Christian order, and the subsequent Terror was the expected eruption of the frustrated religious impulse, an impulse ruptured from its only means of redemption. This expressed itself in human sacrifice offered to the deity-State, the god of a new religion whose political order is totalitarianism.

Providence and nationhood. According to Maistre, national character is the particularisation of the universal law of human nature for this or that people. In his view, this instantiation is the true constitution of a nation, rather than something issued by men in ink on paper. Society, then, is not conceived as something authored by the State, but is prior to the State, with the State being society's political realisation and ordinarily conditioned by society. Maistre holds that a constitution is a work of God's providence. To him, providence is a didactic force in history which teaches each nation its especial mission as it is prepared for discipleship, by which they will be gathered into the one society of the Church. The preservation of nations and their union with one another, then, comes not primarily through human technical knowledge (even if such knowledge has a role in the process), but by their permeation with the Church.

According to Maistre, the Church consecrates the religious principle which is at the heart of society's culture. By this, the supernatural religion of the Church becomes inseparably bound up with the natural religious principle it has come to transform. If, then, the State banishes the Church's mission from the public arena, it declares at one and the same time that *it* is the author of civil society, and therefore may reconstitute civil society at will. By this assumption, the State identifies itself as the true providential lord of society, deeming itself eligible to interfere in every aspect of the lives of the citizenry.[479] Maistre believes that the culmination of this process will be the State eventually claiming for itself rights of worship. In Maistre's view, however, God will use such religious and social frustration, and such political disorder, to plunge the post-Christian nations into a 'dark night of the soul', by which He will lead them back to Himself.

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[479] Lewis described this concern in the following way: 'Of all tyrannies, a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive. It would be better to live under robber barons than under omnipotent moral busybodies. The robber baron's cruelty may sometimes sleep, his cupidity may at some point be satiated; but those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end for they do so with the approval of their own conscience.' C.S. Lewis, *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co; Reprint edition, 1972), 324.

The reception of the Gospel and the transformation of human nature by grace allows the Christian individual, and by extension the corporate person of the nation, to understand history in relation to providence. This causes man, as Filho puts it, 'to be uplifted to God's perspective'. In the Maistrean schema, by the discipling of nations, these moral units pursue an end superior to their own private interests, seeking a transcendent and universal felicity for all nations without those nations losing their distinct cultural differences.

Grace, or what Maistre calls the 'divine principle', overcomes man's inherent frustration by redeeming that which is otherwise incomplete, namely man's very nature. Grace, according to Maistre, and in line with Catholic doctrine, not only heals man, but transforms him interiorly in such a way as to share God's own divine life. Since human nature is deemed by Maistre to be incomplete without grace, so too all institutions which arise from human nature (either necessarily or by human ingenuity) are also deemed by him to be incomplete without the social operation of grace, and that includes the natural institution of the State. In turn, whilst Maistre recognises that there is a certain temporal and pragmatic legitimacy that the political order may claim, largely on the basis of accepted reception and the passing of time, *true* legitimacy, metaphysically grounded, can only be established by consecration of the State by the Church. By this consecration the State becomes the temporal aspect of the Church. This brings us to Maistre's integralist political vision.

Integralism. According to Maistre, no State is a true society, but a shadow of the political order which – when completed and elevated to its proper condition via assumption into the Church – will become the temporal aspect of the Church. This assumption establishes the lay order. In the Church, then, there exists two orders, lay and priestly, with different but complementary apostolates. These orders each possess a power. The laity possess the temporal power and the priestly hierarchy possess spiritual power.

In Maistre's view, the union of the two powers rests on the acknowledgment by the laity, especially by their political leaders, of the infallibility of the pope. Maistre's argument is that temporal sovereigns possess an authority comparable to infallibility in temporal affairs, and it is on this that their very sovereignty depends. In turn, the spiritual power cannot be adequately wielded, and there can be no real union of powers, if temporal sovereigns do not acknowledge that doctrinal and moral infallibility in spiritual affairs resides with the pope. A consequence of the pope's infallibility in matters of morality or religious doctrine, according to Maistre, is that the pope may judge whether a temporal sovereign has become a tyrant or a heretic, and if so, may remove temporal power in accordance with the constitution

of the country of that sovereign. He may do this because he is the head of the whole Church, of which that sovereign and his nation is a part of the temporal aspect. The pope must, however, as stated, transfer power *in accordance with the constitution*, for if he were not to do so, that would mark a case not of transferring temporal power, but of wielding it directly, which Jesus Christ is deemed to have forbidden Peter and his successors from doing. According to Maistre, such a mechanism (to absolve the citizenry of their temporal allegiance and transfer temporal power to another ruler or government) generates a Catholic social order by making the teaching of the Church the criteria for legitimacy, which, for Maistre, is the only social order capable of limiting social violence. Furthermore, such a mechanism preserves civil liberties, and removes the possibility of revolution, for only the infallible pope may question the quasi-infallibility of a temporal sovereign. Therefore, the pope's superior authority, according to Maistre, is not a threat to temporal government, but the only real means to protect it.

Maistre is working within an ancient tradition of Christian political thought, on which he believes Christian civilization is rooted. Indeed, the name he gives to the union of spiritual and temporal powers is simply *Europe*. By this union, Maistre holds that the Church imparts 'Reason' to the temporal society, that is, a knowledge of the proper and ultimate end of its members, and believes the Enlightenment to be a counterfeit of this, the proof of which is the immediate violence which followed the reception of its principles. The union of powers, according to Maistre, does not only limit violence within the nation, but between nations, as they fraternally engage in the common project of redemption within the one society of the Church, without losing their distinct cultural characters which makes them definite moral units and discipled corporate persons.

Preoccupied with the question of how to limit violence, Maistre asks himself what, in such a settlement, will prevent the pope from using his spiritual power in a tyrannical manner. Maistre holds that the temporal and spiritual powers, whilst in union, ordinarily coexist in tension with one another. This tension is a consequence of man's fall from grace and the possession of such powers by sinful people. If a temporal ruler becomes tyrannical or heretical, he may be deposed, and by the spiritual power of the pope the temporal ruler's sovereignty may be transferred to another, and the citizenry may switch their allegiance. On the other hand, if the pope becomes tyrannical or heretical, he may be deemed self-deposed, and his temporal power, which is always wielded by another, may be used against him. What is envisaged to arise out of such a settlement is a certain stalemate, limiting the power of both authorities, and thereby generating liberties all the way down to the lowest level of the one

society of the Church. It is worth recalling that Maistre foresees an age of totalitarian regimes coming out of the Enlightenment, and for this reason wants to propose a different settlement, one of limited powers.

The Maistrean integralist settlement is not merely pragmatic. Maistre really believes that the union of powers, in such a way that limits both, allows for the organic social operation of supernatural grace. According to Maistre, this reception of grace is essential for any kind of true political settlement. This is because liberty, far from being the licence to do whatever one wills, is understood by him to be an interior disposition of self-government in which freedom from disordered appetite is enjoyed, of which political liberty is an effect. When self-government is possessed by the citizenry, limited powers are possible. Maistre does not believe that fallen man has the means for such interior government; this, he holds, comes from without in the reception of grace.

Doing whatever one wills, rather than what one discovers to be good, is for Maistre a form of bondage, and it is into this condition that he believes the Revolution has plunged Europe. From this comes Maistre's 'Christian or slave' view of the human condition. According to this view, the temporal aspect of the Church, separated from the spiritual power, becomes an anti-society, a territory within the principality of Satan. In this principality, man finds himself enslaved in a cycle of vice, bound in totalitarian regimes which demand the worship proper only to God. This is the future from which Maistre wishes to save Europe.

Slavery, Maistre argues, is unavoidable in a state of unredeemed nature. Man is evil, and therefore cannot function as a political animal, but must be held in bondage. He argues, however, that Christianity has made slavery unnecessary by elevating man to self-government through the imparting of virtue. Christianity, then, is a political project, and its mission of evangelisation must be that of 'integral evangelisation'. The proper condition of Christian civilization is liberty, and the proper condition of the unconverted world is slavery. For Maistre, these are the options available to modernity.

At the heart of the slavery of the unconverted world is the interior bondage of man to his own insatiable sexual appetite. Due to the intensity of pleasure connected with sexual acts, man easily pursues sexual pleasure for its own sake, and by this he becomes ever more enslaved to his own irrational appetites, a process by which Maistre believes persons are reduced to objects of use. As women especially become perceived as such objects, they become slaves, that is, objects of use to satisfy the cravings of men, and men in turn become slaves to their basest impulses. This Maistre calls a 'vicious cycle'. Maistre presents the

image of a future world of totalitarian governments overseeing a populace of enslaved sex-zombies.

In contrast to the dystopian vision above, Maistre advances the case for self-government, established by the integration of human nature. 'Integration' is the key word, for Maistre is not advocating the quashing or repressing of passion, emotion, and appetite, as in the approach associated with stoicism or certain schools of Buddhism. Rather, he proposes the integration of passions with reason and the freedom of the will, precisely through the transformation of the interior life in the reception of grace.[480] Through this reception of grace, he argues that Christianity can free the nations whilst leaving them intact. The Church will only be capable of bestowing such liberty if it maintains its supernatural purpose of making disciples of all nations and refuses to become a mere club or private association within the jurisdiction of secularised States, excluded from the public arena and thwarted in its mission. One of the ways available to the Church to avoid such a situation is that of holding to its sacred tongue, by which it may convey that it does not arise out of the nations but comes from without to assume the nations. Only by maintaining its sacred character, communicating itself with its sacred language, and drawing wholly from its ancient tradition, will the Church – laity and priesthood – be situated to lead the counter-revolution which Maistre hopes will restore peace and confer freedom.

2.3   Chapter Summary

What is most striking about Scruton's secular conservatism is not the degree to which it marks a departure from the wider conservative tradition, but the degree to which it is continuous with it despite its formal secularism. Scruton, like the early conservatives, insists on the limitedness of political government and its competence, and emphasises the primacy of family, civil society, and an organic subsidiary arrangement of the national community. Whereas the early conservatives believed this arrangement would not be possible if the State were perceived to be the only unifying authority, and therefore endorsed the State's recognition of the moral authority of the Church, Scruton holds that the Church's moral

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[480] A helpful image of such interior integration and transformation is offered by Lewis. He presents a scene in which a small red lizard, attaching itself to a human soul, prevents that soul from entering paradise. Eventually the soul gives permission to an angel to kill the lizard by strangulation. No sooner does the lizard die than it transforms into an enormous and powerful stallion over whom the soul is master. Soul and stallion are in perfect union – 'Horse and master breathed into each other's nostrils' – and on this steed the soul rides into paradise as all creation proclaims: 'The strengths that once opposed your will shall be obedient fire in your blood and heavenly thunder in your voice.' See C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (London: HarperCollins, 2012), 106-115.

authority is to be recognised by private individuals alone. Following from this first point about the primacy of civil society, Scruton, again like the early conservatives, opposes the expansion of the State into all aspects of civil life, now called totalitarianism. Whilst the early conservatives see inordinate State expansion into civil life to be the effect of excluding the Church and its authority from the political arrangement, Scruton believes that local attachment will suffice to preclude such political encroachment. Scruton, again like the early conservatives, emphasises the unity of humankind, whilst wishing to conserve the autonomy of nation States. The early conservatives do not see such universalism to be possible without a universal society which can assume all nations whilst leaving them intact. They identify the Church to be this society. Scruton, however, holds that national loyalty combined with the privatising of religion (for the prevention of religious clashes) will suffice to conserve nation States and impede most motivations for conflict between them. Scruton, again in line with the early conservatives, holds that culture is essential for national identity. The early conservatives have a complex view of culture as the instantiation of the natural law as well as – in the case of Maistre – the formation of a people as a moral unity for the Christian discipling of the nation. Scruton, on the other hand, believes that culture is, whilst downstream from religion, religion's replacement. He holds that culture blooms in high culture specifically to bestow upon a community the meaningfulness it would have received from religion prior to the 'age of science'. Scruton, along with the early conservatives, prioritises law as one of the most important components for the ordering of political life. Burke and Maistre, however, see law as rooted in, and flowing from, the *natural law*. In the case of Burke it is clear that, for him, law is given to us to make us good; for Burke this human cultivation means enjoying a likeness of God Himself. Law, then, has a mystical aspect to it, namely participation in the Divine Nature. For the early conservatives, if law's religious foundations are removed, so too is its authority and capacity for commanding obedience. Finally, according to the early conservatives, in its secularisation law becomes the product of man's arbitrary will which can be continually changed. Scruton offers no obvious solution to this.

Most surprisingly, Scruton, in line with the early conservatives, holds that 'religious feeling' is natural to human nature. Scruton, indeed, affirms the reality of a kind of natural religion, but argues that religious feeling is a 'species of emotional truth', expressing something about our own needs and not something about the nature of the world in which we exist. Nonetheless, he accepts that there is a kind of natural religious impulse, and he asserts – like his conservative antecedents – that it is dangerous to frustrate this. Scruton portrays the

Christian religion as a category of natural religion, albeit of a cultivated kind. That is, Christian religious teachings are a kind of mythology for expressing the requirements of our religious feelings. By this way of reasoning, Scruton develops his own unique ceremonial integralism, in which the religious impulses of the populace, and the desire to have such impulses expressed publicly, may in part be satisfied by religiously characterised State ceremony. For him, the content of religious doctrine must have no formal effect at the level of policy and law. In all these areas – the priority of civil society, the opposition to totalitarianism, the unity of humankind and the conserving of nation States, the importance of a shared culture, the emphasis on law, the need to recognise the religious nature of man, the imperative of Church-State union – Scruton both follows the early conservatives and departs from them.

Earlier in this volume, I noted that Quinton's tripartite characterisation of conservatism as traditional, organic, and politically sceptical did little more than describe phenomena, leaving us with the question of *why* such a worldview is adopted at all. In the light of the preceding assessment of Burke and Maistre, it is reasonable to assume that whatever is foundational to conservatism is bound up in some way with religion.

Conservatism has its genesis in a religious, explicitly Christian, response to the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and the Terror. Conservatives have repeatedly affirmed the reliance of conservatism on a religious worldview. Even Scruton, having sought to reframe conservatism as a secular politico-intellectual position (albeit not one directly hostile to the practice of religion), nonetheless leaves some public role to religion, even if purely ceremonial.

It is insufficient to deem the case closed on the grounds that the phenomena indicate some connection between conservatism and religion. Such a conclusion would get us no further than the analysis of Quinton. What is needed is a discovery of an underlying principle that accounts for the plentiful and diverse objections of the early conservatives to the rise of liberalism and revolution, one which makes sense of such objections as a whole, and also provides clarification on what is really meant by conservatism. Such an underlying principle – if it really is an underlying principle – ought to explain the ongoing manifest connection between conservatism and religion. Obviously, it would be a mistake to assume that there is just *one thing* that accounts for conservatism as whole. My point is rather that it is inadequate to describe the phenomena; rather, the task is to grasp that which is most fundamental in seeking an explanation for conservatism.

3

A foundational case against secular conservatism

Conservative political works, including those of Scruton, often weave together various ideas to make a holistic case. Such works tend to remain at the surface level, however, and generally deliver historical points or form descriptive observations about the content of conservatism and its value. What remains unclear is whether there is any foundational principle for the conservative attitude and worldview. Perhaps, if there is such a foundational principle, it will be found in works which do not address political philosophy as their main objective, but where we find a presentation of some sort of conservative philosophical anthropology – a particular view of *human nature* – from which morally and politically conservative conclusions are derived. Of course, whether there is such a foundational principle, what it might be, and even whether there is a 'conservative anthropology' from which a conservative worldview is developed, all remain open questions. There is, however, a theme that may be a good candidate for such a foundational principle.

3.1   Second-person perspective

The theme to which I refer, which I suggest may provide the key to understanding the conservative attitude as a whole, is that of *second-person perspective*. If this theme is indeed a good candidate to account for that which is most fundamental and foundational in conservatism, and if it is found that this theme is essentially bound up with religion, then a case against secular conservatism may be developed from bringing this theme to the foreground.

First, I present and analyse the theme of second-person perspective in the thought of Scruton. From there I consider the initial emergence of this theme in philosophy, focusing on the vital contribution of Martin Buber. Then I turn to the important role this theme has played in contemporary psychological research, and its crucial importance for arriving at an understanding of autism, which may in turn play a significant metaphoric role for understanding the concerns of conservatives. Finally, I explore whether an application of these developments in the study of second-person perspective, as well as Scruton's own contribution, help us to better understand the objections raised by Burke and Maistre in the face of modernity's emergence.

3.1.1   Second-person perspective in the thought of Scruton

When looking for a foundational principle to account for conservatism, with the overall objective of constructing a case against secular conservatism, it may be thought surprising that I should first look to the works of Scruton, whom I have presented as an important advocate of secular conservatism. Nevertheless, whatever Scruton's views on the role of religion in a conservative society, the theme of second-person perspective is identifiable in embryonic form in *Sexual Desire* (1986), and increasingly comes to the foreground in his late works, such as *Green Philosophy* (2012), *The Face of God* (2012), *The Soul of the World* (2014), and *On Human Nature* (2017).[481]

   In his work, *Sexual Desire*, Scruton seeks understanding how in human experience another human being ceases to be a mere object and – from one's first-person standpoint – becomes another subject. That is, how a third-personal perspective shifts into a subject-to-subject encounter:

> If we are to understand the first-person perspective then we must see it from the third-person point of view. We must ask for an explanation, not of *my* self-knowledge, but of yours.[482]

Note that in this quotation Scruton does not say that the first-person perspective – namely *my* perspective – finds its explanation in *his*, that is, third-personal self-knowledge, but in *yours*. I would suggest, therefore, that Scruton does not really mean that the first-person perspective is derivative of the third-person perspective, but rather of the second-person perspective. He is really referring to the I-You encounter. That is, my sense of self, of being a *person* rather than just another organism of the kind with which I dwell, arises out of interpersonal relationships with others whom I recognise as other selves.

   It is precisely the notion that personhood, as a concept and as an experience, raises us out of the purely scientific worldview, which is of such pressing importance for Scruton. The primacy of second-personal relatedness for such a transition is brought to the foreground in the following excerpt:

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[481] It is probable that this important anthropological and moral theme, as foundational to Scruton's conservatism, has hitherto largely been missed by commentators of his political thought precisely because it is not explicitly presented in any of his major works about conservative political philosophy.

[482] Roger Scruton, *Sexual Desire: A Philosophical Investigation* (London: Phoenix, 1994), 45.

"Person" does not denote a functional kind, since there is no specifiable set of purposes which guides and limits the employment of this concept. Nor does it denote a natural kind, even though all earthly persons are, as a matter of fact, members of the natural kind "human being". The person enters our *Lebenswelt* as the *target of interpersonal responses*.[483]

Here, Scruton is presenting the case that 'person' evades our normative categories about the world. 'Person' belongs neither to the pragmatic nor to the scientific account of the human being. As Scruton puts it, personhood moves us out of such accounts into the '*Lebenswelt*' (literally 'Life-world').[484] Scruton posits that a life of meaning is one that arises out of the human experience of 'interpersonal responses'.

What we find in the thinly scattered, and somewhat implicit, references to second-person perspective in *Sexual Desire* are the seeds of a principle which later became dominant in Scruton's thought. Eventually, he would present the theme of second-person perspective as the foundational principle for understanding his conservatism, even if he does not do this explicitly in his works on political philosophy.[485]

In *Green Philosophy*, a book which makes the case for environmentalism as an important concern of conservatism, Scruton develops the idea that the content of morality is developed out of the second-personal standpoint. He argues that 'reasons for action are not the impersonal evaluations that appeal to utilitarians nor the abstract and universal principles of the Kantian purists, but "agent-relative reasons": reasons addressed from me to you and from you to me.'[486] The interpersonal character of the lived moral life is tied directly to the conservative attitude by Scruton in the following extract:

It is true that we have a concern for our successors: and it is true that we are motivated in this concern by arguments of justice, like the father who looks after his property *in justice to* the children who will inherit it. But – as that example shows – our concern

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[483] *Ibid*. 55.
[484] '*Lebenswelt*' is a phrase coined by Edmund Husserl and used by Scruton to denote the way of apprehending the world that incorporates *meaning* over facts or use.
[485] Scruton's sources, for his employment of second-person perspective as a moral theme, are Kant, Hegel, Buber, Wittgenstein, and Scruton's contemporary Stephen Darwall. An analysis of this theme in Scruton's sources is unnecessary for my purposes; I limit myself to an analysis of *his* employment of it.
[486] Roger Scruton, *Green Philosophy: How to Think Seriously About the Planet* (London: Atlantic Books, 2012), 204.

for other generations does not arise from some abstract theory of just distribution. It arises from our attachment to others: it is our ancestors, our children, our successors in title who awaken our concern. And the claims of those people have weight for us because we belong to them and they to us. Moreover, if we take seriously the argument… that moral reasoning is rooted in accountability, and that accountability arises between specific individuals by virtue of the relationship between them, we should expect that result. Concern for past and future generations is created by attachment, and will wither when torn from that root.[487]

Scruton, in contradiction to rationalist arguments for universal distribution and obligations to an impersonal *humanity*, insists that morality arises out of our attachments to the real people of our concrete experience, and our desire to do right by them.[488] For Scruton, we honour our ancestors for much of what we enjoy we have received from them, with the stamp of their personalities upon it; our forebears have formed us, and we must live in gratitude to them by allowing them at least a say in the present conversation.[489] According to such a view, we treasure what our ancestors have given us, including the institutions which make our settled life possible, not only because they have gifted it, but because they have bestowed it not upon us as owners but guardians who in our turn are to bequeath it to future generations. What we have here is the Burkean contract, which is not really a contract at all. Rather, it is a *complexus* of personal relations that gives rise to accountability. Central to Scruton's case is the notion that 'the moral motive… is founded in person-to-person reason-giving, and in sympathies that dwindle as distance increases.'[490]

The most important of Scruton's works for analysing his employment of the theme of second-person perspective are *The Face of God* and *The Soul of the World*, both of which are extended meditations on this theme. It will be helpful, however, to introduce these works

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[487] *Ibid*. 207-208.
[488] It is likely that Scruton has in mind, for what he opposes, the sort of thinking found in exemplary form in Peter Singer, 'Famine, Influence, and Morality' in *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 1, no. 3 (Spring, 1972), 229-243. Personal note: Scruton recommended Singer's paper to me as an example of moral thinking that is antithetical to his own.
[489] This view is captured in G.K. Chesterton's famous line: 'Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about.' *Orthodoxy* (London: Baronius Press, 2006), 47.
[490] Scruton, *Green Philosophy*, 208.

with an excerpt from the last of the books in which he engaged directly with second-person perspective, *On Human Nature*:

> The I-You relation was singled out in a famous book by Martin Buber, a Jewish philosopher and theologian who wrote between the two world wars and whose ideas had a powerful influence in literary circles of the day. What Buber never made clear, however, was that the I-You relation enters essentially into every aspect of the moral life.[491]

This was the ever-intensifying conclusion of Scruton: the foundational principle of 'every aspect' of lived morality is second-person perspective. Therefore it became that to which Scruton increasingly turned to account for his conservatism. One can see the presentation of second-person perspective as Scruton's chief consideration in the following text:

> The I-You relation is both distinctive of persons and also constitutive of them. It is by addressing each other as "you" that we bind ourselves in the web of inter-personal relations, and it is by virtue of our place in the web that we are persons. Personhood is a relational condition, and I am a person insofar as I can enter into personal relations with others like me.[492]

This passage brings to the foreground the anthropology presupposed by Scruton's political thought, namely that 'person' does not refer to the soul, the animating principle of living beings; nor does it refer to the human being, that is, an object in the world belonging to a particular species-kind. 'Person' denotes a relation, or a condition of relating to the other as another '*I*'.

Scruton remarks that our awareness of the 'web of inter-personal relations' to which we belong arises out of our calling of one another to account:

> I can address objects and animals as "you", but only figuratively – certainly not by using the word as we use it to each other, by way of calling each other to account for what we think and feel. "How are you?" is usually the first thing that one person says

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[491] Roger Scruton, *On Human Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 51.
[492] Roger Scruton, *The Face of God* (London: Continuum, 2012), 35.

to another; and it is a form of words that establishes a relation that can exist only between those who refer to themselves as I.[493]

As Scruton notes, we ask questions of one another, but not with the 'why?' of facts or use – not with the scientific 'why?' – but with the 'why?' of shared interpersonal perspective. The scientific 'why?', by which I enquire into the world and its laws, is wholly different to the intentional and moral 'why?' with which I address another person in the attempt to see things as he sees them. Human beings are *why?*-asking creatures, and for Scruton the error of modernity, to which conservatism is a response, is the choice to treat the 'why?' of moral and political life as if it were a scientific 'why?' to which we could reasonably expect a scientific answer.[494]

Scruton suggests that the object in the world which provides the pathway out of the world of objects, to encounter the person, is the human face. This is explained in the following extract:

> We do not make a distinction, in our ordinary encounters, between a person and his face. When I confront another person face to face I am not confronting a physical part of him, as I am when, for example, I look at his shoulder or his knee. I am confronting *him*, the individual centre of consciousness, the free being who reveals himself in the face of another like me. There are deceiving faces, but not deceiving elbows or knees. When I read a face I am in some way acquainting myself with the way things seem to another person. And the expression on a face is already an offering in the world of mutual responsibilities: it is a projection in the space of inter-personal relations of a particular person's "being there". To put it in another way: the face is the subject, revealing itself in the world of objects.[495]

As Scruton elucidates above, the face, unlike any other part of the body, discloses the person – I will not say *behind* the face, but emanated *in* the face – inviting one into shared relatedness with the person encountered.

For Scruton, at the heart of the world of meaning – the *Lebenswelt* – is the mystery of the person and the web of interpersonal relations that constitutes, and is constituted by,

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[493] *Ibid*. 35.
[494] See *Ibid*. 36.
[495] *Ibid*. 80.

persons. He extends this theme of interpersonal relatedness to all other aspects of his conservative worldview; indeed, this he calls the project of extending the I-You relation 'from persons to things':

> In the Romantic landscape the beautiful replaces the sacred as the source of meaning. God once promised a home, and urged us to consecrate it in his name. But the path to that home became overgrown, and the promise unbelievable. The romantics were making another path: the path of "aesthetic education". Beauty, for them, was a promise – the promise of community, even if only an imagined community that has yet to find a place on earth. They replaced the sacred with the beautiful, without noticing that this is what they had done. And we should find nothing strange in this, once we recognise that both conceptions arise from a single metaphysical source, which is the I-You relation, extended from person to things.[496]

Taking the romantic movement as his example (which in some respects was the conservative response in the realm of the arts to Enlightenment rationalism), Scruton suggests that the figures pioneering this movement were attempting to recreate the world as a place of settlement. He proposes that the effort by the Romantics to beautify the world in art is comparable to the religious project to sanctify the world, and he infers that both the desire to beautify and the desire to sanctify arise out of the prioritising of second-person perspective.

The comparison of beauty and sanctity is further developed by Scruton. He holds that the Western aesthetic tradition has largely been developed through an expansion of the notion of *consecration*. The act of consecrating, Scruton argues, has its origin in the purported discovery of God as a person, with whom the desired relationship – both for Him and for us – is that of second-personal relatedness: 'God is a person, and he reveals himself as persons do, through a dialogue involving those three critical words, "I", "you" and "why?"'[497] The discovery of God as a person unveils the I-You relationship by which He shares in human endeavours, that is, by which He *consecrates* the human world to which He is present as a person. Scruton argues that this Creator-creature second-personal relatedness has its imprint on all Western aesthetics. He explains:

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[496] *Ibid*. 136.
[497] *Ibid*. 23.

Consecration is something we do – presenting a thing for divine endorsement. It is the theme of all those rites of passage whereby communities renew themselves. And it is the beginning of any building that is to be permanent – any building in which settlement is the goal. The secret of the classical tradition is that it takes the act of consecration and generalises it. The upright posture of the column, in which the building stands before me, I to You, is endowed with a face, by the division into sections, and by the elaboration of mouldings and transitions. Our ability to endow buildings with faces is like our ability to see character in a theatrical mask. By facing a building we conjure a face in it, and by silently addressing it we allow the building to address us in its turn. This "facing" of a building stands to the defacing by a bill-board as real devotion stands to idolatry.[498]

Here, Scruton notes that consecration marks both the presenting of something for divine endorsement and the divine work of making that thing sacred. In other words, consecration is a project of shared attention between Divine Person and human person. This relationship envelopes the promise of permanence by the One who holds all in being. In Scruton's view, this I-You relationship between Creator and creature is successively stamped on every true instance of the Western aesthetic tradition. In turn, when we see an ugly building, or a beautiful building defaced, we see in this something comparable to religious devotion directed at an idol. If indeed the personal – even facial – character of classical buildings is downstream from the I-You relationship with God, then ugly buildings are an indirect defacing of God. For Scruton, there is a real comparison here: idolatry is a true evil, worthy of all the condemnations it receives from the Abrahamic religions, because it is the defacing of the God who has been unveiled as a Person.[499]

The ideas above are further developed in *The Soul of the World*. This is Scruton's most important book for understanding the underlying principle of his conservatism. In several places he states that he is engaging with that which is most foundational, and is eager to show the link between second-person perspective and his wider conservative worldview. Here he advances the case that it is 'the I-You intentionality' – which both effects and explains human personhood – that accounts for his positions on matters as diverse as sexual

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[498] *Ibid*. 145.
[499] According to Aquinas, there is no greater evil *per se* than idolatry. See *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 94, 3.

morality, music, architecture, religion, and political philosophy.[500] All of Scruton's books which directly focus on conservative political philosophy are highly descriptive (like the vast majority of books about conservatism), attempting to demonstrate the good sense of the conservative approach on this or that issue. *The Soul of the World*, on the other hand, more than any other book in Scruton's corpus, presents the underlying and exegetical principle, namely second-person perspective.

Scruton begins by reiterating that human beings are beings of a natural kind, whereas human *persons* are not things, but relations. 'There is, in human affairs, a primordial temptation, which is the temptation to treat persons as things, and the embodied soul as a body.'[501] Indeed, he suggests that this 'temptation to look on others as objects is what we mean or ought to mean by original sin.'[502] This view is presented in the following striking passage:

> The states of mind that are directed toward a world of human covenants and institutions are directed toward a world of "I"s and "You"s, and are founded on the assumption that all participants in that world know immediately and on no basis not only what they intend but also their reasons (some of them, at least) for intending it. This assumption places a radical constraint upon the way in which the object of social awareness can be conceptualised. I do not look on the other, still less on myself, as an organism, whose behaviour is to be explained by some hypothesis concerning the nature of its intentional states. I look on the other as I look on myself – as an "I," whom I *address* in the second person, and whose self-attribution of reasons takes precedence, for me, over any third-person vision of what makes him tick.[503]

Scruton explains here that the states of mind necessary for our social life, and that on which our social life depends – the 'world of human covenants and institutions' – presuppose second-personal relatedness. We cannot have a complete *conceptualisation* of social participation precisely because that would reduce to an abstract and third-personal analysis what can only be understood experientially and through second-personal relatedness. When we try to understand our social life in a removed way, as if we were examining the behaviour

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[500] Roger Scruton, *The Soul of the World* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), 175.
[501] *Ibid*. 130.
[502] *Ibid*. 131.
[503] *Ibid*. 47.

of a hive or herd, proposing hypothesises about what accounts for intentional states of individuals, we reduce the person to an organism. By so doing, the distinction between human being and human person vanishes. As a consequence of such a third-personal analysis, Scruton believes that we reduce the content of morality to the establishing of contractual arrangements. The overall effect of this approach is that we fail to account for our experience of interpersonal relatedness altogether. The problem here is that of commencing the analysis from the wrong perspective.

This problem of reducing morality to contractual arrangements is presented by Scruton, who holds that such a view cannot be avoided if the primacy of second-person perspective is lost, and exchanged for a third-personal analysis of our condition:

> We cannot live in full personal communication with our kind if we treat all our relations as contractual. People are not for sale: to address the other as you rather than as he or she is automatically to see him or her as an individual for whom no substitutes exist. In the relations that really matter, others do not stand before me as members of an equivalence class. I endow them, in my feelings, with a kind of individuality that cannot be represented in the language of science, but which demands the use of concepts that would not feature in the commonsense scheme of things: concepts like those of the sacrificial and the sacramental.[504]

Scruton asserts that our relationships, at least the ones that really matter to us, which fill our lives with meaning and a sense of purpose, are not understood as contractual arrangements. Why is this? In Scruton's account it is because *I* address the other as 'You', and by so doing I declare to him that he is not seen as a mere instantiation of a natural kind, an object of scientific enquiry, but a unique individual relating to me, who cannot be substituted for another. Such second-personal relatedness immediately elevates the human being into the realm of personhood, which eludes any scientific analysis. What is especially striking about the passage above is that Scruton asserts that the underlying truth that enables us to account for the human community, that of second-person perspective, can only be properly understood with the employment of religious language, using terms such as 'sacrificial' and 'sacramental'.

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[504] *Ibid.* 93.

Scruton further illustrates his view with the example of an exchange with his wife, and indicates how moral concepts immediately surface from the shared second-personal relatedness that they enjoy:

> When addressing my wife in interpersonal dialogue, I give precedence to her first-person avowals. The reasons that she offers me are the reasons that count, and her sincere declarations of intention and belief form the ground of my response to her. I see her as a free centre of consciousness, who addresses me from the perspective of an "I" that is unified, individual, and unique as I am. When I ask her, "what are you going to do? My question seeks a response. It is quite unlike the question "what is he going to do? And the two questions do not feature here as substitution instances of a single schema, "what is *x* going to do?" One question is seeking a decision, the other a prediction, and in seeking a decision I am addressing the I in you. To do this, I commit myself to… reasons [that] are shaped by concepts that have no part to play in the description of the physical world: concepts like right, duty, justice, virtue, purity, which inform our interpersonal exchanges.[505]

This passage requires no extended explanation, the important point to note is that first-person awareness – the sense of myself as 'I' – is achieved through being *I*-in-relation. The second-person perspective is not, then, understood by Scruton to be derivative of the first-person case; rather, it is the other way round. I am a person because you are a person, and the interpersonal relatedness that we can share is what effects the personhood I experience both in myself and in you.[506] For Scruton, the moral life depends on this interpersonal relatedness.

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[505] *Ibid*. 48.

[506] This is not to deny the presence of personhood in those who are incapable of such interpersonal relatedness. The human being is a unit comprising a multiplicity of capacities, perhaps the 'highest', so to speak, of which is the capacity for shared perspective in I-You relatedness. This second-person perspective, according to Scruton, being the relation by which personhood *emerges*. Higher capacities, however, are realised by the development of lower capacities. In turn, if a being has a defect in a lower capacity which prevents the actuation of a higher capacity, it does not by that defect *lose* the higher capacity. Rather, the being merely lacks the lower order capacity it needs for the higher capacity to be realised. For example, when the lower capacity necessary for hearing is lost, a little technology can solve the problem, as the ultimate capacity to hear was always present. No advances in technology, however, will realise in a dog the capacity for abstract conceptual deliberation, for no such capacity exists in the dog at all. In turn, just because the capacity for second-person perspective is not actuated in this or that human being, because, for example, the human being in question is a baby, or is impeded by some mental disability, that does not mean that the human being does not possess this capacity. Therefore, such a human being cannot be morally treated as equivalent to an animal of another species. For a more comprehensive presentation of this argument,

It is precisely because second-person perspective undergirds the moral life, as Scruton sees it, that it is the fundamental key to understanding his conservatism.

The position may be criticised for its circularity: persons are defined by being subjects-in-relation, but only persons can be subjects-in-relation, therefore *person* is part of the definition of the person. This circularity, however, is insufficient to call such reasoning fallacious since all definitions must be traced back to some basic concrete experience, which is precisely the object of second-person perspective. Again, there is also circularity in Scruton's assertion that 'the world of obligations and rights is not an artificial imposition… but rather the outgrowth of the I-You encounter', when he also claims that such 'rights exist to ensure that we can each appear in the public realm as free subjects, so as to engage in those I-You relations upon which the public realm is ultimately founded.'[507] The assertion here is that moral rights are the 'outgrowth' of I-You relations, and that moral rights exist to protect I-You relations, whence comes society. Again, this circularity cannot be avoided when engaging with that which is most fundamental and foundational in accounting for the human person. Our sense of personhood, Scruton claims, emerges out of our interpersonal relations – sociability is really prior to individuality – but also our interpersonal relations are what bestow meaning and purpose on our lives, and therefore are what we order our lives around, developing the moral dispositions necessary to maintain such relations. These positions only seem circular if it is believed that causes cannot be causes of one another, and there is no reason why this should be the case; indeed, it has been argued that when addressing what is most foundational or fundamental (in the contingent order), one is always engaging with corelative causation.[508]

The consequences of second-person perspective for conservatism are made explicit by Scruton in the following extract:

> Persons are singled out from the rest of our environment as recipients of love, affection, anger, and forgiveness. We face them eye to eye and I to I, believing each person to be a centre of self-conscious reflection who responds to reasons, who makes decisions, and whose life forms a continuous narrative in which individual identity is

see J.P. Moreland and Stan Wallace, 'Aquinas versus Locke and Descartes on the Human Person and End-of-life Ethics' in *International Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 35, no. 3, issue no. 139, September 1995.

[507] Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 80, 87.

[508] See John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 129-130

maintained from moment to moment and from year to year. All those aspects of our interpersonal understanding are assumed in moral judgment, in law, in religion, politics, and the arts.[509]

Scruton notes that persons are distinguished from the rest of the world precisely by the moral attitudes we have towards them. As Scruton sees it, the theme of second-person perspective is assumed into every part of human life – he lists morality, law, religion, politics and art as obvious cases – because it offers the most foundational account for what it is to be a person. Scruton brings to the foreground the connection of second-person perspective with his conservative vision:

> Societies survive when they are settled, and settlement depends upon piety and self-sacrifice. The I-You relation embraces absent generations, and others who are not clearly manifest among us. And it leads us to make sacrifices on behalf of people who cannot purchase them by a reciprocal promise.[510]

As we have seen, in his works about conservative political philosophy, Scruton focuses on the first-person plural – the '*we*' – of the settled people, or nation. This first-person plural awareness of a settled people presupposes that they are a moral unit; as he puts it above, that they are a people of 'piety and self-sacrifice'. For Scruton, the ethical implications of second-person perspective are not of a contractual kind (though contracts often presuppose the trust which arises out of second-person perspective), but rather by recognising each other as 'You', we call one another to account: we look upon one another with the eye of judgement, approval, or even condemnation. There is a 'we' because there is a community of subjects recognising each other 'I' to 'You'.

The impulse which brings a man to tend to his father's grave, or invest for future generations he will never meet, is not an impulse that arises out of a contractual agreement, but out of the piety which has its root in the web of interpersonal relations from which his very personhood has sprung. The decision of a man to offer his life in defence of his nation, for a people who will not remember his name and who will never thank him or pay him back, has its foundation in the same reality: the web of interpersonal relations outside of which

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[509] Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 52.
[510] *Ibid*. 176.

there is no *self*. In turn, in Scruton's opinion, in seeking to account for the conservative vision which sees society as a covenant between the dead, the living, and the unborn, we must look to the 'I-You relation [which] embraces absent generations, and others who are not clearly manifest among us.'

From the examples above, one can see why Scruton holds that the ways in which human persons interact with each other 'use concepts that have no role to play in the empirical sciences.'[511] For Scruton, the moral and political life of human beings cannot be explained by recourse to scientific analysis. A true account must make use of the concept of personhood, and concepts associated with this primary concept.[512]

The third-personal analysis of society, on which Scruton places the reduction of morality to contractual agreements, he thinks misleads us on the question of duty and obligation. Conservative thinkers tend to stress that 'not all our obligations are freely undertaken, and created by choice.'[513] If all duties are understood to be binding inasmuch as they are effected by individual liberty, Scruton argues that such foundational components for civilization as 'vows of marriage, obligations towards parents and children, sacred ties to home and country' cannot be maintained and will inevitably erode.[514] Such things, Scruton argues, must be bound up with the '"eternal," if they are to perform their manifest function, of securing society against the forces of selfish desire.'[515] For this reason, Scruton states that one of 'the social effects of secularisation' is that 'the world of obligations has been steadily remade as a world of contracts, and therefore of obligations that are rescindable, finite, and dependent upon individual choice.'[516] A society founded on fleeting and revocable contracts, rather than on binding covenants which call us to account for our very selves, is not one that Scruton thinks can survive.

In his assessment of the moral implications of second-person perspective, Scruton gets to the heart of his conservative vision: conservatism is driven by the desire to uphold, affirm, treasure, *conserve*. Conservatism bubbles up, so to speak, from gratitude.

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[511] *Ibid*. 48.
[512] If Scruton is correct, then perhaps little could be more corrosive for the human world than transposing the criteria for knowledge advanced in the scientific revolution into the realm of moral and political philosophy. Such a transposition, however, is precisely what many early conservatives (especially Maistre) believed they were witnessing during their lifetimes, and some appeared to discern that an effect of this would be the disappearance of the person altogether.
[513] Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 94.
[514] *Ibid*. 94.
[515] *Ibid*. 94.
[516] *Ibid*. 94.

Conservatism does not primarily look for what can be discarded, repudiated, criticised, and toppled. Conservatism, understood like this, is a *philosophy of love*. A society based on contractual arrangements is what is left when moral relations are emptied of love. This is the key insight that Scruton draws from Burke, as he explains in the following extract:

> Burke long ago made the point, in opposition to Rousseau's social contract theory and its subversive effect, namely that if society is a contract, then it is one to which the dead, the living, and the unborn are equally partners: in other words, not a contract at all, but an inheritance of trusteeship, which cannot be reduced to the agreement to be bound by it. All obligations of love are like that.[517]

According to the conservative analysis, following the assumptions typical of rationalism the liberal worldview sees all obligations – including those towards the State – as contractual agreements contingent upon human volition. All duties, pieties, and sacrosanct obligations, which are understood by the conservative to be prior to one's sense of self, are dissolved by liberalism into free and ephemeral choices, choices to use and choices to be used. In other words, the liberal worldview, in being essentially contractarian, is essentially third-personal. For Scruton, this means that liberalism proposes a society emptied of the forces of love. From the conservative standpoint, what arises out of the liberal proposal is a vision of society not composed of a great and mysterious *complexus* of interpersonal relations, subject-to-subject, but something much more like a machine, each of whose cogs could be substituted for another of the same kind.

    On Human Nature is a work that conveys in a concise way Scruton's own philosophical anthropology, otherwise only found in a scattered fashion throughout his works. Again, at the heart of this anthropology is the notion that 'person' does not primarily refer to the soul or to the body, nor to the composition of both in a single human being, but to a *relation*. As Scruton puts it, 'what we are is what we are for each other – relation is built into the very idea of the human person, who is a first person held within the second-person standpoint like a lodestar in a magnetic field.'[518]

    Many of the same moral ideas are expressed in *On Human Nature* as are found in *The Face of God* and *The Soul of the World*. Scruton presents his arguments for why a sense of

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[517] *Ibid*. 94.
[518] Scruton, *On Human Nature*, 52.

accountability, responsibility, and the virtues necessary for social life, as well as the education that puts 'us in charge of our passions,' are unavailable outside a 'tightly woven social context.'[519] This insistence on the human need for a closely united community, which is so central to his conservative vision, is undergirded by the concept of the human person in his philosophy. The human person, according to Scruton, is only discoverable in I-You relatedness; indeed he states that 'conflicting accounts of the person arise because thinkers have taken the concept out of context, seeking to define it in abstract terms.'[520] But such an abstraction is not a person at all in Scruton's view, but an object submitted to impersonal analysis. 'These conflicts', Scruton asserts, 'can be understood and to a great measure resolved once we understand the root of the concept of the person in the I-You encounter.'[521]

The human person emerges out of relationships. If this anthropology, or some variant of it, is what is at the heart of the conservative attitude, then the whole liberal and contractarian approach to moral and political questions is founded on an anthropological assumption which the conservative wholly rejects. The notion that there can be an existent individual person subsisting in the first-person standpoint prior to any kind of human sociability is irreconcilable with the position advanced by Scruton. Whereas the liberal typically holds that society is a product of the individuals who have opted into it, the conservative holds the opposite to be true: the first-person standpoint emerges out of the second-personal relatedness achieved through social participation. Scruton is radical on this issue (literally, in that he argues to the *root* of the matter), as he explains in the following way:

> The moral truth that our obligations are derived from the I-You relation is founded on a metaphysical truth, which is that the self is a social product. It is only because we enter into free relations with others that we can know ourselves in the first-person.[522]

The moral life of the human person, then, emerges concurrently with the emergence of the human person, a process generated by social participation.

Scruton directly addresses the circularity of his position: *how can someone logically enter into 'free relations' if the self is the product of such relations?* To this Scruton

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[519] See *Ibid*. 110-112.
[520] *Ibid*. 110.
[521] *Ibid*. 110.
[522] *Ibid*. 52.

responds: 'My freedom is not an uncaused eruption into the world of human events; it is a product of my social condition, and it brings with it the full burden of responsibility to the other and the recognition that the other's voice has just as much authority as mine.'[523] Scruton's point is that the person, and the free association of I-You encounters which effect personhood, emerge concurrently and are causes of one another. This view is clearly presented in the following excerpt:

> The word *you* does not, as a rule, *describe* the other person; it summons him or her into your presence, and this summons is paid for by a reciprocal response. You make yourself available to others in the words that call them to account to you. This would not be possible without the first-person awareness that comes to us with the use of *I*; but that use would in turn not be possible without the dialogue through which we fit together in communities of mutual interest.[524]

'You' does not refer directly to your body, or your brain, or soul, or consciousness. It refers to no object in the world open to third-personal analysis. The word 'you' denotes a 'summons' into relation with *me*. In order to be the instigator of such a summons, I must be in possession of the first-person standpoint, but this standpoint has itself emerged out of my I-You relations within the community by which I am engaged in a collaborative project of material and moral betterment. This is what is at the heart of Scruton's conservatism, the 'I-You encounter', which calls the other into one's perspective on the world in an effort of mutual understanding and with the hope of enjoying a shared project.[525] For this reason Scruton insists on the realism of his position, and supporting his realism is his emphasis on the visible object of the face for disclosing personhood: there is no 'cryptic entity to which I refer as "I" and which is hidden from your perspective.'[526] Rather, he asserts, 'I am this thing that you too observe and which can be understood in two ways – as an organism and as a person.'[527]

Before concluding this subsection, I will briefly return to *The Soul of the World*, for there is something striking about the theme of second-person perspective as it emerges in this work. Scruton never explicitly retracted the view that the State ought to be secular in

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[523] *Ibid*. 111.
[524] *Ibid*. 69.
[525] *Ibid*. 55.
[526] *Ibid*. 55.
[527] *Ibid*. 55.

character, with religion having no formal effect at the level of legislation, policy, and law – a view which he advances in his books on political philosophy. In *The Soul of the World*, however, religion becomes increasingly central to his conservative case as the theme of second-person perspective comes to the foreground. Scruton argues that the error which he believes is causing the disappearance of the human person is one and the same as that which is masking the existence of God, namely the subjection of reality exclusively to examination in conformity with scientific criteria – that is, to a materialist and third-personal criteria:

> God disappears from the world, as soon as we address it with the "why?" of explanation, just as human persons disappear from the world, when we look for the neurological explanation of their acts. For God, if he exists, is a person like us, whose identity and will are bound up with his nature as a subject. Maybe we shall find him in the world where we are only if we cease to invoke him with the "why?" of cause, and conjure him with the "why?" of reason instead. And the "why?" of reason is addressed from I to you. The God of the philosophers disappeared behind the world, because he was described in the third person, and not addressed in the second.[528]

Just as he does in *The Face of God*, Scruton makes the case that we have lost a sense of God's existence for the same reason as he believes we are losing the human person: we have reduced God to an object about which we might try to know something, rather than a subject who cannot be known outside the I-You encounter.

I have made the case that neither Burke nor Maistre can be properly understood without some sensitivity to the mystical aspects of their thought. It seems that something similar can be said of Scruton. He not only places the theme of second-person perspective at the heart of his conservative worldview, but also stresses that it is through I-You relatedness that we might retrieve the existence of God. He explicitly presents support for his view by referring to mystical writers of the past:

> People who are looking for God are not looking for the proof of God's existence; nor would it help them to be persuaded, say, by Aquinas's Five Ways… They are not looking for arguments but for a subject-to-subject encounter, which occurs in this life, but which also in some way reaches beyond this life. Those who claim to have found

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[528] Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 70-71.

God always write or speak in those terms, as having found the intimacy of a personal encounter and a moment of trust. The great witnesses to this – Saint Teresa of Avila, Margery Kempe, Saint John of the Cross, Rumi, Pascal – surely persuade us that one part, at least, of the encounter with God lies in the irruption into consciousness of an intersubjective state of mind, but one that connects with no merely human subject. And included within that state of mind is the sense of reciprocity: the sense of being targeted by the Other, I to I.[529]

According to Scruton, second-person perspective extends to, and accounts for, the desire for God. He holds that those who are looking for God are not looking for a compelling argument, but for an encounter with a Person.[530] For Scruton, the concept of the human person and that of the Divine Person rise and fall together, and both can only be known in the I-You encounter. The God of the philosophers, even the God of the theologians, is not the God who interests Scruton; it is the God of the mystics, known in second-personal relatedness, whom Scruton seeks.

In *The Soul of the World*, we see that Scruton understands the foundation of his conservatism – all that he wishes to say in favour of settlement, beauty, culture, virtue, even law and religion – to have its root in his conception of 'person'. And for Scruton, to be a person is to be a subject-in-relation. This understanding is precisely why he insists that human personhood cannot be grasped through a third-personal analysis, nor can interpersonal relations be understood on purely contractual terms. Furthermore, he suggests that to understand such interpersonal relations we must ultimately have recourse to religious concepts, like those of the sacred, the holy, the sacrosanct and the inviolable. Such concepts seem to fade with the disappearance of God – what Scruton is content to call 'secularism'.

Scruton argues in his earliest work on conservatism, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, that people mistakenly and erroneously associate the 'transcendent bonds' on which society is founded with a 'Transcendent Being'. In *The Soul of the World* (published thirty-four years

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[529] *Ibid*. 13-14.
[530] Scruton mentions Aquinas's Five Ways as an example of what such people are *not* looking for. It is worth noting that a comparison of those arguments to the rest of Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*, in which they are situated together, indicates that such third-personal accounts of God are not what primarily interested Aquinas. After all, Aquinas devoted one article to the Five Ways, whereas he devoted one thousand and four articles to analysing the infused virtues and the gifts and fruits of the Holy Ghost, that is, how the I-You relationship between the Divine Persons and human persons is established. Perhaps, then, Aquinas would have been better placed among the 'great witnesses' whom Scruton lists.

later), however, he contends that this association is exactly the one society's members must make if such bonds are to have any lasting foundation.[531] In turn, it seems that Scruton comes to propose a two-step measure: the rooting of conservatism in the retrieval of the human person, and the retrieval of the human person by the recovery of God. Both of these steps, he argues, can only be achieved by prioritising second-person perspective, a perspective largely lost in the reframing of the world in scientific terms. This important book, in his own words, rests on 'two fundamental thoughts: first, that the I-You intentionality projects itself beyond the boundary of the natural world, and second, that in doing so it uncovers our religious need.'[532]

3.1.2   Martin Buber and second-person perspective

Earlier in this volume, I referred to Martin Luther King Jr's *Letter from Birmingham Jail* to illustrate a major current of conservative thought regarding law, namely that State law must have its foundation in – and must not contradict – some higher perennial law if it is not be the manifestation of mere arbitrary will. King mentions Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas as proponents of the view that there is a higher law – namely *natural law* – that is the objective measure of the law of the State. Immediately after referring to these two Doctors of the Church, however, King addresses the question of the proper contingent and historical application of higher abstract and perennial law, and for this he turns to the theme of second-person perspective:

> Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority. To use the words of Martin Buber, the great Jewish philosopher, segregation substitutes an "I-it" relationship for the "I-thou" relationship and ends up relegating persons to the status of things. So segregation is not only politically, economically, and sociologically unsound, but it is morally wrong and sinful.[533]

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[531] See Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 94-95.
[532] *Ibid*. 175.
[533] King, *Letter from Birmingham Jail* [accessed 6 March 2021].

Here King explains that law is just when it 'uplifts' human personality; in other words, the ultimate purpose of a law is to make man's personality better – to make man good. King criticises segregation statutes specifically because they make man worse. The victims of such legislation are made worse because they are trampled upon, so to speak, and those who are not the direct victims of such legislation are also made worse, because these statutes 'distort the soul', that is, they morally damage all of society's members, especially those who benefit from such unjust laws. King elucidates this damaging of human personality further by turning to the terminology of Buber. Unjust laws, King argues, reduce the subject to an object, treating some*one* as some*thing*. Such a twisting of perspective is not just corrupting of the community's functioning, but it is, King concludes, 'morally wrong and sinful.'

It is widely acknowledged that the theme of second-person perspective was 'given particular philosophical prominence in the pioneering work of Martin Buber', and therefore it is worth sketching out what Buber says, at least inasmuch as it is relevant to my case.[534] Buber argues that we can see the world and the things of which it is composed in two different ways: through the I-it relation or through the I-You relation. The I-it relation is an objectifying perspective, and Buber notes that it is the perspective appropriate to 'use' and to 'experience'. When a person is seen through the I-it relation, he is reduced to something like a piece of technology, an instrument by which to achieve a desirable effect. The I-You relation is concerned with the present 'encounter'; it is a relation by which one is 'captured' by the concrete reality that has been confronted, and not with any accumulated knowledge or predictions about it. For Buber, associated with the I-You relation are all genuine moments of 'spirituality' and 'creativity', and this relation is the foundation of real human flourishing, for he argues that such flourishing inherently requires *You*.

It is necessary to explain what Buber means by 'experience', which can be done by contrasting his use of this word with that of 'encounter'. Buber gives the example of contemplating a tree.[535] According to Buber, for me to view the tree as a thing *experienced* is for me to see it as a mere 'it', an object to be studied or used. According to such a perspective, I reduce the tree only to an example of its kind. In contrast, to 'encounter' a tree is an act of 'contemplation' in which 'I am drawn into a relation' as 'the power of exclusiveness has seized me.'[536] In the I-it relation I *experience* things without interiorly

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[534] Andrew Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective in Aquinas's Ethics: Virtues and Gifts* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 47.
[535] Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), 57-58.
[536] *Ibid*. 58.

connecting with them; in the I-You relation I no longer see them from the perspective of use or the possible accumulation of knowledge, but as those with which I am interrelated, bestowing *meaning* on my life.

Buber holds that whilst, properly speaking, *You* is always another subject, the I-You perspective can be extended by persons to impersonal objects, as in the case of the tree being contemplated as something unique and non-substitutional. In fact, Buber argues that the I-You relation can be extended to 'life with nature'; to 'life with man', in which case there is the possibility of intentional reciprocity; and finally to 'life with spiritual beings'.[537] This last case is not clear (he may be referring to angels) and it is not helpful that he explains this third 'sphere' as something that is 'wrapped in a cloud.'[538] Buber then states that there is a fourth sphere of encounter, a sphere on which the other three depend, and which encompasses them all: 'In every sphere, through everything that becomes present to us, we gaze towards the train of the eternal You; in each we perceive a breath of it; in every You we address the eternal You, in every sphere according to its manner.'[539] I will return shortly to the primacy of encounter with the 'eternal You' in Buber's thought.

According to Buber, I can see another person through the I-it relation, but to know him *as a person* I must see him through the I-You relation, and when he is seen in this way 'he is no thing among things nor does he consist of things' but rather 'everything else lives in *his* light.'[540] Like Scruton, Buber holds that one's personhood emerges not as a thing in itself, but as a *relation* with another person, a relation which is both 'election and electing, passive and active at once.'[541] Indeed, Buber argues that '*I*', by which I know myself, requires 'You' by whom I am known, and therefore in his understanding my personhood exists as a relation of *love*.[542]

It is important to understand that, for Buber, the I-it relation is not inherently problematic. Such a relation is the one proper to scientific enquiry, which can be very fruitful. The problem occurs, Buber argues, when this relation is understood to form the proper perspective in *all things*, with I-it relatedness being transposed into areas where I-You relatedness is required. When such a transposition takes place, especially when extreme, Buber says that what emerges is an 'It-world':

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[537] *Ibid.* 56.
[538] *Ibid.* 57.
[539] *Ibid.* 57.
[540] *Ibid.* 59.
[541] *Ibid.* 62.
[542] See *Ibid.* 66.

The basic relation of man to the It-world includes experience, which constitutes this world ever again, and use, which leads it toward its multifarious purpose – the preservation, alleviation, and equipment of human life. With the extent of the It-world the capacity for experiencing and using it must also increase. To be sure, the individual can replace direct experience more and more with indirect experience, the "acquisition of information"; and he can abbreviate use more and more until it becomes specialised "utilisation".[543]

In the It-world, we begin to see all reality from the perspective of information and utility, and Buber notes that there is almost an infinite capacity for this technological view of the world. As we reduce the world to the information that we can derive from it for its utilisation, we also reduce it to abstract categories that order such information, and by so doing our actual 'encounter' with reality is increasingly diminished. Such a weakened ability for 'encounter' is especially serious, Buber holds, when it comes to the sphere of human communities.

Buber was widely deemed to have concluded to anarchist or anarchic-socialist views in the realm of politics (although he explicitly rejected the association).[544] Due to his view of the damage done to human communities by an encroachment of the I-it relation into the sphere of I-You relations, however, he arrives at some conclusions that are friendly to the conservative worldview. For example, Buber writes the following:

True public and true personal life are two forms of association. For them to originate and endure, feelings are required as a changing content, and institutions are required as a constant form; but even the combination of both still does not create human life which is created only by a third element: the central presence of the You, or rather, to speak more truthfully, the central You that is received into the present.[545]

Read with conservative eyes, Buber can be understood to be saying that there is a true public life experienced by people, the life of the citizen, but there is also a private or 'personal' life, and both of these must be protected. In both domains of life, which surely overlap, there is an ever fluid content of emotion, feeling, attachment, and so forth; but there is also an enduring

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[543] *Ibid*. 88.
[544] See Martin Buber, *Paths in Utopia* (New York: Syracuse University Press; New edition, 1996).
[545] Buber, *I and Thou*, 95.

form, which is found in the received institutions of State and society. Neither fashionable feelings nor the enduring institutions are sufficient, however, to account for the stability of a settled community. Such a community can only be explained, at the most basic level, by the *complexus* of actual existent relationships which converge in the web of associations called civil society: what Buber calls the 'central presence of the You'.[546]

The relationships of which Buber speaks, as those which constitute the 'central presence of the You', are rooted in concrete encounters. For this reason, Buber would sooner speak of *this* or *that* actual community than of 'humanity'. 'Humanity', he holds, is the reduction of human persons and their communities to an 'It':

> The It-humanity that some imagine, postulate, and advertise has nothing in common with the bodily humanity to which a human being can truly say You. The noblest fiction is a fetish, the most sublime fictitious sentiment is a vice.[547]

One can see from this excerpt that Buber is especially concerned with the reduction of realities to abstractions. Altruistic feelings towards 'humanity' are, in Buber's view, a *vicious fetish*. In other words, what matters is not your feelings about an abstract *humanity*, but how you actually live with the people on your street.

Like Scruton, Buber holds that sociability is necessarily prior to individual consciousness, and that the *person*, purely because the word denotes a relation, emerges out of the I-You relation:

> Man becomes an I through a You. What confronts us comes and vanishes, relational events take shape and scatter, and through these changes crystallises, more and more each time, the consciousness of the constant partner, the I-consciousness. To be sure, for a long time it appears only woven into the relation to a You, discernible as that which reaches for but is not a You; but it comes closer and closer to the bursting point until one day the bonds are broken and the I confronts its detached self for a moment like a You – and then it takes possession of itself and henceforth enters into relations in full consciousness.[548]

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[546] *Ibid*. 95.
[547] *Ibid*. 65.
[548] *Ibid*. 80.

What Buber explains here, albeit in his rather opaque idiom, is that the awareness of oneself as *I* appears only in relation, that is, as that which is 'woven into a relation to a You'. The awareness of oneself as *I* in relation to *You* becomes ever more explicit, until eventually the I confronts itself as a You, and at this moment can take ownership of its I-You relations. One always remains *I*, however, only inasmuch as one remains within the dynamic of I-You relations. It is for this reason that Buber is so concerned about the encroachment of the 'It-world'. As he puts it, 'the improvement of the capacity for experience and use generally involves a decrease in man's power to relate – that power which alone can enable man to live in the spirit.'[549]

Buber holds that the modern age is marked by a 'progressive increase of the It-world.'[550] By *modern age*, he means the Enlightenment era, in whose age Buber believed himself to still be living at the time of writing *I and Thou*.[551] In fact, the 'demonic man' whom Buber blames for this 'progressive increase of the It-world', whom he believes saw reality only through the I-it relation, is Napoleon Bonaparte.[552]

Much like Scruton, Buber concludes that we will only recover the I-You relation with one other and – by extension – with the impersonal world, and this recovery will only endure, if we somehow recover the I-You relation with what he calls the 'eternal You'. All our I-You relations, for Buber, have their ultimate foundation in the relation with the eternal You who is God, and the endurance of all our I-You relations depends on their spiritual integration into the I-You relation with the eternal You. This is so, he argues, because we are inherently inclined to reduce all I-You relations to I-it relations, a disorder which has its remedy in the relationship with the *You* who can never be reduced to an *It*. Indeed, for Buber, the moment we approach God through the I-it relation, it is not God that we approach, but an idol.

Buber argues that one cannot know God and simultaneously know only the 'It-world', and so too one who knows only the It-world has no way of knowing God:

> One cannot divide one's life between an actual relationship to God and an inactual I-it relationship to the world – praying to God in truth and utilising the world. Whoever knows the world as something to be utilised knows God the same way. His prayers are a way of unburdening himself – and fall into the ears of the void. He – and not the

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[549] *Ibid*. 89.
[550] *Ibid*. 87.
[551] See *Ibid*. 117, n. 3.
[552] *Ibid*. 117.

"atheist" who from the night and longing of his garret window addresses the nameless – is godless.'[553]

Those who see the world only from the perspective of utility, Buber explains, cannot know God, for they have already missed Him in that which is an icon of Him, so to speak. For Buber, atheism is not merely being unconvinced by rational demonstrations for God's existence of the kind Scruton dismisses as so uninteresting. Atheism is something much deeper: the capacity only to *use*, and the inability to *encounter*. It is the I-You relationship with the 'eternal You' to which Buber devotes the final chapter of *I and Thou*, concluding that this relationship 'alone assures the genuine existence of a community.'[554]

3.1.3   Joint Attention and second-person perspective

Generally, any discussion of the theme of second-person perspective quickly invokes the name of Martin Buber. Since his *I and Thou*, however, this theme has become central to a 'comparatively recent discipline in experimental psychology and philosophy called *joint attention*.'[555] Joint attention begins from the widely accepted notion that attending to an object – say, a painting – on one's own is qualitatively different to attending to it *with* someone else. For this reason, pointing at things is one of the first actions we learn as we develop the capacity to engage with others; that is, we learn to invite others to join us in attending to this or that thing. From the outset we are, to use a mechanistic metaphor, 'hard-wired' for joint attention.

When attending to something with another person, 'that other person enters into the individuation of your experience.'[556] Joint attention requires that a person 'share an awareness of the sharing of the focus,' which is something 'that often entails sharing an attitude towards the thing or event in question.'[557] Joint attention has as its focus some object beyond those who are attending, and yet entails a relatedness shared by those attending to that object, namely the establishment of a shared attitude. The phrase that is routinely used for this shared attitude is a '*meeting of minds*':

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[553] *Ibid*. 156.
[554] *Ibid*. 163.
[555] Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective*, 41.
[556] John Campbell, 'Joint Attention and Common Knowledge' in *Joint Attention: Communication and Other Minds: Issues in Philosophy band Psychology*, edited by Naomi Eilan, Christoph Hoerl, Teresa McCormack, and Johannes Roessler (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 288.
[557] Peter Hobson, 'What puts Jointness into Joint Attention' in *Joint Attention: Communication and Other Minds*, 185.

Each subject is aware, in some sense, of the object as an object that is present to both subjects. There is, in this respect, a "meeting of minds" between both subjects, such that the fact that both are attending to the same object is open or mutually manifest.[558]

There is a deep connection between joint attention and second-personal relatedness. A preliminary point to note is that if one is sharing an awareness of the sharing of focus with someone else, and wishes to address that other person, then the mode of address is 'you', not 'he' or 'she'. And, as Pinsent notes, 'joint attention and the second-person mode of address share the common characteristic of *mutual presence*.'[559] That is to say, for a second-person pronoun to be employed, the person to whom the speaker refers ordinarily must be present, or at least believed to be present. Indeed, it is generally considered rude to use third-person pronouns to refer to someone who is present.[560] When referring to someone who is present, but not addressing him directly, the typically polite mode of address is his name, as if to insists upon his individuality; in other words, in order to second-personalise a third-personal reference. Pinsent illustrates the requirement of 'mutual presence' in join attention with the following example:

It is possible to put oneself in the mind of Attila the Hun meeting Pope Leo, imagining what this experience might have been like from Attila's perspective. It is impossible, by contrast, to share an awareness of a sharing of focus on Pope Leo *with* Attila, since Attila is not present to engage in such sharing.[561]

One can imagine what it might have been like to be this or that person in a given situation. Those in the performing arts professions must do this routinely. One cannot enjoy joint attention with this or that person, however, unless the person is really present and really sharing one's awareness of the sharing of focus.

Pinsent presents three characteristics that are always involved in joint attention:

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[558] Naomi Eilan, 'Joint Attention: Communication and Mind' in *Joint Attention: Communication and Other Minds*, 185.
[559] Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective*, 48.
[560] Hence the rebuke, 'Who is "she"? The cat's mother?'
[561] Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective*, 43.

Joint attention involves at least the following characteristics: a triadic person-person-object scenario in which the object is the focus of attention of both persons; a sharing an awareness of the sharing of focus; and a shared sense of mutual presence and union with one's co-attender in the context of the attention.[562]

Studies in the field of joint attention have helped to identify what is specific about the broadly defined condition known as autism. Whilst autism is generally deemed to be a 'spectrum', with instances of lesser and greater intensity of associated attributes, a common pattern is the 'failure to engage in commonplace join attention activities, such as pointing and gaze following.'[563]

Children diagnosed with autism appear to suffer no difficulty in identifying people *as members of a kind*, and experimental studies have demonstrated that distinguishing images of people from images of impersonal objects poses no problem for autistic children.[564] There have been experimental studies, however, for which autistic children have been shown images of people exhibiting emotional states, enacting gestures that convey surprise, sadness, fear, anger, and happiness; these studies have shown that such children seem largely unable to recognise the emotional states being communicated. Children who have *not* been diagnosed with autism tend to recognise such emotional states immediately.

In the case of children and adolescents with autism, it was the person's movements and actions rather than feelings that were reported. For example, they described the sad figure as "walking and sitting down on a chair"… the second figure was said to be "standing up and moving backwards"… the angry figure was "dancing to some music… clapping a little bit"… There is a striking absence of emotion in these descriptions.[565]

During these experiments, the autistic children could tell that they were viewing a person, and that the person was performing actions. What they did not seem to register were the emotional states prompting the actions being performed.

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[562] *Ibid*. 43-44.
[563] *Ibid*. 44.
[564] See Hobson, 'What puts Jointness into Joint Attention' in *Joint Attention: Communication and Other Minds*, 195.
[565] *Ibid*. 192-193.

In one study, Peter Hobson and his team devised an experiment to examine how autistic children imitated other persons.[566] Both autistic and non-autistic children were told to watch while an adult performed various actions with props. After a short break they were all given the opportunity to 'use' the props for themselves. Their actions were videoed and shown to independent judges who assessed the children's behaviour. Nearly all the non-autistic children imitated the actions they had seen earlier, imitating also in the *style* in which the actions had been performed. Among the autistic children, almost all the actions were imitated, but very few of these children imitated the *style*; rather, they only acted to achieve the goal of each action, often in the simplest way possible.

During the imitation experiment, one of the actions performed by the adult was that of picking up a cloth frog to wipe his brow with it. This was the only 'self-orientated' action performed. Whilst the autistic children could perform the movements of the other actions they observed, fewer than one third imitated this self-orientated action, and fewer than two thirds touched the cloth frog at all. About these experiments, Hobson writes the following:

> In two respects, then, the children with autism were not moved to adopt the orientation of the person they were watching. They did not adopt the style with which the experimenter executed the actions, nor did they identify with him and copy his self-orientated actions so that these actions became orientated towards themselves. On the other hand, they were perfectly able to perceive and copy the strategies by which he achieved the goals in each demonstration. So they were able to learn something from watching what the experimenter did… yet what they learned seemed to be available from their position as a kind of detached observer of actions and goals. They were not "moved".[567]

As Hobson explains, in imitating the actions they observed, the children with autism did not adopt the *style* in which the actions were performed. This alone indicates that, whilst they could – and did – observe and imitate actions, they seemed unable to '*identify with*' the person acting. Generally, for most of the demonstrations, they observed and copied 'the strategies' by which the goals of the actions were achieved. As Hobson notes, though, they

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[566] *Ibid*. 197-200.
[567] *Ibid*. 200-201.

did this as *detached observers*. Hobson concludes that the autistic children, unlike the non-autistic children, were acutely impeded when it came to being '*moved*' by other people.

As noted above, joint attention is widely believed to correlate with learning to use the second-person mode of address appropriately. Early forms of 'proto-declaratives such as pointing' have the very purpose of bringing 'someone else's forms of attention in line with one's own.'[568] The gestures of an infant are interpreted by his parent, who will characteristically 'respond by addressing the infant as "you" in return.'[569] Pinsent adds that, 'in other words, the infant engaged in joint attention also appears to engage in characteristic "I"–"you" communications with other persons even before acquiring the ability to express that relationship in speech.'[570] For this reason it is significant that one of the earliest signs of autism in a developing child is the failure to point. Clara Claiborne Park describes this in the following way, regarding raising her autistic child:

> To point is so simple, so spontaneous, so primary an action that it seems ridiculous to analyse it. All babies point, do they not? To stretch out the arm and the finger is, symbolically and literally, to stretch out the self into the world – in order to remark on an object, to call it to another's attention, perhaps to want it for oneself. From pointing comes the question "What's that?" that unlocks the varied world. To point, to reach, to stretch, to grab is to make a relation between oneself and the outside. To need is to relate.[571]

Park observes that pointing is linked to relating to others. Pointing is simply to call another to attend to something with oneself. The failure to point – this early indication of impeded ability to relate to others, and in turn to share joint attention with them – is the first indicator of what Park later calls her daughter's inability to 'see' persons altogether.[572]

In studies that Pinsent documents, children with autism were found to be deficient, to varying degrees, in person-to-person interaction. 'The most dramatic difference, however, was the triadic person-person-object interactions.'[573] In one experimental study, '*not a single*

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[568] Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective*, 48.

[569] *Ibid*. 48.

[570] *Ibid*. 48.

[571] Clara Claiborne Park, *The Siege: The First Eight Years of an Autistic Child* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1982), 6.

[572] *Ibid*. 93.

[573] Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective*, 45.

infant with autism engaged in any of a wide range of such joint attention activities in their first two years, including offering and giving objects to others, pointing at objects, and following others' points.'[574] Pinsent concludes that a 'failure to engage in joint attention with other persons is strongly correlated with, and may even specify, an autistic condition.'[575]

A common trait in people diagnosed with autism, and seemingly unique to them, is that of 'pronoun-reversal':

> Children with autism often refer to themselves as "you" and the person they are speaking with as "I". for example, the question, "How are you?" might elicit the response, "You is fine".'[576]

As Pinsent notes, 'this pronoun reversal would not be a mistake if the linguistic rules for denoting second persons were the same as the rules for objects and third persons.'[577] Unique to second-person address is that 'I' and 'you' are reversed depending on who is speaking. People with autism apply to second-person address the linguistic rule proper to objects and third persons. That these people struggle with the second-person linguistic rule indicates that 'those with autism have difficulties relating to others in a specifically *second-personal sense*.'[578]

The impeded ability to enter into joint attention, and also to be 'moved' by others, strongly correlates with an impeded capacity for enjoying second-personal relatedness. The findings of studies both of joint attention and the phenomenon of autism have been employed by Pinsent for metaphoric understanding in ethics. Perhaps, the metaphoric use of such findings may also be of help in understanding what Buber really means by life in the 'It-world'. For my purposes, the metaphoric application of such findings may assist in seeking to understand the negative view of conservatives towards rationalism and what is widely deemed to be its moral and political manifestation, liberalism.

3.1.4 Second-person perspective and the diverse objections of Burke and Maistre

Scruton advances a case for second-person perspective as the underlying principle that not only unifies *his* conservatism, but accounts for the conservative attitude in general. I have

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[574] *Ibid*. 45.
[575] *Ibid*. 45.
[576] *Ibid*. 48.
[577] *Ibid*. 48.
[578] *Ibid*. 48.

briefly presented how Buber, a thinker perhaps predisposed to affirm anarchic and socialist ideas, was led to some conservative observations about society by making second-person perspective, and the anthropology that accompanies it, central to his worldview. That this is found in Buber indicates that conservatism flows naturally from the prioritising of such a theme. If the theme of second-person perspective is the underlying and foundational principle of conservatism, then it should be possible to unify by this principle the diverse ideas and objections of the early conservatives.[579] Such a presentation would only need to show that these ideas and objections plausibly stem from this principle, even if the principle itself were only held by the early conservatives as an implicit assumption rather than a fully thought out and explicitly held position on the nature of human relatedness.[580]

Both Burke and Maistre hold that man is inherently social by nature. The various contractarians of the age were in agreement with each other inasmuch as they held that humankind's sociability was an artificial product of the individuals who comprise society. That is, sociability is an artefact confected by the decision – implicit or otherwise – of naturally isolated individuals, for the purpose of living in community to enjoy its benefits. Whilst the contractarian view of society is often interpreted as a metaphor for the individual's participation in society, rather than an historical account of the actual emergence of societies, the metaphorical interpretation of the position nonetheless presents a vision of the human individual as essentially and naturally solitary.[581] In contrast to this, the 'Burkean contract' is, as has been noted, no contract at all. Rather, it is a *complexus* of relations out of which (by virtue of those relations, and the rights and duties entailed by them) the individual emerges as some*one* who is accountable to others. In this Burkean account, the individual discovers himself as someone who has received from those now gone, and who will one day pass on much that he never authored himself, having only ever been a trustee of a civilization to which he only contributed in collaboration with others. This view of society is lucidly explained by Scruton:

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[579] It may seem rationalistic, and therefore unconservative, to seek an explanatory principle for conservatism, but the advantage of the principle of second-person perspective for this purpose is that it is not an *abstract principle* but an explanatory principle that refers to an *existential experience*.

[580] The implicit nature of the presence of second-person perspective in the thought of the early conservatives should not be surprising given that research in this area is comparatively more recent than their works.

[581] See John Plamenatz, *Man and Society: Political and Social Theories from Machiavelli to Marx, Volume II: From Montesquieu to the Early Socialists* (London; New York: Longman, 1992), 153.

The effect of the contemporary Rousseau-ist ideas of social contract was to place the present members of society in a position of dictatorial dominance over those who went before, and those who came after them. Hence these ideas led directly to the massive squandering of inherited resources at the Revolution, and to the cultural and ecological vandalism that Burke was perhaps the first to recognise as the principal danger of modern politics. In Burke's eyes the self-righteous contempt for ancestors that characterised the Revolutionaries was also a disinheriting of the unborn. Rightly understood, he argued, society is a partnership between the dead, the living and the unborn, and without what he called the "hereditary principle", according to which rights could be inherited as well as acquired, both the dead and the unborn would be disenfranchised. Indeed, respect for the dead was, in Burke's view, the only real safeguard that the unborn could obtain in a world that gave all its privileges to the living. His preferred vision of society was not a contract, in fact, but a trust, with the living members as trustees of an inheritance that they must strive to enhance and pass on.[582]

As Scruton explains, in the contractarian view of society, the isolated individual – existing independently of those who came before and those yet to come – lives socially only insofar as he has opted into a pragmatic arrangement with those who also happen to be alive. Scruton argues that what follows from this is a vision of the nation's inheritance as spoils to be used and, in his words, 'squandered'. The cultural imperative to pass on anything is seen to vanish; those who come after must make their own contractual arrangements. According to Scruton, in the contractarian view, those who live are seen as all there is, as if an existing society is really an abstraction to be understood independently of history, culture, and particular circumstances. For Burke, however, society was something *real*, with a history and a future, with cultural and moral wisdom to receive and pass on, with obligations to fulfil, and ultimately was to be understood as a common and shared project spanning generations.

One can easily detect the second-personal character of the Burkean vision in comparison to that of the contractarian view. For Burke, society is essentially a community of members sharing joint attention, entering into each other's perspectives in order to enjoy a 'meeting of minds', or establish a shared attitude about their common life. Society is not merely useful, but the proper condition of human nature. Society is also particular, and as a

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[582] Scruton, *Gentle Regrets*, 43-44.

corporate person can only be understood – in the idiom of Buber – as 'You', unique and non-transferable. The personhood and claims of both the dead and the unborn must be grasped and respected, according to Burke. Society, in this way, is a continuum of those who can only be encountered as 'You', with each unique 'You' calling and being called to account.

The second-personal character of Burke's thought becomes even more clear when one considers his view of law. The essential feature of Burke's understanding of law is that true law is the antithesis of 'arbitrary will':

> Law and arbitrary power are in eternal enmity… It is a contradiction in terms, it is blasphemy in religion, it is wickedness in politics, to say that any man can have arbitrary power… We may bite our chains, if we will, but we shall be made to know ourselves, and be taught that man is born to be governed by law; and he that will substitute *will* in the place of it is an enemy of God.[583]

For Burke, the laws of the State depend always on the laws of God, and he who fails to recognise this will substitute arbitrary will in the place of right reason and order, and thus, in Burke's view, become an enemy of God.

Classically, in the common law system, the natural law, or *Ius Naturale*, has been understood to be prior to State law. Natural law cannot be wholly reduced to propositional form; it 'comprises the authority of a man over himself, of parents over their children, discretionary judicial power and the executive power of governments.'[584] There is, however, the *Ius Gentium*, namely what belongs to natural law which can be presented in propositional form, and thus is the same for all peoples, even if its *application* may differ from one people to another. Finally, the *Ius Civile*, or 'civil law', which concerns matters indifferent in themselves but which nonetheless require some legislation for the sake of communal living, e.g. on which side of the road cars must travel.[585] Burke envisaged that the secularism of the Enlightenment would have the effect of replacing law with arbitrary will, and recently it has been argued that the subsequent Napoleonic Code intrinsically has arbitrary will as its foundation:

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[583] Burke, 'Speech on the Impeachment of Mr Warren Hastings', quoted in Schuettinger, *The Conservative Tradition*, 47.
[584] Crean and Fimister, *Integralism*, 139.
[585] For an analysis of these categories in common law, see *Ibid*. 139.

For them all is Civil Law: all matters, criminal as well as civil, are legislated for by man and codified. The Civilian system thus implied the deity, and hence the secularity, of the state, which comprehends all reality and legislates for it in a univocal code. As its creator, the Civilian state exists before society, and the individual and the family exist under license from the Civilian state. The subject of the Common Law has *liberties* empowering him to do everything that has not been positively forbidden by reason or statute. The temporal power constituted by natural law is limited by natural and divine law. When the ruler commands something contrary to these laws his command is null and void. When he seeks to compel his ostensible subject to violate God's law he is to be resisted, by the grace of God. The subject of the Civilian Code, in contrast, has "rights": a list of things he is allowed to do by the "State". For everything else he must ask permission.

The subject of the contractualist Civilian state has agreed in advance to all that Leviathan wills. The denial of this subjection is a threat to the very existence of the beast, as is the claim that any sort of society, pre-eminently the family, is natural. For to admit the existence of any natural society is to strike a fatal blow at the foundation myth of the Leviathan.[586]

According to Crean and Fimister, in the Civil Code, all law is understood to belong to the category of *Ius Civile*. The underlying assumption of such law is that the individual has created the State through the 'social contract', and the State has in turn, through legislating, created and authored society. Therefore the State may be society's determinate in entirety. The subject in the common law tradition is understood to possess *liberties* by which he can judge whether the State is trespassing beyond its proper remit. The civilian of the Civil Code has *rights*, a set number of capacities granted to him by the State. For Crean and Fimister, this modern settlement entails that the State is not simply the political realisation of an already existing reality, namely civil society, but a pseudo-deity whose cultus requires the denial of all other pieties. The name for this entity they find in Hobbes, the proto-contractarian: *Leviathan*.

For Burke, law is an ongoing conversation, with recourse to the stories of the nation and how old disputes were settled. It is the antithesis of arbitrary will. Law is legislated in the debates of parliament. Law is decided by the guilds of law called inns, the uniqueness of each

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[586] *Ibid*. 140-141.

case is respected, with attention given to possible analogues to make the right judgement, and a jury is questioned, who represent civil society in the court and behold those actually involved in the case.

Perhaps the most important aspect of Burke's insistence on the opposition between law and arbitrary power is his view that law exists to make man good, whereas arbitrary power exists in order to give licence to unfettered appetite. For Burke, law should both coerce and direct us towards self-government. Indeed, for him, the one who interiorly conforms himself to the law, inasmuch as the law reflects the natural law, has in fact conformed himself to the wisdom of God. If natural law is not recognised, but only a pragmatic code for the benefits of society to be enjoyed, then nothing transcendent exists – at least not practically speaking – to which to conform oneself. Therefore society itself becomes a mechanism for the expansion of private gratification. It has long been observed by many authors that the interior rule of appetite reduces others to objects of use.[587]

It is from the point that law has its purpose in making man good that we may turn to another deeply second-personal aspect of Burke, namely his view of the craft of statesmanship. Burke held that politics was less about having the right formula for governmental organisation, and more about having the right sort of people *in* government, that is, cultivated and virtuous people. Good government, according to Burke, depends upon practice, relationships, insight, understanding, prudential deliberation and cautious action. Good government is not primarily about – to use Oakeshott's terms – *technical* knowledge but *practically acquired* knowledge. Whilst the rationalists of his age tended to think of political science as something mechanistic, whose success depended on the knowledge of abstract principles, Burke understood politics to be the domain of *persons*, whose wisdom came from experience. It might be said, using the metaphor proposed by Pinsent, that the rise of rationalism was pushing man into a kind of political 'autism'.[588] Eighteenth-century rationalism increasingly reduced political wisdom to isolated principle, prioritising *technique* and ignoring *style*, unable to grasp political life as the communal perspective-sharing which Burke understood to be at the heart of civil society.

Turning to Maistre, we see that his concerns also appear to hinge on the primacy of second-person perspective. Many of the second-personal concerns of Maistre are also found

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[587] The opposition of the approaches of *love* and *use* toward another person has received philosophical attention in different ways from Plato to Wojtyła. See Plato, *The Phaedrus*, 230e-241d; Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 28-31.

[588] For a fascinating description of the autistic trait of 'blindness' to particulars and the preoccupation with abstractions, see Park, *The Siege*, 57-58.

in another form in Burke, perhaps the most obvious being Maistre's theory of the establishment of legitimacy through *time* and *relationships*, which strongly corresponds to Burke's view of statesmanship as arising out of *experience* and *prudence*.

Like Burke, Maistre is deeply sceptical about third-personal or abstract conceptions of the human community, a community which he thinks can be properly understood only in its particular instantiations. Maistre's comments on the revolutionary constitution of France are reminiscent of Scruton's anti-internationalism and Buber's warnings about the 'It-humanity':

> The Constitution of 1795, like its predecessors, was made for man. But there is no such thing as man in the world. In my lifetime I have seen Frenchmen, Italians, Russians… but as for *man*, I declare that I have never in my life met him… A constitution that is made for all nations is made for none; it is a pure abstraction, an academic exercise made according to some hypothetical ideal, which should be addressed to man in his imaginary dwelling place.
>
> What is a constitution? Is it not merely the solution of the following problem? *Given the population, the mores, the religion, the geographic situation, the political circumstances, the wealth, the good and the bad qualities of a particular nation, to find the laws that suit it.*[589]

According to Maistre, humankind is not a concept to be ordered and arranged in accordance with abstract principles. Humankind is a reality instantiated in *particular* nations, with their own especial histories, customs, climates, resources, legal traditions, religious habits, political arrangements, and so forth. In other words, one can know humankind not as an 'It', but only by encountering individuals and their communities as 'You', with each 'You' being unique, particular, and non-transferable.

At the heart of Maistre's thought is the pressing need for us to be in moral union with our fellow, and our corresponding inability to secure such union. This interior frustration is what Lively calls humankind's 'moral schizophrenia'. For Maistre, society is bound together by trust, and he has a particular trust in the intuition and prejudice of the 'ordinary man', who he argues possesses an unhampered – though limited – share in perennial wisdom by virtue of his possession of unexamined language. And yet, according to Maistre, society is always on

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[589] Maistre, *Considerations*, 53.

the verge of falling apart, and we are always a moment away from coming into conflict with our fellow.

The constant moral frustration that is the human condition, stemming from – in Maistre's view – a deep wound in our very nature, leads to the cult of sacrifice in natural religion. Man everywhere discovers himself as a bearer of guilt, and must find an innocent victim who may expiate for such guilt by the spilling of his blood. This attempt to heal the community, however, fails to do so, precisely for the act itself reduces the victim in an absolute way to an object of use. The act which is meant to be the remedy for our alienation finds its expression in the total alienation of an innocent, and in his absolute objectification. According to Maistre, then, guilt expresses itself in the natural religious impulse, which in its turn only intensifies the guilt we bear. For Maistre, this cycle can only be remedied by the affirmation of the victim's personhood. The victim would not only have to die for us, but befriends us; a victim who would not only serve us, but summon us to account; a victim who would be reduced to an annihilated object, but continue to live.

3.1.5 Summary

For my purposes it has been necessary to seek an underlying and foundational principle that accounted for the diverse ideas and objections of conservatives, from the genesis of conservatism in the eighteenth-century down to our own age. The candidate for such a principle, I submit, is that of second-person perspective.

In *Sexual Desire*, Scruton observed that we are tormented by the fact that in romantic attraction we both conceive of a person as an object – an object of desire – and, if it is genuine desire, see her not only as an object but, rather, encounter her as a subject. In such an encounter, I discover the other as a *person*, and at one and the same time see (if I am in a questioning relation with my experiences) that her personhood evades normal categories by which I understand the world. Yet her personhood also bestows meaning on that world, namely meaning that arises out of 'interpersonal responses'. Later, in *Green Philosophy*, Scruton further connects to morality the invasion of meaningfulness that is caused by interpersonal relatedness, arguing that what motivates us to justice is the attachment we have to others with whom we share an embodied and experienced relation. This attachment, he contends, binds us to the dead from whom we have received so much, and to the unborn whose future existence depends upon our agency. This attachment, he insists, we cannot experience in relation to a 'faceless humanity'. These considerations lead him to link the realisation of justice to local attachment.

In *The Face of God*, *The Soul of the World*, and *On Human Nature*, Scruton unveils the principle of second-person perspective as that which is most foundational in the conservative worldview. Only a person, he states, can be 'I' to 'You', and only this relation accounts for the emergence of personhood. We ask each other questions not only for the sake of gaining useful information, but to enter into the other person's perspective, a perspective which is primarily disclosed in the face: 'When I read a face', Scruton writes, 'I am in some way acquainting myself with the way things seem to another person.' Scruton also holds that it is the particular gift of persons to extend I-You relationality to the world of impersonal objects, a phenomenon to which he links classical architectural forms. As we lose a sense of personhood, we lose such forms, and begin to prioritise utility largely to the exclusion of all other considerations, which, as Scruton has suggested elsewhere, quickly renders our works useless.

Scruton suggests that 'what we mean or ought to mean by original sin' is the capacity to reduce others to objects, seeing persons, and by extension everything else, only from a third-person perspective. Third-personal accounts of human communities, he argues, lead to a contractual view of moral obligation. According to him, no community can survive on such a view: the first-person plural of settlement relies on the second-person perspective of the individuals who compose that '*we*'. For this reason, Scruton explicitly links the theme of second-person perspective to the so-called 'Burkean contract', which Scruton notes is not a contract but a trust. The duties, pieties, and sacrosanct obligations on which society depends are in one sense prior to personhood, and therefore cannot be diminished to passing choices and rescindable contracts.[590]

It is noteworthy that Scruton has recourse to the theological term of 'original sin' to describe the disappearance of personhood. In fact, he goes further, and suggests that the concept of the human person and the Divine Personhood of God rise and fall together. God disappeared, he argues, because we began to subject Him to third-personal analysis, rather than encounter him in the I-You relation. Furthermore, conservatism consists of a particular attitude towards settlement, beauty, culture, virtue, law, religion, and so forth. The conservative understanding of these, he argues, cannot be grasped without recourse to religious concepts. This, he states, is the real danger of the secularisation of society. A retrieval of human personhood, he concludes, may depend upon the recovery of God. Scruton

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[590] In another sense, persons are prior to such moral imperatives, as such imperatives can only arise out of a community of persons. In turn, I have argued that persons and the moral framework of persons are correlative causes.

indicates that this process is only possible by prioritising the second-person viewpoint that is at the foundation of personhood, and which according to Scruton we are rapidly losing due to a third-personal, scientistic, and contractarian account of the world.

Many of the anthropological and moral ideas connected with second-person perspective we find already in Buber, who was largely responsible for introducing this theme as an area of deliberate enquiry. Buber argues that there are two predominant relations through which we see the world: the I-You relation and the I-it relation. The first allows us to see the particular, the unique, and the meaningful, whereas by the latter we see things as mere instances of a kind, sources of information and objects to be used. Buber notes that we are inherently inclined to reduce all relations to I-it relations, and this, he suggests, can only be remedied by relatedness with the *You* who can never be reduced to *It*: God Himself. This inclination to reduce all relations to I-it relations has, Buber argues, characterised the world since the Enlightenment, and placed us in an 'It-world'.

The theme of second-person perspective has played an important role in the field of joint attention research, which studies the human capacity to attend to objects together in acts of co-attendance. Such attending qualitatively differs from attending to something alone, since sharing awareness of the sharing of focus can entail the sharing of attitude, or 'meeting of minds', of those enjoying this relation. This area of study has been of help for understanding the condition of autism, as those who have this condition appear to suffer a deficit of second-personal relatedness. Pinsent has shown how findings in the study of joint attention and the condition of autism can play a helpful metaphoric role in the understanding of virtue ethics. Perhaps it may play a further metaphoric role in the understanding of the concerns of conservatives.

An initial application of the theme of second-person perspective to some of the ideas and objections of Burke and Maistre indicate that the prioritising of this perspective may mark the assumption undergirding early conservatism. I have suggested how Burke's view of society, law, and the formation of good government follows cleanly from the prioritising of second-person perspective. So too, I have indicated how Maistre's reflections on the particularity of constitutions, the moral frustration of humankind, and the shortcomings of natural religion appear to be deeply second-personal. It is worth noting that both Scruton and Buber make the case that human personhood depends in some way upon the discovery of the personhood, through I-You relatedness, of God; such a view dovetails well with the more theological conclusions of both Burke and Maistre.

3.2   Second-person perspective and Christianity

The Greek peoples, the peoples throughout the Roman Empire, and the Northern European tribes all worshipped strong gods and hearth gods, characters of the imagination whose existence would metaphysically presuppose the existence of another explanatory being. The notion of a Being whose existence requires no explanation, and who alone really qualifies for the definition of God, received little attention from these peoples. A case, however, in which God is considered as a perfect, self-subsisting, eternal Being can be found in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*:

> If, then, God is always in that good state in which we sometimes are, this compels our wonder; and if in a better this compels it yet more. And God *is* in a better state. And life also belongs to God; for the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality; and God's essential actuality is life most good and eternal. We say therefore that God is a living being, eternal, most good, so that life and duration continuous and eternal belong to God; for this *is* God.[591]

Here, God is understood as a removed object, whose life may be imitated in some analogous way, but who – it seems – is not known as *You*, but rather as *Him* or *It*. This extract, in which Aristotle seeks to understand the life of God by arguing from the life of human beings, may be compared with *The Canticle of the Creatures* by Francis of Assisi:

> Most High, all powerful and good Lord,
> Yours are the praises, the glory, the honour and the blessing,
> To you alone, Most High, do they belong,
> And no mortal is worthy even to speak your name.
> > Be praised, my Lord, by all your creatures
> Especially by our brother, master sun,
> Who brings the day to us,
> You give us light through him.
> How radiant and beautiful he is in all his splendour
> And so he speaks to us of you, Most High.
> > Be praised, my Lord, by sister moon and all the stars

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[591] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, XII. 7, 1072b24-30.

Which you have formed in the heavens,

Bright and precious and lovely.

     Be praised, my Lord, by brothers wind and air

By fair weather and by stormy, and by every season

Through which you give sustenance to all that you have made.

     Be praised, my Lord, by sister water,

So very useful is she, so humble, precious, pure.

     Be praised, my Lord, by brother fire.

Through whom you brighten up the night:

How beautiful he is, how playful, powerful, strong.

     Be praised, my Lord, through sister earth, our mother

Who nourishes and rules us

Bringing forth fruits in their variety, and coloured flowers, and herbs.[592]

In Francis's *Canticle*, God is not spoken about, with the author reasoning from contingent things to a description of the eternal life of God. Rather, God is spoken *to*, and in the light of this I-You relationship all contingent things are seen.

From the religion of the Israelites, Christianity had inherited a way of relating to God which was unfamiliar to other peoples of the world. In the Temple of Jerusalem, using the prayers of the Book of Psalms, the Levitical priests had addressed God as *You*:

O God, thou art my God, I seek thee,

my soul thirsts for thee;

my flesh faints for thee,

as in a dry and weary land where no water is.

So I have looked upon thee in the sanctuary,

beholding thy power and glory.

Because thy steadfast love is better than life,

my lips will praise thee.

So I will bless thee as long as I live;

I will lift up my hands and call on thy name.

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[592] *The Heart in Pilgrimage: A Prayerbook for Catholic Christians*, edited by Eamon Duffy (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 76-77.

> My soul is feasted as with marrow and fat,
>
> and my mouth praises thee with joyful lips,
>
> when I think of thee upon my bed,
>
> and meditate on thee in the watches of the night;
>
> for thou hast been my help,
>
> and in the shadow of thy wings I sing for joy.
>
> My soul clings to thee;
>
> thy right hand upholds me.
>
> But those who seek to destroy my life
>
> shall go down into the depths of the earth;
>
> they shall be given over to the power of the sword,
>
> they shall be prey for jackals.
>
> (Psalm 63:1-10)

In this Psalm, God is addressed directly and is recognised as the One for whom the soul thirsts and yearns. It is said that God's love is received by he who contemplates and seeks Him, and God is praised throughout by the psalmist, *I* to *You*. In the final lines of this Psalm, however, an expectation of suffering for the psalmist's enemy is expressed. These lines may be contrasted with a prayer said by Stephen the Deacon that is found in the New Testament, directed to God as Stephen is beaten to death with rocks: 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them' (Acts 7:60). Here God is still addressed as *You*, but a different attitude towards the enemy is adopted by the person praying.

As noted, outside the Judeo-Christian tradition, God (when not replaced with an image or idol) seems to be largely understood as *He* or *It*, rather than *You*. But within the Judeo-Christian tradition there appears to be a marked difference between the I-You relatedness of the Israelite with God and the I-You relatedness of the Christian with God. Whereas the Psalmist declares his expectation that his enemy be chopped up with swords and eaten by jackals, Stephen prays for his enemy to receive God's pardon.[593] The Psalms do not express forgiveness for the enemy, nor call upon God to pardon the enemy. Such expressions of forgiveness, however, are a principal motif of Christian spirituality, finding their archetypal example in the words of Jesus Christ on Calvary: 'Father, forgive them, for they

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[593] One of the effects of this prayer, a Christian might claim, was the conversion of St Paul, who personally oversaw the stoning Stephen.

know not what they do' (Luke 23:34). Francis of Assisi, in his *Canticle*, goes on to say, 'Be praised, my Lord, by those who declare forgiveness through your love.'[594] Francis is saying that God is in fact honoured by one's pardoning of an enemy, and one should forgive one's enemy for the love of God, as if such forgiveness is what God wants and reflects God's perspective on the enemy in question. What is unfolding here is what Dietrich von Hildebrand has called 'the new personal world embodied in the new creature in Christ.'[595]

In the light of this brief reflection, it is plausible that there is something distinctive about Christianity in regard to the question of personhood and interpersonal relatedness, and that this is connected with a distinctively Christian way of relating to God. If this is so, this may help to render clear the early conservatives' insistence on a Christian social settlement.

3.2.1   The symbiotic co-evolution of personhood and Christian theology

In the work, *Persons*, Robert Spaemann traces the origins of the Western conception of personhood. Spaemann, like Scruton, holds that 'person does not denote a natural kind.'[596] Moreover, Spaemann argues that 'person' does not denote a class of *any* kind, and he offers two reasons for this. First, when we refer to someone as a person, by that we do not mean that he is an instance of a 'generic category', and whilst 'persons do in fact invariably belong to some natural species, they do not belong to it in the same way that other individual organisms belong to their species.'[597] Second, 'when we apply the term "person" to individuals we accord a special status to them, that of inviolability.'[598] Connected to this second point is the fact that 'personhood corresponds to… a status – the only status, indeed, that we do not confer, but acquire naturally.'[599]

So, for Spaemann, when we refer to someone as a 'person', we are not simply indicating that he is a human being – one example of a natural kind – but we are referring directly to an *individual*. Also, recognising someone's personhood necessarily entails the acknowledgement of a certain moral character and protected status, which is possessed by virtue of the kind of thing he is. Whilst there is much dispute among modern philosophers

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[594] *The Heart in Pilgrimage*, 77.
[595] Dietrich von Hildebrand, *The Heart: An Analysis of Human and Divine Affectivity* (South Bend, Indiana: St Augustine's Press, 2007), 76.
[596] Robert Spaemann, *Persons: The Difference between 'Someone' and 'Something'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 1.
[597] *Ibid*. 16.
[598] *Ibid*. 16.
[599] *Ibid*. 16.

over which members of the human species may be recognised as persons, all agree that a certain moral character and some kind of protected status follow from being a person.

On the point of the relationship between species-kind and personhood, Spaemann observes the following:

> While the word "man" denotes a species, a natural kind defined by the specific predicates of its members, "person" does not denote the kind, but the member of the kind, and not *as* a member of the kind, but as an individual… That means, not a concept, but a name.[600]

As Spaemann understands the term, 'person' refers not to the species-kind, but to a specific member of that kind. It differs from a reference to this or that *human being*, however, in that 'person' does not refer to a specific member of the species-kind *as* a member of that species-kind, but rather to this or that *individual* as someone who happens to have the nature of that species-kind. For this reason, Speamann concludes that in referring to someone as a 'person' we are not simply applying an abstract concept to a particular being, but concretely recognising another 'I': a *name*. Spaemann captures this with his phrase: person is a 'generalizable proper noun.'[601]

Here we can reconcile Spaemann's account – which supplements those of Scruton, Buber, and Pinsent – with the classic definition from Boethius that a 'person is an individual substance of rational nature.' Only a 'thinking being', according to Spaemann, can 'exist' or 'live' as an individual, rather than merely as a member of a species, whose behaviour can be explained in entirety by reference to the species' characteristics:

> An animal of one species reacts aggressively, where the animal of another species turns tail. A nature is a principle of species reaction. With the concept of the person, however, we come to think of the particular individual as being more basic than its nature. This is not to suggest that these individuals *have* no nature, and start out by deciding for themselves what they are to be. What they do is assume a new relation to their nature; they freely endorse the laws of their being, or alternatively they rebel against them and "deviate". Because they are thinking beings, they cannot be

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[600] *Ibid*. 31.
[601] *Ibid*. 32.

categorised exhaustively as members of their species, only as individuals, who "exist *in* their nature". That is to say, they exist as persons.[602]

As Spaemann explains, we can understand why a deer, for example, behaves in a particular way by understanding the species of deer to which it belongs. Human persons, however, as they develop, come to understand their nature, and discover that they do not belong to it, but that it belongs to them. They possess their nature, and can choose to endorse its laws or diverge from them; to this is connected the moral life which touches everything in the human experience.

Clearly, we can speak comprehensibly of persons without any reference to the Christian religion. As stated repeatedly, however, 'person' does not refer to a natural kind. In other words, persons do not simply *occur in nature*. The term itself has its origins in the ancient Greek plays, with 'person' initially referring to the theatrical masks worn by the actors, and then later to the roles the actors were playing. 'Person' was also used as a grammatical term to distinguish between first-, second-, and third-person modes of address. Finally, 'person' was adopted as a legal term in Roman law to refer to human agency and culpability. The term as we have it now, however, comes to us after its transformation by theologians in their attempts to understand the Triune Nature of God and the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.

Theologians had the difficult charge of affirming the Triune Nature of God (which they judged to be unquestionably revealed in Holy Writ) in such a way as to maintain the distinction of the three members of the Godhead – Father, Son, and Holy Ghost – *and* avoid polytheism. They recognised that the grammatical use of 'person' implied relatedness, as a first-, second-, or third-person is always in relation, whilst leaving the subject in himself unchanged. This seemed to capture the nature of the Divine Persons, who are unchanging and eternal, and yet have 'their reality in self-giving and self-receiving.'[603]

Theologians also had the challenging task of maintaining that Jesus Christ is uncreated and divine, the eternal Logos, and also that he is a fully human man. They had to be careful to make this case without teaching that Jesus Christ is some sort of half divine and half human hybrid like the Greek hero Hercules. By applying the concept of personhood, theologians could say that Jesus Christ *is* a divine person who *has* human nature. Given that

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[602] *Ibid*. 33.
[603] *Ibid*. 27.

one only has to possess human nature to be a human being, that he is a divine person makes him no less a human being, as he is said to have wholly assumed human nature from his mother at the moment of the Incarnation. Jesus Christ, then, could be said to be a human man, and fully so, by being a bearer of human nature, and yet a person as the unique individual he is in relation to the Father and the Holy Ghost.

From the challenges posed by these two Christian doctrines, a conception of personhood arose: a person is a unique, individual subject, the bearer of a nature who cannot be exhaustively explained by reference to that nature, and a person inasmuch as he is in relation to other persons. This last facet is perhaps the most important, as Spaemann notes: 'The difference between the person and its condition, or the kind of being it is, is found immediately in the fact that a person so understood can only be thought of in relation to other persons.'[604]

How did this theological notion of personhood, applied exclusively to the Divine Persons, come to be applied to human beings? For Spaemann, the answer is found in the Christian notion of the 'heart'. In ancient times, the majority of people were slaves of some sort or another. This was generally not thought to be due to any fault of their own. Slaves were slaves because they were either deemed mentally inferior and therefore incapable of leisure (activities enjoyed for their own sake), or simply the conditions into which they had been born meant that they could survive only in servile subordination to a free man who could provide nourishment and shelter. In the teaching of Jesus Christ, however, slavery and liberty are primarily presented as interior, and hinge on what kind of '*heart*' one has. Spaemann explains:

> It is not the lottery of nature, a function of the genes and education, that determined whether or not the absolute claim of the rational good prevails in any human life; the basis lies in the human being him- or herself. Following the New Testament, Christianity calls this basis "the heart". Unlike reason, which is by definition always rational, but is sometimes unenlightened and ineffective in exerting control, the heart is always in control, but makes its own decision as to who or what it will accept direction from. On what basis does it make that decision? On the basis that it is a heart of such and such a kind, with such and such a "nature", about which it can do nothing? No. According to this account the heart is not a nature. There is no condition

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[604] *Ibid*. 27.

of the heart, no specific quality, that could be a basis for defection from good or for love of darkness. The heart is its own basis, and needs no further basis.[605]

As Spaemann points out above, according to Christianity, the truly human life – the life which lays claim to 'the rational good' in an absolute way – is not available only to those in a societally rare and privileged position. Rather, living a truly human life is available to all and only depends on what kind of heart one possesses. The philosophical tradition downstream from Socrates had taught that the truly human life is the fruit of liberation from ignorance and the acquisition of good habits. Neither Plato nor Aristotle would have considered Benedict Joseph Labre or Maria Goretti examples of human flourishing.[606] Jesus Christ had taught that true liberation is not effected by 'adding onto nature' knowledge and good habits of conduct, but by the transformation of what is most fundamental in the individual: the kind of individual one *is* unfolds 'out of the heart' (Matthew 15:19). The heart is presented by Christianity as that which is most fundamental in human existence, the foundation and basis beyond which one can look no further for an account of who and what we are. And the heart does not tell us who and what we are as *humans*, but as individuals; as Spaemann puts it: 'the heart is not a nature.'[607] For Spaemann, in searching for the origins of human personhood, one must look to the Christian concept of 'the heart' as 'the source of the discovery of the person.'[608]

So bound up with the Christian theological tradition is our conception of the human person that Spaemann believes we risk losing the notion of the human person altogether as it drifts ever further from that tradition:

Without Christian theology we would have had no name for what we now call "persons", and, since persons do not simply occur in nature, that means we would have been without them altogether. That is not to say that we can only speak

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[605] *Ibid*. 27.
[606] Labre (d. 1783) was a homeless man from France who mainly lived in Rome; he died of malnutrition at age 35. Goretti (d. 1902) was a rural Italian girl who lived in desperate poverty and was murdered at age 11 during a rape-attempt; the attacker later repented and became a Franciscan friar. Both Labre and Goretti have been canonised as exemplary examples of the Christian life.
[607] For this reason, von Hildebrand associates the unveiling of one's 'heart' with knowing the other *by name*. Commenting on the event in which Mary Magdalene encounters the risen Jesus Christ (John 20:14-17), von Hildebrand writes that 'by calling her by her name, Jesus unveiled his Sacred Heart.' von Hildebrand, *The Heart*, 76.
[608] Spaemann, *Persons*, 20.

intelligibly of persons on explicitly theological suppositions, though it is conceivable that the disappearance of the theological dimension of the idea could in the long run bring about the disappearance of the idea itself.[609]

Spaemann argues that persons do not 'simply occur in nature', but come to us from the Christian theological tradition. Scruton agrees that persons do not simply occur in nature, but he argues that they are a construct of the interpersonal relations that form society. These two viewpoints are not irreconcilable. Persons, we might say, are a construct of society, but of a specific kind of society, namely a society formed in the light of Christian theology: a Christian society. Perhaps, in the Enlightenment effort to secularise society, and reframe man as a naturally solitary creature in possession of certain rights by which he can enter into contractual arrangements, human beings were in fact being stripped of their unique personhood. Rather than driving humankind forward into a golden age of *liberté, égalité,* and *fraternité*, perhaps the *philosophes* were really – even if unknowingly – driving humankind back to an age in which persons as we know them do not exist.

Clearly, we can speak comprehensibly of human persons without explicit recourse to Christian theology. Nonetheless, we can observe that the concept is increasingly slipping away from us, with evermore disagreement about the essential content of the concept and who or what may be identified by it. We are creatures of habit, and without consistently returning to those theological reflections by which our concept of the human person arose, this concept finds itself 'orphaned', and risks losing its content altogether. I do not by this suggest that only a society composed of theologians will retain the proper content of the concept of human personhood. In the light of Spaemann's account, however, it is plausible that only a society in which theology's insights are experienced in an embodied, affective, organic, and habitual way can resist the tendency to let the concept of the human person slip away. Why does man suffer from such a tendency? We can answer by recalling the words of Scruton, which now seem more than rhetorical, that 'the temptation to look on others as objects is what we mean or ought to mean by original sin.'[610]

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[609] *Ibid*. 18.
[610] Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 131.

3.2.2 Liturgical anthropology: relating to God as 'I' to 'You' and the embodied person in relation

As noted, there appears to be something distinctive about Christian I-You relatedness. In antiquity, outside the religion of the Israelites, religious expression was dominated by idol-worship and devotion to fictions of the imagination. The act of religion, namely sacrifice, seems to have been largely undertaken in a contractual way, e.g. the offering of a victim to prevent divine retribution or to procure a good harvest.[611] Those who sought to attain some comprehension of God did so in a third-personal way, and denied that anything like friendship with God could be enjoyed.[612]

Within the religion of the Israelites, an I-You relationship of sorts with God appears to have been enjoyed, but seemingly not a 'meeting of minds'. What is largely absent is second-person perspective: the sharing of God's perspective, to a lesser or greater extent. Pinsent holds that the 'infused moral virtues' – those dispositions that Christianity teaches are received through baptism, namely prudence, justice, courage, and temperance – are given by God specifically that the Christian may adopt God's stance (in a limited way) towards a third object, chiefly other people, but also creation in general. As Pinsent puts it, the 'claim that the infused moral virtues perfect the soul in regard to other things besides God, yet in relation to God, corresponds well with the triadic scenario of joint attention, in which a person's stance towards a thing is modified by appropriating the stance of the second person.'[613] According to this view, dispositions are given by God to the Christian that he may adopt God's attitude in a stance which can be compared to what is observed in someone engaged in joint-attention. When the object of this 'supernatural joint-attention' is another person, the virtues in question enable the Christian to see (in a limited way) that person as God sees him. For this reason, Pinsent writes elsewhere:

> As human beings follow the road set out by Jesus Christ, there is a shift in focus from
> first-person need ("poor in spirit") to care and outpouring of love for other persons.

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[611] Eleonore Stump has argued recently that no contractual or quasi-contractual view can be adopted for an understanding of the sacrifice of Christ, like those she posits were employed in the *satisfaction theory* of Anselm of Canterbury or the *penal substitution theory* of John Calvin. If she is correct, this would support the view held by Maistre that the sacrifice of Christianity cannot be accounted for by any theory which could be analogously applied to other types of sacrificial offering, and therefore has given rise to a new definition of sacrifice altogether. See Eleonore Stump, *Atonement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 3-114.
[612] See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII. 7, 1159a3-5.
[613] Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective*, 69.

The Christian life, poor in itself in relation to Christ, gradually becomes more ecstatic and outward-focused.[614]

According to this excerpt, the Christian, in the actuation of the dispositions which he receives from God, moves from enjoying a predominantly I-You relationship whose focus is personal need to a life of service towards those whom the Christian sees as God sees them, according to the Christian's capacity. This helps to explain why Aquinas holds that 'love of God' and 'love of neighbour' refer to the same love.[615]

Pinsent has argued that the theme of second-person perspective largely accounts for the structure of Christian moral theology, at least as it is presented in the thought of the 'Common Doctor', Thomas Aquinas. According to Pinsent, the infused moral virtues dispose one to share God's perspective (akin to joint-attention), whilst the 'theological virtues' – namely faith, hope, and love (which, unlike the infused moral virtues, have no natural counterparts acquired by habit) – give one the attitude necessary to enjoy interpersonal *union* with God.[616] The infused moral virtues, then, effect in the Christian the sharing of God's stance third-personally. The theological virtues effect in the Christian a second-personal stance *with* God, which 'spills over' in a stance towards neighbour, such as Christian love of neighbour.[617] These infused moral and theological virtues, or dispositions, are realised by way of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, namely understanding, knowledge, wisdom, counsel, fear of the Lord (filial, rather than servile fear), piety, and courage: 'The gifts enable a person to be moved by God in a manner that can be understood, metaphorically, in terms of a person appropriating the psychological orientation of a second person in joint attention.'[618] So, rather than being 'moved' like a remote-controlled machine or a puppet on strings, the Christian understands himself to have drawn close to God in friendship, so that his 'being moved' is part of his free agency and is actuated by the free receiving of divine *gifts*. Ultimately, according to such a view, the effect of this second-personal relatedness with God

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[614] Andrew Pinsent, *Faith, Hope & Love: The Theological Virtues* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2017), 60.

[615] See Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea: Commentary on the four Gospels collected out of the works of the Fathers, Volume I: St Matthew*, edited by John Henry Newman (Southampton: The Saint Austin Press, 1997), 763.

[616] See Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective*, 69-72.

[617] Personal note: This division of the third- and second-personal natures of the infused moral virtues and theological virtues respectively is not clear from reading Pinsent's book, and was explained to me by him in conversation as a development of his position.

[618] Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective*, 62.

is that the Christian somehow becomes like God ('*theosis*'), in much the same way as, by analogy, friendship between people gives rise to the sharing of characteristics.[619] This *fruition* of the 'divine life' in the Christian, through second-personal relatedness with God, is observed in the twelve fruits of the Holy Ghost.[620] The fruits which 'pertain to the good ordering of the mind with regard to itself' are love, joy, peace, patience, and long-suffering (or endurance).[621] Those which pertain to the good of 'one's neighbour or God' are goodness, benignity, meekness, and faithfulness.[622] And those which pertain to the integrity of the body are modesty, self-control, and chastity.

To summarise, according to Pinsent, the infused virtues enable the Christian to love God and also to love neighbour with a divine love. These infused virtues are actuated not as if the Christian were an automaton being controlled, but by the free reception of divine gifts. The fruition of this sharing of divine life with God is a certain union and harmony with God, as Pinsent explains:

> The fruits, like the gifts, pertain to a triadic person-person-world relationship, in which there is a harmony of desire or union of affection with the other person, with respect to some object. As both love and gift-based movement are second-personal, the fruits could be defined more specifically as states in a second-personal manner. These states or operations are also described as having a certain inherent finality and delight for the person engaging in them. In addition, Aquinas claims that the harmony with God implied by the descriptions of the fruits implies a sense of God being present to a person or even abiding *in* a person immediately, the source of the joy to which the name of the fruit of joy refers.[623]

The important point here that the whole structure of the Christian moral life pertains to being in union with God – a kind of 'meeting of minds' – and consequently to seeing the world as He sees it, albeit in a limited way. This union entails the sharing of desires and the enjoyment of mutual affection. This triadic interpersonal relatedness – of being in union with God and seeing the world as He sees it – is experienced as joyful and delightful, like a friendship. Whilst Pinsent's focus in this passage is on the Christian-God relationship, we can note that

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[619] See *Ibid*, 98.
[620] These are listed in the Vulgate's rendering of Galatians 5:22-23.
[621] Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective*, 91.
[622] *Ibid*. 91.
[623] *Ibid*. 95.

(given that love of God and love of neighbour are understood to stem from the same love) such divine fruition enables a union and harmony with neighbour that the Christian would deem unavailable to undivinised human nature.

Here we can further develop our understanding of Maistre's view of the human condition. As studies in joint attention have demonstrated, human beings are 'hard-wired' for second-personal relatedness, indeed, seemingly from the moment they enter the world. On the other hand, human beings are ever in conflict and in a state of alienation from one another. Such alienation, what Scruton calls the 'defacing' of the person, has presented itself in every century.[624] Human communities are ever oscillating between cohesion and violent explosion. Maistre argues that a remedy is sought in religious expression, seeking to re-establish communal friendship by offering innocent blood to expiate for guilt. But he also notes that such a solution in fact offers no antidote, but only perpetuates violence and alienation. Maistre holds that the true antidote, to reconcile man to man, can only be sought in the grace that comes from the unique sacrifice of supernatural religion.

We can abstract the following points: first, as studies in joint attention have shown, interpersonal relatedness is proper to human development and flourishing. Second, interpersonal relatedness is very difficult to achieve, and often degenerates into conflict, to which so much of history testifies. Third, second-person perspective accounts for the structure of Christian morality. We can draw from this that whilst sustaining second-personal relatedness – or a 'meeting of minds' – is challenging to say the least, despite the fact that this relatedness is proper to human nature, the Christian notion of the supernatural life provides (on its own terms) a solution to this challenge. In Burkean terms, the health of the 'little platoons', those communities of which civil society is comprised, depends upon the 'infused principles' of 'Christian manners'.[625] Correspondingly, from the Maistrean angle, the moral integration of the nation depends upon the Eucharistic transformation of its members in the unbloody sacrifice which has, according to Maistre, superseded all the sacrifices of natural religion, and made possible a reign of peace. Only then, Maistre holds, can the nation live in harmony both within itself and with other nations, fulfilling its mission and assisting other nations in fulfilling theirs.

Does this mean that, according to the early conservatives, wherever a Christian political settlement is achieved the immediate effect will be fraternal peace? It is clear from a

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[624] Scruton, *The Face of God,* 2.
[625] See Burke, *Reflections*, 135; 'Letter to a Member of the National Assembly' in *The Works*, vol. 6, 38; 'An Abridgement of English History' in *The Works*, vol. 10, 282.

cursory study of the history of western civilization that this is not so, and both Burke and Maistre knew that. As Maistre illustrates with his famous meditation on the role of the executioner, however, whilst Christianity does not bring about the elimination of violence, it does effect a change in attitude towards violence. This change is what Burke documented in *An Abridgement of English History* regarding the transformation of the fierce tribes of Europe into the settled Christian societies of monasticism, chivalry, and agriculture. The Christian knight, Burke argues, was not the same kind of being as the Roman legionary, who was an almost totally depersonalised killing 'machine', nor was he like a Saxon warlord or Viking marauder. The knight – whom Burke sees as a kind of icon of the Christian social order – was expected to live by an unwritten code inscribed onto his heart, so to speak, to protect the poor, defend the land, uphold justice and sacrifice himself for others.[626]

Whilst human beings are deeply predisposed to engage in interpersonal relatedness, out of which I have argued their personhood emerges, the Christian has doubts about 'fallen' human nature's capacity for experiencing and maintaining such relatedness, positing that a 'meeting of minds' among men is downstream from a 'meeting of minds' with God. Indeed, human-human love willed and experienced specifically as an effect of God-human love is what Jesus Christ refers to as the 'new commandment' (John 13:34). The corollary of this, according to Christian teaching, is that one's enemy is seen under the aspect of God's relatedness with that enemy. Thus, paradoxically, even one's enemy becomes an object of love. It is taught by Jesus Christ that such love towards the enemy is a certain measure for whether God-human love has truly been filially experienced (Matthew 5:43-48).

If the thesis is correct that the human personhood that emerges out of embodied second-personal relatedness is itself downstream from second-personal relatedness with God – a relationship for which 'undivinised' human nature does not appear to be equipped – then we would expect the emergence of the human person to coincide with the reception of the Christian religion (on the condition that this religion's teaching about grace and the supernatural life is true). This is indeed what Spaemann argues. To render Christian revelation understandable, which is theology's chief task, theologians had to develop the concept of the *person* to explain the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, and this was

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[626] In a Christian society, adopting the model of Jesus Christ, the hero was not deemed to be the one who kills but the one who offers his life, as seen in the most celebrated Christian act, martyrdom. Certainly, not every knight lived by this code, but the *ideals* are nonetheless a sharp departure from those of the societies that Christianity sought to assume and transform.

organically transferred to account for the emerging human identity in Christian societies that had been denoted by the New Testament notion of the 'heart'.

According to Dawson, as settled communities were assumed into the Church during the early evangelisation efforts of Europe, the Christian religion effected a new form of relationality between people:

> When the social revival of Western Europe began, the new development was inspired by religious motives, and proceeded directly from the tradition of the spiritual society… Everywhere men became conscious of their common citizenship in the great religious commonwealth of Christendom. And this spiritual citizenship was the foundation of a new society. As members of the feudal state, men were separated by the countless divisions of allegiance and jurisdiction. They were parcelled out like sheep with the land, on which they lived, among different lordships. But as members of the Church, they met on a common ground. "Before Christ," writes St Ivo of Chartres, "there is neither free man nor serf, all who participate in the same sacraments are equal."[627]

Dawson is describing the period of history following the fall of the Roman Empire in the West, and soon after the Migration Period during which Huns, Slavs, Saxons, Vikings, Angles, Lombards, Goths, Vandals, Franks and other loosely affiliated peoples roamed across Europe and north Africa, eventually forming settled communities, the European nations in their embryonic stage.[628] It was during this time that the Church renewed its efforts to assume Europe into itself, out of which emerged Christendom in the early medieval period. As Dawson notes, the population of this 'new society' continued to live in hierarchical communities, to rule and be ruled, and no doubt the lives of all were hard and filled with suffering. For the first time in the history of these fierce and unruly people, however, it was possible for them to see one another as equal heirs to something, something that transcended everything else, namely God Himself. According to Dawson, in the newly evangelised societies people ceased to see one another only under the aspect of temporal life and began to see each other under a different aspect altogether, in which no one was barred from membership of the spiritual aristocracy of the saints by virtue of being a serf. To transpose

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[627] Dawson, *Progress and Religion*, 133.
[628] See Francis Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution* (London: Profile Books, 2012), 229-244.

Dawson's observation into the terminology of second-person perspective, the I-You relationship with God, that was enjoyed by society's members through sacramental participation, gave rise to the possibility of seeing one's neighbour from God's perspective, albeit in a limited way.

Besides any logical or measurable advantages, now we can better understand why conservatives favour localism and subsidiarity, even if they generally do so intuitively.[629] One's 'neighbour', the concrete person one encounters and must live and engage with, is not interchangeable with 'man'. On the Christian account, it is not an abstraction, a category, or a member of a species-kind *as* member of that species-kind that I must see from God's perspective. It is this concrete person, whom I know by name – whom I encounter and call to account, and by whom I am encountered and called to account – that I must see from God's perspective. If the Christian is called to love humankind, it is as a conglomerate of irreplaceable and non-substitutional individuals, not as an abstract category.[630] For this reason, in the words of Spaemann, Christianity required a 'generalizable proper noun', namely '*person*'.[631]

The understanding of Christianity presented here helps us to better understand what Maistre was trying to advance with his work, *The Pope*, which at first glance appears to be a defence of Christian doctrine, but is really a defence of Christian civilization. Understanding religion as a set of doctrines to which adherents must assent reduces God to a third-personal entity, an abstract category about which we can gather information. According to Buber, this

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[629] The theme of second-person perspective may in part account for the persistent conservative sympathy towards agrarianism, rural life, and countryside pursuits in general. The extension of I-You relatedness to the realm of impersonal objects may be what undergirds attachment to ways of life connected to particular and non-substitutional areas of land which have the imprinting of human personality on them, often spanning several generations. For a brief analysis of the conservative attitude towards the countryside, see Hailsham, *The Conservative Case*, 103-108; and Roger Scruton, *England: An Elegy* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2000), 234-243.

[630] It is for this reason that Burke argues that whilst one is called to love humankind, love of the 'little platoon' is the necessary 'first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love to our country and to mankind.' It is a common complaint of conservatives that whilst those of a liberal persuasion profess a love for humanity, this coincides with a certain animosity towards localism and national identity, as they seemingly prefer transnationalism, universal monoculture, and what Cahill calls 'a colourless and ineffective love of humanity and a so-called "Patriotism of the world".' For the conservative, expressions of love for humanity are unconvincing if professed by one who can hardly show faint affection for his neighbour. From the conservative standpoint, true love for humankind presupposes love for local communities and for the nation. For this reason, the conservative generally doubts the liberal's 'love of humanity', suspecting it to be more likely self-directed sentimentalism. See Burke, *Reflections*, 135; Cahill, *The Framework*, 574.

[631] What I am describing is a process that Pinsent, metaphorically applying findings in joint attention, has characterised as overcoming 'spiritual autism'. See Pinsent, *The Second-Person Perspective*, 102.

is no longer God, but an idol. Of course, religious doctrines are of significance for I-You relatedness with God, just as knowing truths, and disbelieving untruths, about one's friend is important for maintaining the friendship. Nonetheless, friendship cannot be reduced to knowledge of facts. Scruton holds that 'religion is not, in essence, a matter of doctrine.'[632] He roots the 'essence' of religion in the need for 'encountering and solving the problem of membership', which is why, he argues, there is a need for 'special phrases, liturgies and hollowed language.'[633] Religion, as understood here, is an embodied experience of ceremonies, prayers, music, art, churches and chapels, holy processions, priestly rituals, places of pilgrimage, relics, sacred languages, and sacraments. From this aspect, religion is not an assemblage of ideas but the lived experience of a transformed human community, facing God together, united in fraternal membership.[634]

If the view of religion as framed above is correct, then religion is not first and foremost doctrinal, but *liturgical*. Nichols has argued that the whole Christian life is liturgical, and has called the life of the Church in its temporal aspect the 'Liturgy after the Liturgy':

> This formula makes the important point that every expression of the Church as polity should be treated as a continuation of the Liturgy, of the Church's appropriation of her life received from the Trinity, in Christ, through the nuptial mystery of the Cross. The range of attitudes, or postures of mind and heart, which the Liturgy calls forth from us ought to be perpetuated to the degree possible and in a manner pertinent throughout the day.[635]

As Nichols explains, the 'Church as polity', both in its spiritual and temporal – priestly and lay – aspects, *is* liturgical; every part of its life either being the liturgy or continuous with the liturgy. It is clear why early conservatives favoured an integralist settlement: by secularisation, religion was being reduced to a set of private ideas. But, as I have suggested above, the Christian religion cannot be a set of ideas, but is necessarily the embodied experience of a transformed community, 'the Church as polity', as Nichols puts it.

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[632] Roger Scruton, *The Sacred and the Human* [accessed 2 January 2021].
[633] Scruton, *Our Church*, 13, 8.
[634] It is plausible, in the light of these considerations, that the political significance of the ceremonial role which Scruton's political philosophy affords an established Church is greater than might be obvious.
[635] Nichols, *The Realm*, 145.

The early conservative worldview, as a defence of a liturgical polity, lives by embodied experience and the I-You encounter, affirming the human person as an effect of concrete relatedness with God.[636] Scruton argues that the antithesis of this worldview is observed in revolution: 'the revolutionary consciousness lives by abstract ideas, and regards people as the material upon which to conduct its intellectual experiments.'[637]

I have presented the case that we are 'hard-wired' for second-personal relatedness, but we cannot satisfactorily enjoy this by the apparatus of our nature, and yet it is on the enjoyment of such relatedness that conservatism rests. For this reason, the subterranean presence of conservatism seems to be an ongoing defence of society as transformed by second-personal relatedness in relation to God.

3.2.3   Conservatism and second-person perspective in relation to God

There are a number of explicitly theological concerns raised by the early conservatives, matters bound up with the theme of second-person perspective in relation to God. I shall present a few examples from both Burke and Maistre to illustrate this point.

Burke holds that political science requires not only a knowledge of history, but the ability to see history in the light of God's providence. In the Burkean view, God, down the ages, provides the means required in the circumstances that arise, to achieve the end for which our nature exists. For Burke, 'the whole scale of Nature is subservient to a moral End.'[638] And God, who 'gave our nature to be perfected by our virtue, willed also the necessary means of its perfection.'[639] If our nature is to be perfected by virtue, and yet the burden is on God to provide this means to human flourishing, this indicates that Burke does not hold that human nature *per se* possesses that virtue (even in potency). The indication here is that Burke is not referring merely to the good habits found in the Aristotelian account of virtue. This assessment dovetails well with his view that the emergence of true political life coincided with the 'infusion of manners' during the Christianisation of the nations, procuring for their members what I have called a 'God's-eye-view'. Certainly, we can conceive of God's providence as the provision for material needs like food, clean water, even the State itself. Nevertheless, Burke also has in mind the supernatural life that he believes is made available in the Christian religion, in turn healing human nature and making political life

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[636] For this reason, John Rao has claimed that 'the Revolution was – and still is – nothing other than a full-scale war against the Incarnation.' *Removing the Blindfold*, 62.
[637] Scruton, 'Man's Second Disobedience' in *Philosopher on Dover Beach*, 200.
[638] *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, vol. 8, 364.
[639] Burke, *Reflections*, 196.

possible at all. This is why Canavan argues that Burke's view of the State proposes political life as a 'joint product of God and man.'[640]

Such a 'joint product' requires a framework within which a 'meeting of minds' between man and God can take place. As I have argued, for Burke, the fundamental purpose of State law is to conform the life of man to a transcendent law, a law which has its ultimate source in the Divine Nature. In other words, the deeper end for which law exists is that of harmonising human life with God's life. Such relatedness with God renders possible the 'joint product' of political life. This is why, for Burke, the replacement of law with the arbitrary will of those who happen to possess power is not just the annihilation of law as rightly understood, but is 'blasphemous'.[641]

These considerations return us to Burke's meditations on the Christian knight, whose universalisation Burke sees in the ideal of the gentleman.[642] This view of the gentleman has recently been discussed by Rémi Brague, who argues that a gentleman can be defined as one who has so assimilated the imperatives of the Decalogue into his personality that he reflects God in the world. Moreover, this assimilation is the purpose of the 'generalization' of 'aristocratic principles' to the whole human race, which he suggests is what is connoted by the concept of the gentleman.[643] The law of God, according to Brague, is not for the gentleman an instruction received from without, like a code of etiquette, but is the very shape of his heart, so to speak, from which he thinks and acts, rising up from within him as 'manners'.[644] The concept of the gentleman, framed like this, is a certain measure for the

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[640] Canavan, 'Edmund Burke's Conception of the Role of Reason in Politics' in *Edmund Burke*, 34.
[641] Burke, 'Speech on the Impeachment of Mr Warren Hastings', quoted in Schuettinger, *The Conservative Tradition*, 47.
[642] See Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law*, 224.
[643] See Rémi Brague, *God as a Gentleman* ⟨https://www.firstthings.com/article/2019/02/god-as-a-gentleman⟩ [accessed 7 January 2021].
[644] Personal note: When I was a child, my mother explained to me the distinction between manners and etiquette with the following story. My great-grandmother, Stanisława Mazierski, came to England as a refugee from Poland during the Second World War. Soon after arriving, she was invited to a formal dinner with senior clergy. The table etiquette to which she was accustomed required the proper cutlery to be brought with each course of the meal. At this dinner, however, all the cutlery was already laid out on the table for the coming courses, and she did not know which to use as the first course arrived (being unaware of the take-from-outside-in rule). She would have looked to see what others were doing but, being the guest of honour, she was expected to begin the meal by picking up her cutlery first. She picked up a knife and fork that seemed appropriate to the course but was in fact the wrong cutlery. The host immediately spotted this and proceeded to do the same as she had done. All the other guests followed suit. In short, their impeccable manners obliged them to breach what etiquette would have required. By this story, the extrinsically imposed and third-personal character of etiquette can be easily distinguished from the interiorly cultivated and second-personal character of manners.

perfection of the human person. This view of the gentleman has been well presented by one 'Burkean conservative with a loathing for revolutionary schemes', John Henry Newman:[645]

> The true gentleman… carefully avoids whatever may cause a jar or a jolt in the minds of those with whom he is cast; – all clashing of opinion, or collision of feeling, all restraint, or suspicion, or gloom, or resentment; his great concern being to make everyone at his ease and at home. He has his eyes on all his company; he is tender towards the bashful, gentle towards the distant, and merciful towards the absurd; he can recollect to whom he is speaking; he guards against unseasonable allusions, or topics which may irritate; he is seldom prominent in conversation, and never wearisome. He makes light of favours while he does them, and seems to be receiving when he is conferring. He never speaks of himself except when compelled, never defends himself by a mere retort; he has no ears for slander or gossip, is scrupulous in imputing motives to those who interfere with him, and interprets everything for the best. He is never mean or little in his disputes, never takes unfair advantage, never mistakes personalities or sharp saying for arguments, or insinuates evil which he dare not say out. From a long-sighted prudence, he observes the maxim of the ancient sage, that we should ever conduct ourselves towards our enemy as if he were one day to be our friend. He has too much good sense to be affronted at insults, he is too well employed to remember injuries, and too indolent to bear malice.[646]

In other words, the gentleman is someone who has become intensely a person, that is, ever living in interpersonal relatedness. Burke would argue that the gentleman defined above by Newman is a product of Christian civilization. The gentleman behaves towards others in the way described because he sees them, in some way, as God sees them, by virtue of his union with God. Burke understands his society as one that has been shaped by shared relatedness with God, which he holds has been made possible by the Church's 'consecration of the State.'[647] It is through this consecration that society's members have received the 'infused principles' which give them the 'manners' for peace between them and interpersonal relatedness with God.

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[645] Peter A. Kwasniewski, *St John Henry Newman, the Traditionalist* ⟨http://www.newliturgicalmovement.org/2019/10/st-john-henry-newman-traditionalist.html#.X_XCwS2cbEY⟩ [accessed 7 January 2021].
[646] John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University* ([n.p.] Assumption Press, 2014), 163.
[647] Burke, *Reflections*, 190.

The same theme of second-person perspective in relation to God is found throughout Maistre's writings. For Maistre, it is in relation to God that man discovers himself to be a 'monstrous centaur', both a seeker of God and alienated from Him.[648] Due to this alienation from God, rooted in his sinful condition, man finds himself isolated from his neighbour, and this failure to enjoy interpersonal relatedness routinely erupts in social violence. Natural religion, in Maistre's opinion, is not the orderly and disinterested contemplation of God described by Aristotle, but the frenzied cult of sacrifice found diversely across all societies and civilizations.[649] Maistre holds that these violent and chaotic attempts to expiate for sin, and bridge the void between man and God, are the proper expressions of the innate religious impulse after the Fall.[650] Such bloody sacrifices are, for him, the perfect illustration of man's condition: a chosen victim is reduced to a pure object of utility, to the point of annihilation, to the supposed benefit of everyone else. In this act, man's alienation from man, arising out of his frustrated state in relation to God, is theatrically displayed. For Maistre, all social violence, war and conflict should be understood as religious, an extension of the principle ritualised in natural sacrifice. We seek a solution to our frustrated condition – a condition rooted in alienation from God – by spilling blood: 'The whole earth, continually steeped in blood, is nothing but an immense altar on which every living thing must be sacrificed without end, without restraint, without respite until the consummation of the world, the extinction of evil, the death of death.'[651]

In the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, Maistre believes that the world has been 'consummated', and evil and death overcome.[652] He sees in this event the reconciliation of the priest (that is, the agent-principle of violence) and the humiliated and murdered victim in the same person. Maistre finds confirmation of his interpretation of religious sacrifice in the events of the French Revolution. In this event, secularisation – the rupture from the 'religious principle' – has not, in his view, brought about an absence of religion at all, but an eruption of superstition and religious violence.[653]

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[648] Maistre, 'The Saint Petersburg Dialogues' in *The Generative Principle*, 199.

[649] See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, X. 8, 1178a9-1179a33.

[650] The views of Burke and Maistre on natural religion respectively reflect and emphasise two aspects of natural religion analysed by Newman as the 'aspect of religion which the teachings of conscience bring before us', inspiring adoration and moral goodness, and the 'severe side of natural religion', which he associates with the themes of atonement and sacrifice. See John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* ([n.p.] Assumption Press, 2013), 254-266.

[651] Maistre, 'The Saint Petersburg Dialogues' in *The Generative Principle*, 253.

[652] Maistre, 'Soirées,' 5:126 in *Oeuvres.*

[653] Maistre, 'Essay on the Generative Principle of Political Constitutions' in *The Generative Principle*, 176.

It is through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that Maistre believes we are reconciled to God, and by this reconciliation we may begin to see one another, and creation in general, from 'God's perspective'. Here, we uncover the Thomistic side of Maistre.[654] Aquinas, unlike Anselm of Canterbury, held that God could have 'paid the debt' of sin simply by cancelling it, and done this without committing any injustice, since 'God has no one superior to him.'[655] God, by remitting 'an offence committed against himself, does not act unjustly but is merciful.'[656] For Anselm and others of his school, the obstacle to atonement (*at-one-ment* with God) is God's need for perfect justice, to which God must find a solution which satisfies Himself. For Aquinas, the obstacle to atonement does not lie with God, but with man.[657] Maistre, like Aquinas, proposes the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the solution not to a problem with God, but to the woundedness of man.

In the Maistrean schema, man is sinful and as a consequence finds himself alienated from God and neighbour, and therefore offers sacrifices to expiate for his sinful condition. Maistre holds that God became man in Jesus Christ to assume the act of natural religion – sacrificial offering – into his death on the cross in order to displace it.[658] Jesus Christ, Maistre believes, has provided the means for transforming frustrated and hateful human nature, which is expressed most overtly in natural sacrifices, by taking 'possession of the heart of man.'[659] This event has made possible the establishment of a *reign of love*, of which the new sacrifice of Christianity is both the means and the icon.[660] According to Maistre, man may be so transformed through Eucharistic assimilation into the victim of the one true sacrifice.

The Eucharist is of such importance in the Maistrean schema because the society which he seeks to conserve is one in which second-personal relatedness with God is possible, an aspect of which is that of man and God being present to each other in an *embodied* way. As Maistre sees it, the society which the Revolution is seeking to establish is one in which alienation from God – His very banishment from public life – is the foundation. The effect of

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[654] Maistre was an admirer of Thomas Aquinas and lamented later in life that he had not followed Aquinas's thought more closely. See Aimee E. Barbeau, 'The Savoyard philosopher: deist or Neoplatonist?' in *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*, 162.
[655] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, 46, 2 ad 3.
[656] *Ibid*. III, 46, 2 ad 3.
[657] See Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), 432.
[658] See Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre*, 150.
[659] Maistre, *The Pope*, 240.
[660] This idea of conservatism framed as a case for a 'reign of love' or even 'empire of love', dependent on the supernatural transformation of nations, was later taken up as a major theme in the writings of Cortés. See Juan Donoso Cortés, *Essays on Catholicism, Liberalism, and Socialism Considered in their Fundamental Principles*, translated by William McDonald (Dublin: M.H. Gill & Son, 1879), 24-92.

this, in Maistre's view, will not be the universal *fraternité* that has been promised, but alienation from neighbour, with the executioner (or even less personal, the guillotine) supplanting the forgiving and merciful priest-victim at the heart of the social order.

In the renewed world effected by this sacrifice, the priest is no longer the principle of violence; rather, the executioner is the principle of violence, the one with whom one can hardly enjoy a 'meeting of minds'. The executioner, precisely because he is a principle of violence existing in the world of the New Covenant, sits uncomfortably in the community.[661] On the other hand, the innocent victim offered in the sacrificial offering, rather than being humiliated and reduced to an object to be annihilated, becomes the heart of the community, crowned and adored.

For Maistre, the reign of love effected by Jesus Christ's sacrifice finds its political realisation in the discipling of nations, in which God Himself becomes the teacher of humankind down the ages. Indeed, by definition, to have a teacher is to be instructed in such a way as to see things as the teacher sees things. The discipling of nations is the political settlement which effects the national corporate person's second-personal relatedness with God; this is what Filho calls, in his assessment of Maistre's political thought, being 'uplifted to God's perspective.'[662]

Maistre is not arguing that the order of grace established in the New Covenant makes union with God, and consequentially union with neighbour and peace between nations, easy or automatic. Human persons are nothing like automatons in his analysis. Nevertheless, Maistre holds that the order of grace makes such things *possible*, a glimpse of which he holds was captured in the Christian social order threatened by the Revolution.

What is grace, or the 'divine principle', then, from the Maistrean viewpoint? Human beings are meant to be persons, but from the moment of their existence they are fragmenting; grace, for him, is the reintegration of human nature through its supernatural transformation in the enjoyment of union with God: *grace is shared divine life*.

Seen through the prism of the theme of second-person perspective, this, I suggest, is a plausible way of viewing Maistre: a theocentric political thinker seeking to rescue human

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[661] It is possible that the prioritising of second-person perspective may even allow for a certain relatedness to be extended to the figure of the executioner, who is, after all, a servant of the law. Such second-personal relatedness is depicted in the final scene of the 1966 film, *A Man for All Seasons*, during which Sir Thomas More turns to his executioner and blesses him, tips him with some coins, and addresses him with the following words: 'I forgive you, right readily. Be not afraid of your office. You send me to God.'

[662] Filho, 'The pedagogical nature of Maistre's thought' in *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of Enlightenment*, 195.

personhood, which he deems under threat. If one thinks of Maistre in this way, his intellectual-political positions fall into place in a coherent schema. For example, Maistre shares Burke's deep suspicion of power. Burke expresses this suspicion of power in his analysis of law in opposition to arbitrary will. Maistre does so in the case he makes for the union of spiritual and temporal powers. Maistre's fear of a totalitarian future, effected by the divorcing of spiritual and temporal powers, is essentially a fear that the person will vanish in a world in which human beings are conceived as the mere matter by the use of which the powerful achieve their aspirations. The solution to this problem is, in his view, the limiting of powers from the top and most distant to the lowest and most local forms in society, enabling the maximising of accountability. The union of spiritual and temporal powers, whilst maintaining their distinction, in the one society of the Church has a double advantage: the limitation of power and expansion of the reach of grace. In other words, if the obstacles to man's redemption lie with man, and the possibilities for his reconciliation and regeneration lie with God, then the union of spiritual and temporal powers, as Maistre conceives it, limits the means for man to destroy himself whilst simultaneously expanding the reach for God to heal man and redeem him.

Maistre expresses his fears about the secularisation of once Christian nations in his considerations of slavery. A 'society of slaves' is one in which the human person has disappeared. This is the society of the future, according to Maistre, once the possibility of union with God as a political foundation has been banished from all public considerations. He argues that the human person will be swallowed up by insatiable appetite: people will become faceless and substitutional objects seen only from the viewpoint of use. If the redemption initiated a reign of love, Maistre thinks that the Revolution will introduce a *reign of use*. This *reign of use* Maistre believes will come about through a multifaceted composition of different forms of disordered subordination. Women will be subdued according to the sexual demands of men, men who cannot govern themselves. 'Vice will become duty', as Maistre says, and through such subordination men will become increasingly subjugated to their own passions. Trust between the sexes will break down. Maistre presents an image of the post-Christian future in which the ability to experience the I-You encounter, by which the human person is realised, will rapidly deteriorate. An unruly and disordered populace of slaves to appetite will require a more totalitarian government. The human person will eventually vanish.

For Maistre, modernity has offered the nations of the world a choice between two clashing settlements: the Church or slavery. To summarise Maistre's view, Christianity eliminated slavery not because it was deemed contrary to human nature in any way, but

because the practice of slavery could not survive in a society composed of human *persons*. St Paul returned a runaway slave to his master, seemingly accepting the legitimacy of the master-slave arrangement, but he simultaneously attempted to *personalise* the relationship between them (Philemon 8-20). Maistre believes that, with Christianity ousted from the public arena, the human person will disappear, and consequently slavery – which in his view is entirely natural – will necessarily return in various forms, first interiorly and then increasingly as the structure of political life. He proposes that the only way to prevent this future is to regain 'God's perspective' by inviting grace back into the public life of the post-revolutionary world through the union of spiritual and temporal powers.

Understanding Maistre as engaged in a theocentric project of rescuing the human person helps to explain his particular conception of counter-revolution. Counter-revolution is, for Maistre, not only a non-violent movement in itself, but a movement for the vanquishing of social violence. That is, counter-revolution is the action of conservatives to conserve the human person. In the midst of his proposal of counter-revolution, Maistre writes the following:

> Talk no more of the difficulties and the evils that alarm you as the consequence of what you call *counter-revolution*. All the evils that you have suffered come from yourselves… [T]he Frenchman has shut himself up in an egoism that prevents him from seeing any more than himself and his present time and place. Assassinations are occurring in a hundred places in France; it does not matter, he is not being pillaged or massacred. If crime is committed on his street or in his neighbour's house, again what does it matter? It has already happened, *now it is quiet*. He will double his locks and not think about it. In a word, every Frenchman is happy enough as long as he is not being killed… [T]he absence of religion joined to the total absence of public education is preparing for France a generation the very idea of which makes one shudder.[663]

What Maistre is describing here is the corrosion of the I-You relatedness that is the foundation of society. What the Revolution has brought about, in his view, is not a new kind of society, but the disappearance of society: inward-facing individuals, no longer enjoying

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[663] Maistre, *Considerations*, 86.

anything like genuine second-personal relatedness. What is more, as long as he is left alone, the post-revolutionary Frenchman is 'happy enough'.[664]

In Maistre's view, modernity has produced isolated individuals enclosed in their own natures, unable to experience that outpouring of self within which personhood subsists. This is, we can suppose, the deeper meaning of Maistre's characterisation of modernity as 'satanical'.[665] For Maistre, counter-revolution is the non-violent reversal of this 'satanical' settlement, which in his view is really no settlement at all. The society which he proposes has as its model the outpouring of self by Jesus Christ on the cross, which bridges the void between Creator and creation, reconciling man with God and consequently pouring peace into the human heart.

3.2.4 Summary

I have argued that I-You relatedness to the extent of enjoying second-person perspective with God is a central feature of Christianity. It is on account of this feature that we can understand perhaps the most paradoxical characteristic of the attitude Christians are charged to adopt: love of enemy. It has been argued by Spaemann that the concept of personhood as we know it today has its roots in Christian theology, and that the concept of the human person co-evolved with the establishment of a society shaped by Christian theology. In his view, the root of the concept of the human person can be found in the New Testament notion of the 'heart'. The case has been made that the ability to see another person, even one's enemy, as a heart of moral responsibility, who calls me to account and whom I call to account, is rooted in the acquisition of God's perspective, for which God infuses the capacity through special virtues and gifts.

It is possible that only a society shaped by Christianity will maintain the concept of the human person, and that without Christianity the concept finds itself 'orphaned'. What exactly does it mean to have a society 'shaped by Christianity'? In a post-Enlightenment world, it is easy for us to think of this as a society within which people accept a certain set of doctrines, presented in abstract formulae for the intellectual assent of the populace. I have suggested, however, that such a view removes us from what is at stake, namely the *person*,

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[664] Again, Maistre appears to be describing the onset of what Pinsent calls 'spiritual autism'.
[665] Dante offers an image of Satan as frozen (literally) in self-absorption, so closed up in himself that he fails even to notice Dante and Virgil making use of his bulk as an escape route to the island mountain of Purgatory. See Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy* (London: Everyman's Library, 1995), Inferno, canto xxxiv.

which does not denote an abstraction, a category, or an idea, but a concrete individual with whom I am in interpersonal engagement. For this reason, a society shaped by Christianity is an embodied reality, something more like a 'liturgical polity'.

With these considerations in mind, the positions of Burke and Maistre are clearer. They are both deeply concerned with a Christian constitutional settlement because they do not believe that true political cohesion can be established in any other way. They not only object to the Revolution, but defend a particular vision of society, one that is centred on the infused virtues that give rise to union with God and love of neighbour.

For Burke, enjoying the 'joint product' of true political life requires the sharing of second-person perspective with God. Indeed, as I have argued, the ultimate purpose of law, according to Burke, is that of bringing one's life into harmony with that of God. State law is true law insofar as it is rooted in, reflects, and does not depart from the law of God which is convertible with His own Nature. For Burke, State law is meant to be admixed with the teaching of the Church because both are helping the citizenry to interiorise the law of God, so that law is no longer instruction from without but the very shape of one's heart, so to speak, whence comes true freedom. This perfection of self-government has its realisation, for Burke, in a special product of Christian civilization: the gentleman. The gentleman is intensely a person, who has so overcome unruly appetite through personal integration that he can truly be present to another person for that person. The gentleman can see the other, in some way, as God sees the other.

For Maistre too, man's disorder and frustration are rooted in his alienation from God. This disorder and frustration are expressed in natural sacrifice, by which man in a futile manner seeks to reconcile himself with God. All social violence, according to Maistre, is an extension of sacrifice: blood-spilling to overcome interior disorder. Maistre believes that in Jesus Christ, God Himself has provided the sacrifice through which we can be reconciled to God and share in His life. By the grace merited in His sacrifice He has founded a new society, the Church, of which all people and their political arrangements are to be a part, and in which He may establish a reign of love. This new society, through its duality of powers, spiritual and temporal, contains the mechanism to limit man's capacity to destroy himself and maximise the reach of grace for his transformation from a 'monstrous centaur' into a *person*. This is, for Maistre, the role of counter-revolution, namely the non-violent reversal of secularisation, to save the human person from disappearing in the 'society of slaves', the establishment of which can otherwise not be avoided.

One does not need to share all of Burke and Maistre's theological assumptions and conclusions to appreciate their positions. Whilst it is impossible to empty Burkean or Maistrean conservatism of their theocentrism without losing the coherent structure of their political positions altogether, anyone can accept as admirable certain aspects of their concerns. Burke wants a settlement which is freed from negative rationalism, which he predicts will only give rise to competing ideologies divorced from the history and experience of the real settled people. He advocates a prudence-based way of proceeding, deeply respectful of the already established institutions of the constitution, which will encourage self-government and, consequentially, social cohesion. Maistre also wants social cohesion through limited powers, the minimising of violence, and the overcoming of unfettered appetite. These are not values which most would deem controversial. These goals, however, are situated by the early conservatives within an anthropological pessimism that makes them unachievable without divine grace. For the early conservatives, seeking to achieve such goals without dependence on God's action in the world, especially through the Church, will lead to the kind of anthropological optimism, superstition of progress, and Enlightenment ideology that they attack.

3.3   Second-person perspective and conservatism

Conservatism was often characterised by Scruton as love of a specific place, a territory historically and legally settled, associated with a particular people to whom one belongs. Indeed, this emphasis on settlement and territory accounted for much of his take on private property, besides the classic arguments about private property's connection to liberty and security. Private property is essential, in the Scrutonian view, because by it one carves out a part of the settled territory, and agrees to live alongside others, negotiating differences and forming bonds. This is a part of what has been called his philosophy of 'homecoming'.[666] Scruton came to see, as undergirding this sense of attachment, the notion that we realise the potential of our human nature in concrete interpersonal I-You relatedness, in which the human person is situated, as he puts it, 'like a lodestar in a magnetic field.'[667] For him, only in the social arrangement of settlement and local attachment can I-You relatedness arise. For the wanderer, someone encountered today will be replaced with another encountered tomorrow. Such encounters are always with a transient 'he' or 'she', and not with a unique

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[666] See Roger Scruton, 'Homecomings' in *The Roger Scruton Reader*, 185-208.
[667] Scruton, *On Human Nature*, 52.

and non-substitutional 'You' by which one can discover oneself as a unique and non-substitutional 'I'.[668] For this reason, in his arguments for localism and national loyalty, the underlying principle of second-person perspective increasingly became the object of Scruton's defence. This development is observed in his later writing, and, quite organically, this defence took on a religious character.

The requirement to settle for the realisation of the human person was put in expressly theological terms by Scruton:

> God's message concerning the temple was not simply the foundation of a specific cult, devoted to the god of a tribe. It was a message to all of us, telling us that God will dwell among us only if we too dwell, and that dwelling does not mean consuming the earth or wasting it, but conserving it, so as to make a lasting sanctuary for both God and man. Hence the promise of God's kingdom in the book of Revelation is a promise of the "New Jerusalem," the Holy City, in which we live side by side with each other and face-to-face with God. The theme of the Holy City, which is the measure and ideal of all our settlements, was made central to Christian life by Saint Augustine, in *The City of God*. We might summarise the message… thus: a true city begins from an act of consecration, and it is the temple that is the model for all other dwellings.[669]

As he explains in this passage, the requirement to settle is an important theme of the Judeo-Christian tradition. We must make of the world, as he puts it, a 'lasting sanctuary for both God and man.' Scruton looks back to a text to which many conservatives have turned and taken as a certain foundational work for their political endeavours, namely Augustine's *The City of God*.[670] For Augustine, we can only make this world into a home once we have recognised that it can never be our *true* home. To put this another way, this world can only be

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[668] Interestingly, the link between the conservative concerns of settlement and the realisation of personhood go back even to Benedict of Nursia (c. 480-547). Speaking of monks who are 'always on the move' and 'never settle down', Benedict says that such people are characterised by being 'slaves to their own wills and gross appetites.' To this day, Benedictines take a 'vow of stability' by which they promise to settle, and to remain at the same monastery for the rest of their lives. *The Rule of St Benedict in English* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1981), 22.
[669] Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 122.
[670] For a discussion of the importance of this work for the formation of the conservative vision, see Juan Donoso Cortés, 'Letter to the Count de Montalembert (Berlin, May 26th, 1849)' in *Juan Donoso Cortés: Readings in Political Theory*, edited by R.A. Herrera, translated by Vincent McNamara and Michael Schwartz (Ave Maria, Florida: Sapientia Press, 2007), 129.

a home after it has become the first sphere of our eternal home. Thus, in the Augustinian view, this world must indeed become a 'lasting sanctuary', and for this reason Maistre insists: 'you wish to *conserve* all, *consecrate* all.'[671] Only in a consecrated world, according to the view presented here, is the human person not ever on the verge of being 'eclipsed'.[672] This was increasingly the conclusion of Scruton. At the end of his life, reflecting on the modern world, Scruton ever more turned to religious ideas, as he put it, 'not to make room for religion in any traditional sense, but to make room for the person.'[673]

3.3.1   Second-person perspective and rationalism

Scruton, by implicitly identifying the theme of second-person perspective as the underlying principle of conservatism, may have located the key to unifying the diverse objections and conclusions of its proponents. Another philosophical advantage of prioritising this theme is that it reveals conservatism to be antithetical to liberalism, not merely at the level of effects and phenomena but at the level of foundational principle. This may not be an advantage from the standpoint of seeking a pacifying way forward in a world of political and social disagreements, but it is an advantage in the pursuit of a clear analysis of such disagreements.

If at the root of conservatism is found the prioritising of I-You relatedness, it is plausible that at the root of liberalism one finds the prioritising of third-personal categorisation. Third-personal categorisation, which lends itself to the reduction of realities to abstract kinds, is one way to characterise the epistemological assumptions on which liberalism is said to depend, those assumptions grouped and denoted by the term 'rationalism'.[674]

At the risk of over-simplification in describing rationalism, we can say that this epistemological position is typified by the tendency to reason and act as if the content of ideas and abstractions were more real than things. Such a tendency has its roots in medieval nominalism and some Protestant theology, but it can be said to have culturally 'set in' in the Enlightenment.[675] As McGilchrist puts it, drawing from his neuroscientific research on hemispheric functioning: 'That this dislocation between the ideal and the reality has tended to

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[671] Maistre, 'Essay on the Generative Principle of Political Constitutions' in *The Generative Principle*, 176.

[672] A phrase I take from Martin Buber. See *Eclipse of God* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).

[673] Roger Scruton, 'Things as They Seem' in *Philosophy: The Journal of the Royal Institute of Philosophy*, vol. 94, no. 369 (July 2019), 462.

[674] See Cahill, *The Framework*, 108.

[675] See Servais Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 284-291.

obtain wherever societies have most stridently identified themselves with Enlightenment concepts… is an expression of the reality that the left hemisphere cannot bring something to life: it can only say "no" or not say "no" to what it finds given to it by the right hemisphere.'[676]

According to McGilchrist, the left hemisphere of the brain is characterised by the impulse to reduce reality to clear, certain, abstract, limited, and graspable ideas; it does not engage with the untidy, broad, unique, existential, real thing that is actually encountered, as the right hemisphere does. The left hemisphere cannot, as McGilchrist puts it, 'bring something to life' in the human mind. McGilchrist has taken an especial interest in rationalism, explaining it in terms of an inordinate dominance of left hemisphere brain activity in regard to our ways of thinking and, consequently, our social arrangements. This has led him to make the following striking observation regarding the French Revolution:

> The most obvious expression of the necessarily negative force of the left hemisphere's project is the way in which the ideals of liberty, justice and fraternity led to the illiberal, unjust, and far from fraternal, guillotine. Anything that is essentially sacramental, anything that is not founded on rationality, but on bonds of reverence and awe (right-hemisphere terrain), becomes the enemy of the left hemisphere, and constitutes a bar to its supremacy; and so the left hemisphere is committed to its destruction. That there were, as at the Reformation, abuses of power, is not in doubt, and in the case of both priests and monarch, these were sometimes justified by reference to divine authority, an intolerable state of affairs. But, as at the Reformation, it is not the abuse, but the thing abused – not idolatry, but images, not corrupt priests but the sacerdotal and the sacred – that become the targets. The sheer vehemence of the attacks on priests and king during the French Revolution suggest not just a misunderstanding of, but a fear of, their status as metaphors, and of the right hemisphere non-utilitarian values for which they metaphorically act.[677]

Irrespective of whether McGilchrist's view of hemispheric activity is correct (the first two-hundred and thirty-eight pages of his book construct a robust case in favour of his position), one can accept that the narrow, abstract, rationalistic worldview which he associates with the

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[676] McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary*, 346.
[677] *Ibid*. 347.

Enlightenment has been characterised by an impulse to destroy all that cannot be accommodated in its limited purview. An abstraction such as justice was treated as more real than the actual existent legal system and social institutions which endured to realise justice, albeit doing this imperfectly: therefore such realities were wiped away by revolution. So too for liberty and fraternity. Where conservatives would have opted for conserving and reforming such structures and institutions, liberals eradicated these realities with no clear notion of what they would be replaced with. Rationalism in politics has been said to present itself in history as a force of 'immense negative energy.'[678] In its struggle to affirm anything, for not being in possession of realities, rationalism was realised in the kind of social violence whose limitation was the concern of Maistre.

McGilchrist notes that in the 'relentless process of secularisation' we have not simply witnessed the exclusion of religion from the public arena, but a 'transfer [of] power from the sacerdotal base of the Catholic Church to the state.'[679] That is, the State has taken to itself the power of the priesthood, declaring that it contains within itself all that is necessary for ultimate human flourishing. Such a settlement, according to McGilchrist, stems from the 'representation of human experience in purely rationalistic terms, necessarily exclusive of the Other, and the insistence that all questions concerning morality and human welfare can and should be settled within those terms.'[680]

The general prioritising of abstractions and ideas over things, by which I characterise rationalism, would certainly lead to the kind of third-personal categorisation to which I have argued the early conservatives were inadvertently responding. Furthermore, one can see how such an epistemological position would give rise to the kind of transnationalism and universal monoculture of which conservatives today are so critical.[681] Whereas the conservative is interested in what is suitable to this or that existent community, the liberal is interested in *man*. The antithesis of the rationalist position would be that of prioritising second-personal relatedness which, by definition, cannot be abstract, but only concrete. Indeed, it is for the reason of its concreteness that such relatedness required a 'generalizable proper noun': *person*. One way to frame the conservative-liberal disagreement, then, is that of two opposing

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[678] Roger Scruton, *Understanding Music: Rousseau* (https://www.roger-scruton.com/homepage/about/music/understanding-music/179-rousseau) [accessed 19 March 2021].
[679] McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary*, 347.
[680] *Ibid*. 347.
[681] See Roger Scruton, *Culture Counts: Faith and Feeling in a World Besieged* (New York: Encounter Books, 2007), 69-85.

'stances': one, an ideal-based, third-personal, rationalism; the other, a reality-based, second-personal, existentialism.

3.3.2   Second-person perspective and the problem of a secular conservatism

As noted, Spaemann has argued that the concept of the person not only co-evolved with Christian theology, but that 'it is conceivable that the disappearance of the theological dimension of the idea could in the long run bring about the disappearance of the idea itself.'[682] This concern would follow from the argument I have developed that second-person perspective between human persons largely arose with second-person perspective with God. If the existence of the human person depends upon the religious tradition of Christianity, and if I am correct to place at the heart of conservatism the defence of the human person, then surely any case for a 'secular conservatism' of the kind Scruton sought to advance is doomed to fail. At times, Scruton seemed to intuit this inevitability, even suggesting that the only role for (secular) conservatives was merely 'to keep the frail crust of civilization in place as long as possible, knowing… that "delay is life".'[683]

As the theme of second-person perspective came to the foreground in his later works, so too did deeper theological considerations. He increasingly rooted what he saw to be the disappearance of the human person in the rise of atheism:

> I do not deny that atheists can be thoroughly upright people, far better people than I am. But there is more than one motive underlying the atheist culture of our times, and the desire to escape from the eye of judgement is one of them. You escape from the eye of judgement by wiping away the face.[684]

Here Scruton notes that this or that atheist might be a morally upright person, but nonetheless he holds that there are shared motives behind the movement of a whole culture towards atheism, and he sees the primary motive to be that of escaping the divine presence that ever calls us to account. This, for Scruton, is the underlying purpose of secularisation: the removal of God's face in society, for the emancipation of man from the moral law.

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[682] Spaemann, *Persons*, 18.
[683] Scruton, *How to be a Conservative*, 165.
[684] Scruton, *The Face of God,* 2.

According to Scruton, the result of wiping away God's face is that human persons disappear, and the free interpersonal relations which compose an organic society are replaced with something more like a great machine, to which we belong as cogs:

> The relation between subjects can be uprooted and replaced by an arrangement of objects. And in a hundred ways the result of this is a culture of idolatry, in which freedom and personality are obliterated by intrusive images, clamouring for an addictive response… the great story told in Genesis reaches forward to incorporate these new and troubling facts. The Fall did not occur at a particular moment in time; it is a permanent feature of the human condition. We stand poised between freedom and mechanism, subject and object, end and means, beauty and ugliness, sanctity and desecration. And all those distinctions derive from the same ultimate fact, which is that we can live in openness to others, accounting for our actions and demanding an account from them, or alternatively close ourselves off from others, learn to look on them as objects, so as to retreat from the order of the covenant to the order of nature.[685]

Here Scruton expresses an enduring theme of conservatism: The choice is before us: we may freely give of our very selves, achieving our finality, beautifying life by sanctifying it; or we can close ourselves up in selfishness, seeing others as substitutional objects for our own use, before whom we exist in solitude, capable only of satisfying the 'addictive response' of our appetites. This latter condition he simply calls 'idolatry'.

To use Scruton's terminology, conservatism is concerned with maintaining the 'order of the covenant', so as to not lose the human person. According to him, this covenant is first and foremost a bond with God. But how, he questions, can we enjoy such relatedness with a God whom we cannot see? He indicates that this question finds an answer in the central doctrine of Christianity, namely the Incarnation:

> We cannot confront the creator in a direct I-to-You encounter, since this would lead to our annihilation: "thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me and live" (Exod. 33:20). But in his self-emptying in Christ, God shows his freedom and makes it possible for us to address him as Thou. This self-emptying is rehearsed in the

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[685] Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 174.

Eucharist, the act of communion that is performed "in remembrance of me" – in other words, in recognition of God's presence among us as an I.[686]

In a passage reminiscent of Maistre's writings, Scruton explains here that I-You relatedness between man and God is uniquely rooted in the doctrine that God became man, and the belief that this mystery is somehow perpetuated by the Eucharist. Scruton, whilst at times critical, was an admirer of the Quran and also had an interest in the Jewish religion.[687] Nonetheless, he identified that the belief that 'God… made a gift of himself' is 'a peculiarity of the Christian religion that is not reflected in the account of God's love that we are given in the other Abrahamic faiths.'[688] According to this view, without the acceptance of God's gift of Himself, by which we are invited to share His perspective on others, our vision of others as unique, non-substitutional subjects is inhibited.

Just as for the early conservatives, so too for Scruton: the choice before us is between the self-gift of personhood and or the selfishness of appetite. For this reason, Scruton takes up a theme prominent in Maistre's analysis, namely the reduction of persons to objects of appetitive use, especially sexual appetite:

Hunger is directed towards the other only as object, and any similar object will serve just as well. It does not individualise the object, or propose any other union than that required by need. Still less does it require of the object those intellectual, moral, and spiritual virtues that the lover might reasonably demand – and, according to the literature of courtly love, must demand – in the object of his desire.[689]

As Scruton explains, the degeneration of sexual desire is that of it becoming a kind of hunger. Such appetitive impulses do not centre on the experience of being drawn to the intellectual, moral, and spiritual reality that is unveiled in the I-You encounter, nor can they accommodate such a reality. Appetite encounters 'a body', not an 'embodied subject'.[690] According to

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[686] *Ibid.* 71.
[687] For a brief account of Scruton's interest in Islam, see the following overview by Ed Husain, former senior interfaith advisor to Prime Minister Tony Blair and doctoral student of Scruton: *Roger Scruton is a friend, not a foe, of Islam* ⟨https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/roger-scruton-is-a-friend-not-a-foe-of-islam⟩ [accessed 12 January 2021].
[688] Scruton, *The Face of God*, 104.
[689] *Ibid.* 94.
[690] *Ibid.* 93.

Scruton, the vanishing of human personhood is exemplified most intensely by pornography, in which the person is 'desecrated' into a state of being a pure object.[691]

The corruption of sexual desire into an appetitive addiction to stimulating a body-part 'removes sexual pleasure entirely from the I-You relation, there being, in this case, neither an I nor a You.'[692] Here Scruton arrives at an especially Maistrean observation: 'What is interesting, from the psychological point of view, is that the resulting experience is addictive – that is to say, it can be obtained without effort, leads automatically to the pleasure that completes it, and rapidly colonises the brain of the one who gives way to it.'[693] In other words, the disappearance of the human person through the unfettering of insatiable appetite leads to a form of interior captivity.[694] Such interior slavery Scruton identifies with the sin of Adam.[695] This is noteworthy because both Burke and Maistre see interior slavery, or lack of self-government, to be a reversal of the healing work of grace.

The sexual impulse, in Scruton's view, is either genuine sexual desire for another unique, non-substitutional individual, or it is a counterfeit, and really a form of selfish appetite. Sexual desire, then, is a category of I-You relatedness. Given that, as argued in this volume, the concept of the human person is largely a theological construct issued from the Christian conversion of society, it is unsurprising that Scruton should appeal to religious terms in his moral analysis of sexual desire. The human being, viewed as a species-kind, may not be sacred; the human person, however, is sacred, and comes to us from the effort to understand divine revelation. And as Scruton notes, 'we can desecrate only what is sacred.'[696] For this reason, Scruton concludes that 'sex is either consecration or desecration, with no neutral territory between, and… nothing matters more than the customs, ceremonies and rites with which we lift the body above its material need.'[697] Here Scruton arrives at the conclusion to which the early conservatives arrived: the only way to redeem the sexual impulse, transforming it from a path of slavery to an affirmation of the human person, is

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[691] *Ibid*. 107.

[692] Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 151.

[693] *Ibid*. 151.

[694] It has been argued that unfettered and disordered sexual appetite has led to a pseudo-religious attempt to create a counterfeit of the human person that is being vanquished:

> 'Eros must be raised to the level of religious cult in modern society… It is in carnal desire that the modern individual believes he affirms his "individuality". The body must be the true "subject" of desire because the individual must be the author of his own desire.'

Stephen Gardner, 'The Eros and Ambitions of Psychological Man' in Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith after Freud* (Wilmington, DE: ISI, 2006), 244.

[695] Scruton, *The Face of God*, 96.

[696] *Ibid*. 109.

[697] Scruton, *Gentle Regrets*, 75.

marriage. Not marriage understood as a contract that one can confect with multiple people and equally dissolve at will, but a covenant centred on a lasting promise of union between persons. In Burke's words, 'the Christian religion, by confining marriage to pairs, and rendering the relation indissoluble, has by these two things done more towards the peace, happiness, settlement, and civilization of the world, than by any other part in this whole scheme of divine wisdom.'[698] Scruton, framing this observation in the language of second-person perspective, writes:

> Sex has been absorbed… into the world of vows, rather than that of contracts, and contractual sex, like recreational sex, has been accepted only with a form of ritual condemnation. In the world in which we live, a new kind of sexual norm has emerged, in which the overreaching intentionality of the interpersonal relation is curtailed. The sexual object replaces the sexual subject.[699]

According to Scruton, in our civilization sex ceased to be a pathway to the objectification of human beings and became a means by which to affirm the unique individual. This was only possible by the assumption of sex into the realm of unbreakable vows. One of Scruton's many criticisms of the modern world is that it has removed sex from this realm and placed it in the ephemeral sphere of mere bodily stimulation where persons are eclipsed. In such a condition, the *person* subject to my sexual appetite has vanished and been replaced in the same being with an object of use, who by being so used encloses me in my own selfishness. As Maistre puts it, she 'returns to him in full measure the perversity she receives at his hands.'[700]

The discussion of what it means to be a person, that is, to exist in the I-You relation and enjoy second-person perspective with others, is another way of analysing whether the realisation of our being comes through pursuing our own private interests, or by our lives being shaped by love. Again, in religious terminology, this question is taken up by Scruton:

> With the idea of the self comes that of the other – of the other who is another like me. *That* is what God was pointing out to Moses, and what the Jewish revelation has transmitted down the centuries – that the free being, who can say "I", must

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[698] Burke, 'Letters on a Regicide Peace' in *The Works*, vol. 13, 173-174.
[699] Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 150-151.
[700] Maistre, *The Pope*, 242.

acknowledge the equal existence of the other. It is why the original commandment, to love God entirely, contains the second, to love your neighbour as yourself.[701]

As Scruton presents it, this is a central truth of religious revelation: there is only 'I' because there is 'You'. Once we see that in the revelation of Himself we are being addressed by God, and that we can address Him back in a communion of love, we can accept the invitation to see others as He sees them, and address them too as 'You', uniquely loved by Him and sustained in being by His desire. Scruton, like Aquinas, concludes that the imperative to love God and love neighbour refers to two divisions of the same love.

As the theme of second-person perspective comes to the foreground as the central theme of his conservative worldview, so too Scruton increasingly appeals to the religious language of the Judeo-Christian tradition. If we accept the veracity of Spaemann's claim regarding the interrelatedness of theology and personhood, this is what we should expect.

Finally, Scruton explicitly presents his view that to be cut off from others, to exist in a state of alienation, unable to encounter 'You' and discover oneself as 'I', is the natural state of human beings. This condition he calls, with pure simplicity, 'loneliness'. To exist as a person, in the 'overreaching' of one's being so as to exist in relation with another and enter into his perspective on the world as if it is one's own, is, Scruton 'reluctantly' concludes, an effect of grace:[702]

> Human beings suffer from loneliness in every circumstance of their earthly lives. They can be lonely on their own, or lonely in company; they can enter a crowded room of friendly people only to find their loneliness deepened by it; they can be lonely even in the company of a friend or spouse. There is a human loneliness that stems from some other source than the lack of companionship, and I have no doubt that the mystics who have meditated on this fact are right to see it in metaphysical terms. The separation between the self-conscious being and his world is not to be overcome by any natural process. It is a supernatural defect, which can be remedied only by grace.[703]

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[701] Scruton, *The Face of God*, 60-61.
[702] *Ibid*. 153.
[703] *Ibid*. 153.

Repeatedly, Scruton identifies with *original sin* the condition of being closed up in oneself and viewing others first as objects. This is a condition which he sees to be reclaiming humankind in the modern world. This situation is returning us, as he puts it, by a 'supernatural defect' to the 'order of nature'.[704] And that natural condition is one of frustration, isolation, and interior loneliness. In the final analysis, Scruton puts the fact of this condition down to our alienation from God, and remarks that 'our failure to find him is the cause of such deep disquiet.'[705]

According to the view presented above, once we have found God can we find our neighbour. In Augustine's words, there is no 'true friendship unless you bind together the souls of those who cleave together through that love which is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.'[706] Scruton, however, concludes that *we* cannot find God: we must take the path of the mystics and let God find us. Whilst the obstacle to our union with God may lie with us, the solution lies with God: the condition of our nature 'can be remedied only by grace.'

3.3.3 Second-person perspective and integralism

I have argued that with the arrival of Christianity a change took place among its recipients, a change that centred on human flourishing in the overflowing of self in I-You relatedness. The human being discovered in the unfolding of his 'heart' that he existed as something like a '*subsistent relation*', a term developed later in reference to the Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity.[707] The term 'person' was organically transferred onto the human being as – as Christians would see it – grace entered the human heart from without and supernaturally transformed it from within. It is, I hold, the concern of conservatives to defend the human person in the face of what they deem to be the eclipsing of the human person in the modern world. This defence, most conservatives intuit, is connected to a religious worldview.

For the early conservatives, nothing short of an integralist settlement of the union of Church and State, or as Maistre would have put it, the union and distinction of the spiritual and temporal powers in the *one* society of the Church, would be adequate. To be 'lifted up', to understand God's work in His providence and the unique mission of nations in their discipleship – in other words, to comprehend the end for which we exist and the means to that end – we must have this told to us by God. Concurrently, we must enjoy the relationship of

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[704] Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 174.
[705] Scruton, *The Face of God*, 153.
[706] Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions* (Bath: The Folio Society, 1993), 58.
[707] See Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, 40, 1.

trust necessary to believe what God tells us. This is one way to cast the role of religious revelation and the action of divine grace.

It has been argued recently by Crean and Fimister that the world could have existed in many different ways, and in any of those possible worlds some sort of religious revelation would have been necessary.[708] To return to a previous example, to know the general purpose of swords is not to know what *this* sword is for. Only the maker of *this* sword could disclose that, for he possesses the reason for which it was commissioned. According to Crean and Fimister, in 'our order of providence' God has provided the Church to make known to us the end for which *this* world exists and the means by which to achieve that end.

This position on the need for public religion is one with which Scruton had increasing sympathy. As he put it:

> The European Enlightenment… leads not only to the privatisation of the religious need, but also to a peculiarly bloodless vision of community – one in which 'conceptions of the good'… are likewise removed from the public arena and privatised. The abstract liberal concept of the person, as a centre of free choice, whose will is sovereign, and whose rights determine our duties towards him, delivers at best only a part of moral thinking.[709]

As Scruton explains, a new concept of the 'human person' arose in the Enlightenment, one for which there was no shared vision of the end for which the person exists. Rather, the human finality was now to be a private matter, for each isolated individual to determine for himself. In the conservative analysis, this development did not liberate man but closed him up in his own nature, in the state of his original loneliness. For Scruton, the abstract idea of personhood advanced by liberalism to replace the embodied relational person has landed us with at best a half-truth regarding our condition, and left us with a 'peculiarly bloodless vision of community'.

Conservatives, the concern of whom, as I have proposed, is the defence of the human person as an entity existing in I-You relatedness, and by extension whose concern is the preservation of community, have time and again concluded to the requirement of an integralist settlement. Cortés, reflecting sixty years after the French Revolution, wrote:

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[708] See Crean and Fimister, *Integralism*, 9-23.
[709] Scruton, *The Face of God*, 158.

Society is perishing because it has withdrawn from the word of the Church, which is the word of life. Societies are weak and starving because they are not receiving their daily bread. Unless the great Catholic word is restored in its plenitude, every attempt at salvation will be sterile.[710]

For Cortés, the Church, in both its temporal and spiritual aspects, is not only a saviour of souls, but has the role of preventing the perishing of society altogether by proclaiming its 'word', namely revelation. Without this 'word', society will perish. In the view of Cortés, man and the polity, left to natural powers, are without the finality and the means to be saved from ruin. In other words, revelation and the sacraments are political. In this vein, Chateaubriand wrote that 'Jesus Christ may therefore, with strict truth, be denominated, in a material sense, that Saviour of the World which he is in a spiritual sense.'[711]

The condition of 'natural man', as understood by conservatives, entails that there is no middle ground. Cortés held that 'sinful man is perpetually in need of help and that God perpetually grants it though supernatural aid.'[712] If God did not act in this way, according to Cortés, wounded as human nature is, man would not just be without grace, he would lose nature too, for 'the supernatural is the atmosphere of the natural, that which, without making itself felt, surrounds it and sustains it.'[713] For this reason, the early conservatives were in agreement that with the retreat from supernature even elementary requirements of the natural law would increasingly elude us.[714]

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[710] Cortés, 'Letter to Queen Maria Cristina (Paris, November 26th, 1851)' in *Readings*, 129.
[711] François-René de Chateaubriand, *The Genius of Christianity; or the Spirit and Beauty of the Christian Religion*, translated by Charles I. White (Baltimore: John Murphy & Co., 1875), 678.
[712] Cortés, 'Letter to Cardinal Fornari (Paris, June 19th, 1852)' in *Readings*, 144.
[713] *Ibid*. 144.
[714] This view was later formulated, in 1870, in an official statement of the Catholic Church during the First Vatican Council:

> 'Thereupon there came into being and spread far and wide throughout the world that doctrine of rationalism or naturalism – utterly opposed to the Christian religion, since this is of supernatural origin – which spares no effort to bring it about that Christ, who alone is our lord and saviour, is shut out from the minds of people and the moral life of nations. Thus they would establish what they call the rule of simple reason or nature. The abandonment and rejection of the Christian religion, and the denial of God and his Christ, has plunged the minds of many into the abyss of pantheism, materialism and atheism, and the consequence is that they strive to destroy rational nature itself, to deny any criterion of what is right and just, and to overthrow the very foundations of human society.'

Decrees of the First Vatican Council ⟨https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/ecum20.htm⟩ [accessed 19 March 2021].

Since the Enlightenment, as the violence committed against clergy and consecrated religious subsided, a supposed 'middle ground' between integralism and persecution of religion has been advanced, that of religious indifferentism in the public square and its corollary, the privatisation of religion. Newman, however, insisted that there is 'no middle ground.'[715] In confronting the Church, he argued, political leaders must either 'deny her claim to divinity or humble themselves before it – that is, as far as the domain of religion extends, and that domain is a wide one.'[716] Conservatives have routinely denied the acceptability of such an arrangement, deeming it to be predicated on a misunderstanding of the human condition, as Cortés explains:

> Once the action of God upon man is denied, the abyss between the Creator and His creature reopens (insofar as this is possible), and society instinctively separates itself from the Church by the same distance… [E]verything supernatural is discarded and religion turned into a vague deism. Then humanity, who has no need for the Church, which is hidden in the sanctuary, nor God, chained to His heaven like Prometheus to his rock, turns his eyes earthwards and dedicates himself exclusively to the cult of material interests.[717]

According to Cortés, secularisation does not create a religiously neutral settlement, but a new 'cult', one of 'material interests'. Here we come again to a recurring theme of conservatism: man is religious by nature, and if he does not have God, he will have idols.

The corollary of Maistre's view that man is either Christian or in slavery is the notion that man either worships God or he worships idols. Either way, man must worship something. This theme of the connection between idolatry and interior slavery has been taken up recently by Scott Hahn and Brandon McGinley:

> Liberal Man doesn't exist. Modern Western civilization is built for an abstraction, an idealised species of soulless hominids concocted to fit the anti-religious (specifically anti-Catholic) mania of the Enlightenment… For real, actually existing human beings, genuine freedom and humane autonomy are found not in the absence of restraint but in harmony with the divine order. Ignoring or denying this order in the name of

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[715] John Henry Newman, *A Letter Addressed to the Duke of Norfolk* ([n.p.] Aeterna Press, 2015), 15.
[716] *Ibid*. 15.
[717] Cortés, 'Letter to Cardinal Fornari (Paris, June 19th, 1852)' in *Readings*, 144.

liberty, on the other hand, leads to idolatry and its moral counterpart, enslavement of the will.[718]

According to Hahn and McGinley, the settlement of religious neutrality that the West has developed since the Enlightenment is based upon an abstraction, not a reality. In fact, they argue, human beings as they exist must know their shared finality and live by the means to achieve it. In line with the conservative tradition, they conclude that any other path leads to idolatry and interior slavery.

What, then, are our idols? The human person, as the conservative understands him, exists only in interpersonal I-You relatedness. In turn, the Enlightenment vision of an isolated human person, namely an autonomous centre of rights who freely chooses to make a contract with society, a rescindable agreement made for personal advantage, is deemed by the conservative to be an *illusion*. Idols, according to the Judeo-Christian tradition, signify illusions (Psalm 135:15-18; 1 Corinthian 8:4). It is plausible, then, that the isolated self is the idol of the modern world, a false god who must be represented in icons written with selfie-sticks, celebrated in public expressions of devotion, gratified with carnal liturgies, and protected by blasphemy laws.

If conservatism is *inherently* bound up with integralism, the question arises: is 'conservatism' simply the name for the case for a Christian social order? The answer to this, I suggest, is yes and no. Conservatism arose in the eighteenth-century to accomplish two goals. First, to conserve that which they deemed to be good in the pre-revolutionary age; second, to hold fast to such things, reapply them, and argue for their 'relevance' in the modern age. I have argued that their case centred on the human person. The human person, being a theological construct, denotes the existential transformation of humankind in the reception of grace. In turn, *yes*, conservatism is another name for the case for a Christian social order. On the other hand, the underlying principle of second-person perspective, as that which unifies the diverse objections and conclusions of conservatives, has led such conservatives to specific positions on traditional culture, openness to the sacred, the arts, ancient wisdom and classical texts, nationhood, law, custom, localism and subsidiarity, the limits of the State, the role of civil society, marriage and family, sexual morality, private property, organic hierarchy and so forth. One can find analogues of such positions in cultures beyond the Western or

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[718] Scott Hahn and Brandon McGinley, *It is Right and Just: Why the Future of Civilization Depends on True Religion* (Steubenville, Ohio: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2020), 91-92.

historically Christian world. So too, within the Western or historically Christian world, one can find people who sympathise with such 'values', and are willing to defend them, without necessarily accepting the theological and theocentric vision in which they have their foundation. Those who defend such values can rightly be called, at least by analogy, conservatives. From a pragmatic perspective, conservatives who stand in the tradition of Burke, Maistre and others, if they wish to see the success of their cause, should willingly cooperate and collaborate with all such conservative-minded people.[719]

Conservatism is not directly a defence of the supernatural life promised by Christianity; rather, it is a defence of the human person and the organic society proper to the human person. On the other hand, conservatives have routinely concluded that human nature, being what it is, must be permeated, assumed, and transformed if human personhood is to be conserved, and correspondingly not be eclipsed. For this reason, the assumption of human nature by the divine has remained at the heart of conservatism down the centuries.

3.3.4   Summary

Plausibly, the phenomenon of second-person perspective and the enjoyment of interpersonal I-You relatedness, of the kind described in various different but complementary ways by Buber, Spaemann, Pinsent and Scruton, has its origins in a conception of second-personal relatedness with God which is rooted in Christianity. According to the Christian Church, in the fulfilment of revelation, God is teaching all nations about Himself and His plan for them through the Apostles and their successors. And through the supernatural means of grace, God is forming the relationship of trust necessary for His revelation to be believed. According to this view, man does not know what his shared purpose is, and needs it to be told to him, which is partly the reason for revelation. Scruton holds that the loss of this shared purpose, namely through the secularisation of civil society and the privatisation of religious practice, has had the effect of confining us in a state of alienation. This alienated condition he believes to be natural to us and he identifies it with what Christianity calls original sin. By this isolation, the human person who exists in interpersonal I-You relatedness is eclipsed. Remarkably, Scruton, known for his secular conservative political philosophy and for his sceptical (but respectful) stance towards religion, 'reluctantly' concludes that second-person perspective, by which the human person is effected, is downstream from grace.

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[719] A point insisted upon by Michael Davies; see *The Reign of Christ the King* (Rockford, Illinois: TAN Books, 1992), 29.

For this reason, traditionally, the conservative has rejected the notion of a 'middle ground' between religious persecution and integralism, believing that such a middle ground can only exist as an idea. The conservative holds that in reality the religious impulse in man cannot be vanquished, it can only be transferred onto something else, a thought that troubled Scruton.[720] Many conservatives have argued that man, being innately religious, will either worship God or worship idols; this religious orientation has its corollary in the notion that man is either freed through self-government or lives in interior captivity. The connection between idolatry and moral slavery is found in the conviction that we exist for a shared purpose; by losing our common destiny, we close ourselves off and individually pursue the gratification of appetite, a pursuit that may eventually overcome us completely. The religious impulse is transferred and directed to the realm of finite things, causing the human person to drown, so to speak, in a commodified world of consumerism and titillation. If that conviction is sound, it is conceivable that by losing a shared purpose, this loss masks the human person who exists in interpersonal relatedness. The upshot of this is that people are seen third-personally and reduced to objects of use, becoming commodities, ultimately for the satisfaction of appetite. In such a condition, it is predicted that the most demanding and insatiable appetite is the one that will rule, and therefore conservatives have always placed an especial emphasis on the importance of sexual morality for the conserving of human liberties.

Conservatives have long argued that we have, since the Enlightenment, entered a new world of slavery and idol-worship. Perhaps the idol of the modern age is the self. According to the second-personal philosophy I have developed in this volume, the self cannot exist other than as a relation in interpersonal relatedness. The isolated self, standing alone irrespective of – and prior to – all relationality, is an illusion. Having been cut off and confined in alienation, the illusory, isolated self has become an object of worship, a false god. This is, at least, the assessment of Hahn and McGinley.[721]

What has been covered here raises the question of whether conservatism is simply the case for a Christian social order, or whether we can rightly and intelligibly speak of conservatism in other ways. I have suggested that the answer to this is not simple. It is undeniable that conservatism arose as a defence of the Christian social order of Europe, which its proponents deemed to be under threat. The intellectual-political tradition which has come down to us from this original objection is what we properly call conservatism. I have

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[720] See Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism*, 159.
[721] See Hahn and McGinley, *It is Right and Just*, 93-97.

shown how what is central to this tradition, the human person, may be essentially bound up with the maintaining of a specifically Christian religious worldview. The various positions to which this tradition has arrived, however, has analogues in other cultures and non-Christian societies, as well as comparable positions shared by non-Christians in post-Christian or historically Christian societies. Whilst the Christian conservative may deem the position of such people imperfect, there is a longstanding conservative custom of cooperating and collaborating with all 'people of good will', and it is sensible for Christian conservatives to continue to adopt this attitude if they wish to see their cause succeed.

4
Conclusion

Many of the arguments that Scruton develops, and many of the conclusions to which he arrives, are continuous with those of the early conservatives. Scruton's political case, however, is framed as one which is not only compatible with political secularisation (by which I mean the privatisation of religion and, correspondingly, its exclusion from the political arena beyond a ceremonial role) but positively requires such secularisation. Such a view, as I have sought to demonstrate, conflicts with the tradition from which Scruton draws many of his ideas. The foundational and exegetical principle of early conservatism, I have argued, is bound up with a theme of Scruton's other work, which remained undeveloped in his works of political philosophy. Had he explicitly connected the theme of second-person perspective to his political philosophy, it is plausible that Scruton would have needed to modify his political philosophy's formally secular character. I offer two reasons for thinking this. First, the theme of second-person perspective, even personhood *per se* as we understand it today, remains connected to its theological origins and foundations. Second, as Scruton brought the theme of second-person perspective to the foreground of his wider philosophy in the last decade of his life, he not only increasingly adopted theological language but had recourse to theological doctrines – such as the Incarnation, the atonement, and the role of divine grace – to provide explanations where philosophy appeared to have reached its limit. It is conceivable that, had Scruton more directly brought this theme into dialogue with his political ideas, he would have afforded religion a greater role in the political sphere.

For those who identify conservatism (or the *Right*) with fascistic political projects, the identification of conservatism with interpersonal relatedness and spontaneous – divine, even – love, which I have argued is its foundation, may come as a surprise. Dawson, however, grouped fascism together with socialism as ideologies in opposition to the conservative

cause: 'It is the choice between the mechanised order of the absolute State, whether it be nominally Fascist or Socialist, and a return to spiritual order based on a reassertion of the Christian elements in Western culture.'[722] For Dawson, both fascism and socialism, like liberalism, were ideological offspring of the Enlightenment. In opposition to these ideological approaches stood the conservative tradition (Dawson mentions both Burke and Maistre by name), based on the notion of a spiritual order, ultimately known to us in the Christian religion and its embodiment in culture.[723] Dawson associated the conservative cause with the Christian religion, and the hallmark of the latter is, according to its own teaching, the life of *agape*, or *caritas*, that is, infused divine love. This view dovetails well with the position I have advanced, namely that the underlying and exegetical principle for understanding conservatism is the theme of second-person perspective. Such an underlying principle does not only help to explain the religious character of conservatism in its diverse objections and conclusions, but also explains the *imagery* associated with conservative movements throughout history, to which I will turn shortly. Before considering conservative imagery, it will be helpful to briefly indicate the ways in which the underlying principle of second-person perspective has bonus explanatory power for understanding conservatism.

Given that the underlying principle of second-person perspective does not denote a concept or abstract category, but a concrete experience of I-You interpersonal relatedness, we can see more clearly why conservatism is routinely conceived as *attitudinal* rather than *ideological*. Conservatives notoriously struggle to present their case for political, social, cultural or moral positions in clear, formulaic or credal forms. This is both a strength and weakness of conservatism; the fact that it is generally a felt attitude based on unclear and prejudicial outlooks entails that it often apprehends more of the reality in question, but with less clarity. On the other hand, it may be argued that conservatism's ideological competitors comprehend only a fraction of the reality in question, but do so with great clarity and communicable understanding.

Given that conservatism, if my assessment is correct, seeks to defend the realisation of the person – existing in the enjoyment of second-person perspective in concrete interpersonal relatedness – we can better understand why conservatives prioritise those conditions in which this relatedness is experienced, namely the family, the local community, and civil society (or the nation). Furthermore, we can understand why conservatives are

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[722] Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Modern State* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1935), 140.
[723] Christopher Dawson, *The Historic Reality of Christian Culture: A Way to the Renewal of Human Life* (London: Elliots Books, 1960), 78.

naturally uncomfortable with such conditions being subjected to ideological reconfiguration or modification. I do not mean to diminish the importance of robust arguments in defence of these conditions made by thorough-thinking conservatives, like those for the family as primary cell of society (and the rights and duties peculiar to the family that conservatives hold should not be undermined); or those for the local community based on subsidiarity and effectiveness; or those for the nation based on political sovereignty and the distinction between constitutions or legal traditions. As good as these arguments may be, however, isolated from the broader conservative case they bypass what is most fundamental in conservatism, namely the concern that the existence of the human person is at stake. The centralisation of power in institutions of the State, and the corollary of this process, that of the dissolution of various powers in civil society, is of concern to conservatives primarily because it minimises the experiential relatedness wherein the human person subsists.[724] The conservative intuition is that the facelessness and unaccountability which flows from such a process of power-centralisation ultimately undermines the person.[725]

Finally, there is another feature of conservatism which appears to be explained, at least in part, by the underlying principle of second-person perspective, and that is the tendency of conservatives to concern themselves with aesthetic values. This is a huge topic, which cannot be covered in full here, but it is difficult to ignore that – from Burke to Scruton – conservatives have deeply engaged with aesthetics. When arguing for the objective value of a work of art, one finds oneself avoiding syllogistic reasoning or theories that would appeal to strict rationalists who only sympathise with what is logical, quantifiable or measurable. Rather, reasons are generally offered as invitations to see the work of art in *this* way or in *that* way, or to keep such and such in mind when considering the work. This is not to diminish the objective value of a given work of art, but to indicate that part of the knowability of that

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[724] For a thorough description of the tendency for the liberal State to assume and centralise all societal power, and even what pertains to social norms, to the erosion of local and domestic authorities and customs, see Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed*, 43-63.

[725] This idea is explored by Orwell in his depiction of an absolute centralised State of the future: 'Already we are breaking down the habits of thought which have survived from before the Revolution. We have cut the links between child and parent, and between man and man, and between man and woman. No one dares trust a wife or a child or a friend any longer. But in the future there will be no wives and no friends… There will be no loyalty, except loyalty towards the Party. There will be no love, except love of Big Brother. There will be no laughter, except the laugh of triumph over a defeated enemy. There will be no art, no literature, no science. When we are omnipotent we shall have no more need of science. There will be no curiosity, no enjoyment of the process of life. all competing pleasures will be destroyed… If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face – for ever.' George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London: HarperCollins, 2021), 283-284.

objective value is found in *perspectival thinking*.[726] In other words, a part of making objective aesthetic judgements is found in our ability to adopt the perspective of another, or share perspectives with another. Scruton goes so far as to argue that our ability to make aesthetic judgements about given objects in the world greatly relies on our capacity for extending the experience of second-personal encounter to our encounter with impersonal objects:

> Aesthetic values are intrinsic values, and when I find beauty in some object, it is because I am seeing it as an end in itself and not only as a means. And its intrinsic meaning for me in the here and now. That way of encountering objects in the world is importantly like my way of seeing persons, when they stand before me face-to-face and I recognise that I am accountable to them and they to me. In the aesthetic experience we have something like a face-to-face encounter with the world itself, and with the things that it contains.[727]

Scruton here presents the likeness between aesthetic encounters and interpersonal encounters; both evade the utility-standpoint. The aesthetic calls a person to account, and also condemns him for failing to correspond his affectivity to the object encountered. For example, one who looks with indifference upon Michelangelo's *David*, or is unmoved by Beethoven's *Fifth*, can be said to have failed regarding the proper intentionality of his feelings. Likewise, someone who exclusively or predominantly sees others from the standpoint of use, and not as other subjects who call him to account, has failed to see them for what they are, and may have largely failed to become a person in actuality himself. Of course, another feature of art in particular, which indicates its connaturality with interpersonal relatedness, is its embodied character, something which McGilchrist highlights in discussing the Enlightenment.[728] If we accept the theme of second-person perspective as the underlying principle of conservatism, and Scruton is right to argue for a certain connaturality between aesthetic judgements and

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[726] A cultivated capacity for perspectival thinking is what Burke deems to be an essential component in the education of 'Taste'. See Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 22-26.

[727] Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 174.

[728] 'Art is by its nature implicit and ambiguous. It is also embodied: it produces embodied creations which speak to us through the senses, even if their medium is language, and which have effects on us physically as embodied beings in the lived world. The Enlightenment is concerned primarily with the intellect, with all that "transcends" (from the Enlightenment point of view) the limitations of the contingent and the physical, the incarnate and unique.' McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary*, 340.

interpersonal relatedness, perhaps it ought not to surprise us that conservatives have routinely concerned themselves with aesthetic enquiry and the appreciation of art.

I have argued that the second-person perspective that accounts for human personhood is bound up with, and downstream from, the religious change that took place with the arrival of Christianity, in which a certain second-person perspective is said to be enjoyed with God Himself. Given that conservatism, as I have presented it, centres on a political defence of human personhood, it could be argued that – for the conservative – the most foundational political activism is *prayer*. As Burke put it in arguing the conservative case, 'we ought to elevate our minds to the greatness of that trust to which the order of Providence has called us.'[729] In his later work, Scruton argued that, in rescuing the person, we should recognise the unique significance of the humanity of Jesus Christ, take the path of the mystics, and acknowledge the role of grace.[730] Whatever Scruton may have meant by these themes, they correspond to those we find at the origins of conservatism.

On the eve of the Enlightenment, when the writing of the Revolution was on the wall, so to speak, a response was found in the mystical tradition of Christianity – hitherto largely hidden in monasteries – which was deliberately spread among the laity for the transformation of the temporal sphere.[731] This new spiritual movement (what was later known as the *French School of Spirituality*) was merged with the teachings of Margaret Mary Alacoque, teachings that encouraged practices drawn from her mystical experiences centred on veneration of the heart of Jesus Christ.[732] These practices were put into a guide for lay mysticism in 1694 with Jean Croisant's *The Devotion to the Sacred Heart*; his fellow Jesuits adopted the devotion as central to their charism, proceeding to spread it across the world.

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[729] Burke, *The Speeches*, I, 337.

[730] Scruton, *The Soul of the World*, 71; *The Face of God*, 153.

[731] This process chiefly began with the work of the Bishop of Geneva, Francis de Sales (1567-1622), who wrote what was to become a popular guide for the mystical life, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, especially intended for the laity. He launched a new spirituality of what has been called 'everyday mysticism' as a way to overcome the emerging social ills of Europe. The most rigorous and ascetical school of Christian mysticism was that of the Carmelites, revived in the sixteenth-century by the Spaniards Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, whose writings had been known to few until their Order was introduced to France by Madame Acarie, later Marie of the Incarnation. The first prioress of Paris's Great Carmel, Madeleine of Saint Joseph, had been encouraged by the example of Sales and continued the work of Madame Acarie, overseeing the dissemination of Carmelite mystical practices through the parishes of France and beyond. This work was carried out by famous preachers and spiritual leaders, many of whom Madeleine of Saint Joseph knew personally, such as Pierre de Bérulle, Charles de Condren, Jean-Jacques Olier and Baron Gaston Jean Baptiste de Renty. See William M. Thompson, 'Historical Aspects of The French School' in *Bérulle and the French School: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 10.

[732] Alacoque (1647-1690) belonged to a religious order foundered by Sales.

The Sacred Heart devotion was not new.[733] What was unusual about the revival of this spirituality, however, was that it immediately gave rise to a movement of lay mysticism, leading to practices like 'visits' to the Sacrament, regular fasts, 'divine reading', daily meditation on the mysteries on the Rosary, 'family consecration' and 'enthronement' of the Sacred Heart image in the family home. What is still more striking is that this lay mysticism was promoted from the outset in opposition to political revolution. Indeed, the claim was repeatedly made that the unification of spiritual and temporal powers could only be conserved through the consecration of nations to the Sacred Heart.[734] It seems that there was a widespread intuition that the rationalism and materialism of the emerging Enlightenment, which was to effect the divorcing of the spiritual and temporal powers in the Revolution, required a response at the most foundational level, namely at the level of interpersonal relatedness with God through mystical practices centred on the humanity of Jesus Christ.

I am brought to the topic to which I referred above, namely the imagery associated with conservatism. The new mysticism of the Sacred Heart found its artistic expression in unsophisticated pictures of a human heart pierced with a lance, bound with a crown of thorns, on fire with the burning of divine love, out of whose flames emerges a wooden cross. In this image, we are presented with a heart, which, according to Spaemann, is the New Testament denotation for human personhood, transformed by self-emptying, self-giving, self-sacrificing love, manifested in the blazes of supernatural grace. The image is both a theological depiction of Jesus Christ's heart and a soteriological catechesis on what His sacrifice is meant to do to the hearts of His followers. Valentin Tomberg describes the connection between this new spirituality and the emerging Enlightenment in the following way:

> There have been (and still are) times in Europe and elsewhere during which for whole nations the life of the soul as such has been (and still is) in grave danger, having been smothered and reduced to a minimum. This holds not only with respect to the tidal wave of materialism that has flooded across the world in this century, but also for the outpouring of "intellectual enlightenment" during the age of rationalism in the eighteenth-century which paved the way for materialism… It was then that the revelation of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus occurred. This led to the cult of devotion

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[733] It was a revival of a strictly monastic and largely forgotten spirituality of the Benedictine Order centred on venerating the heart of Jesus Christ, a practice explained in the writings of the thirteenth-century German Benedictines Gertrude of Helfta and Mechtilde of Hackborne.

[734] See Charles A. Coulombe, *The Politics of the Sacred Heart* ⟨https://catholicism.org/the-politics-of-the-sacred-heart.html⟩ [accessed 2 February 2021].

to the most Sacred Heart of Jesus, which spread rapidly in Catholic countries and took root there. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus was to save the soul of humanity. For, with the intellectual enlightenment, the danger threatening to break in upon human beings was that of the *centaur*. Human beings would have been turned into a kind of centaur – a being consisting of head and limbs (intellect and will), but without heart – that is, a "clever beast". Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus had the task of rekindling the heart. Thereby the light, warmth, and life, streaming from the heart of Jesus, was to counteract the will-to-power and the intellect serving this will.

Be that as it may, the… deepest life of the heart is by no means certain of survival, not even within Christian, civilized mankind. All kinds of dangers threaten, and destruction is an ever-present danger. The life of the soul has to be cultivated and stimulated as took place (and is still taking place) with the help of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.[735]

In this excerpt, Tomberg begins by acknowledging that nations are ever in danger of corrupting due to the 'life of the soul' being debased among their members. For the paradigmatic example of such debasement he points to eighteenth-century France. Adopting the terminology of Maistre, Tomberg refers to man in retreat from grace as a 'centaur', that is, a divided creature.[736] According to Tomberg, in this centaurial condition, man is still in full possession of his intellect and will, but the heart – the person – has been eclipsed, to which neither the intellective nor the volitional powers can be reduced.[737] This eclipsing of the heart was met with a response in the Sacred Heart devotion, in which I-You relatedness with God in an 'everyday mysticism' was to unmask the human person for the reintegration of society.[738] Like Spaemann, Tomberg observes that the subsistence of the human person is fragile, and may be lost altogether, and he proceeds to point to the mysticism of the Sacred Heart as the path to salvaging the person.

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[735] Valentin Tomberg, *Lazarus, Come Forth!* (Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Books, 2007), 280-281.
[736] See Maistre, 'The Saint Petersburg Dialogues' in *The Generative Principle*, 199.
[737] See von Hildebrand, *The Heart*, 67-71.
[738] The Sacred Heart devotion was also deeply connected with reaction to Jansenism – a set of theological and ecclesiastical beliefs that were eventually condemned by the Catholic Church – which it has been argued was intertwined with the foundations of the French Revolution. See Dale K. Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560-1791* (London: Yale University Press, 1999).

The overview above helps to explain why the imagery of the Sacred Heart became the chief imagery of conservative movements around the world. Even before the age of Enlightenment, the image of Christ's Heart had been promoted against what some saw as a revolt of the temporal power against the spiritual power during the Reformation.[739] The Sacred Heart image reappears time and again throughout the history of conservatism and counter-revolution.[740] Furthermore, this devotion has explicitly been identified with the notion of public religion and the union of Church and State.[741] Interestingly, Armenteros argues that both Maistre's spirituality and political conservatism were undoubtedly formed by the mysticism of the Sacred Heart; whilst Maistre never mentions the cult of the Sacred Heart directly, he certainly read many of its most important proponents.[742]

Since its origins in the thirteenth-century, mystics of the Sacred Heart had associated this devotion with the experience of John the Divine at the Last Supper, during which he rested his head on the chest of Jesus Christ (John 13:23). This devotion was deeply second-personal from the outset. In the modern period, it may be plausibly argued that this devotion marked a flooding of the temporal arena with the theme of second-person perspective with God, enjoyed through Jesus Christ's humanity, for the rescuing of the person and the reintegration of society.[743]

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[739] It may be argued that the first great revolt of the temporal power against the spiritual power in the Church was advanced by King Henry VIII. This met with a response in the Pilgrimage of Grace (a name not without its importance), a counter-revolution of nobles, burghers, peasants, priests, monks and friars, who occupied whole English cities in the North and Midlands in an attempt to re-establish what they deemed to be the proper order of the Church polity. The Pilgrims of Grace placed at the centre of their banner an image of the pierced heart of Jesus Christ.

[740] Against the French revolutionaries, the members of the Vendée Uprising and the 'Chouannerie' of Brittany and Maine marched under the banner of the Sacred Heart, also wearing an image of the Sacred Heart on their chests. The conservative Sanfedismo movement of southern Italy was consecrated to the Sacred Heart. The conservative Tyrolean Uprising against Napoleon was also consecrated to the Sacred Heart and marched under its banner. The conservative Carlist movement of Spain has always used the Sacred Heart as the image of its cause. Gabriel García Moreno, founder of Ecuador's Conservative Party, consecrated that country to the Sacred Heart before he was assassinated by the representatives of Ecuador's liberal faction.

[741] See Pope Pius XI, 'Quas Primas', 26 (1925) in *A Reader in Catholic Social Teaching*, 162.

[742] Armenteros, *The French Idea*, 170-171.

[743] This theme was fostered in Victorian Britain especially by nineteenth-century English conservative and devotee of the Sacred Heart, Newman. He declared that his life's work had been that of combating liberalism. For his cardinalatial motto he chose a simple phrase taken from the writings of Francis de Sales, which summarises the theme of second-person perspective and the resulting interpersonal relatedness wherein the human person subsists: *Cor ad cor loquitur*, 'Heart speaks unto heart'. See John Henry Newman, *Biglietto Speech* ⟨https://www.newmanreader.org/works/addresses/file2.html⟩ [accessed 5 March 2021]; see also Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1945), 191-200.

In the light of these considerations on the Sacred Heart, the overall argument that I have developed may be more plausibly posed. It is conceivable that conservatism down the ages, since the Enlightenment, has sought to rescue the human person, and conservatives intuited that this requires the enjoyment of second-person perspective with God, mediated by the humanity of Jesus Christ.

For the early conservatives, whatever would happen, society would end up with an integralist political settlement of some kind – that is the unavoidable consequence of possessing a nature both innately political and inherently religious. Therefore, for Burke, Maistre, and all who belong to their tradition, it has been necessary to argue for the union of Church and State. Unlike in the case of Hindu, Buddhist, or other world religious polities, which Burke and Maistre saw as expressions of the natural religious impulse in the political and cultural arena, the Revolution was only going to cause the conjoining of political life with suppressed, frustrated, and chaotic religious feeling. Conservatives offered reasons for why the modern settlement would culminate in a disordered transposing of the religious impulse, bringing about various forms of tyranny. As an alternative to this possibility, the early conservatives argued for an integralism of love, and this they held would depend on grace.

These observations lead to an uncomfortable proposition. If the conservative cause has the theme of second-person perspective as its underlying principle, a concessionary approach to political, social, cultural and moral problems is insufficient, if by such an approach conservatism continually concedes ground to the ongoing eclipsing of the human person.[744] If Buber is correct in claiming that we are still living in the time of the Revolution, or at least in its shadow, then what is required of conservatism – if it is to survive – is not a concessionary approach but an actively conciliatory approach of the kind advanced by Burke and Maistre. The idea of such a conciliatory approach was captured well by Newman:[745]

> All I know is that Toryism, that is, loyalty to persons, "springs immortal in the human
> breast"; that religion is a spiritual loyalty; and that Catholicity is the only divine form

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[744] This concessionary approach is one for which the U.K. Conservative Party has been routinely criticised in recent years, having been accused of abandoning Tory principles by those who feel that it has ceased to be a conservative political party. See Peter Hitchens, *The problem, not the solution* (https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/the-problem-not-the-solution) [accessed 2 February 2021].

[745] For a comprehensive presentation and analysis of Newman's conservatism, see Stephen Kelly, *A conservative at heart?: The political and social thought of John Henry Newman* (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2012).

of religion. And thus, in centuries to come, there may be found out some way of uniting what is free in the new structure of society with what is authoritative in the old, without any base compromise with "Progress" and "Liberalism".[746]

Here, Newman notes that conservatism – 'Toryism' – is not rooted in a loyalty to concepts, abstractions, ideas, or even to 'humanity' but to concrete persons, and this *attitude* (springing up from within) is bound up with our religious nature, whose only true expression he asserts comes with the Church ('Catholicity'). For Newman, from this foundation the conservative must adopt a conciliatory approach: the challenge that lies before the conservative, he argues, is that of reconciling what is 'free' in the post-revolutionary settlement with what was 'authoritative' in Christendom without conceding anything to the ideology of liberalism.

In the last decade of his life, Scruton seemed to recognise a need for a shift in approach, criticising himself for being 'too soft', and proceeding to say the following:

> I've tended to overlook the actual underlying *precariousness* of human life, so thinking we could all just arrange things by sticking to nice, agreeable procedures, being the decent stiff-upper-lip Englishmen that we've always been, and let the whole thing manage itself… The more I live, the more I see that humanity is *always* poised on the brink, and can fall into chaos and disaster at any time.[747]

Conservatism has always emphasised the fragility of human life and the precariousness of the societies established for its protection and flourishing. This aspect of conservativism seemingly became more important to Scruton, perhaps as he more intensely considered the emergence of the human person and the ease with which the person is eclipsed. As he put it, we are '*always* poised on the brink'. Perhaps conservatism, if it is to survive, must rediscover itself as a foundational attitude which envelopes both a willingness to adapt to change and a willingness to criticise changes, fighting against them if they are deemed malign. The criterion for such discernment, I would suggest, is the dignity of the human person, not as an abstract concept, but as an existent entity emerging out of a web of relations in an historical context, protected by customs, culture and institutions, and ever existentially fragile.

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[746] Newman, *A Letter Addressed to the Duke of Norfolk*, 54-55.
[747] Aida Edemariam, *Roger Scruton: A pessimist's guide to life* ⟨https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2010/jun/05/roger-scruton-interview⟩ [accessed 4 February 2021].

What is at risk for conservatism and its future? If conservatism does not resituate itself as a cause engaged in an essentially religious struggle for the existence of the human person, then it may lose its place in political and social discourse altogether. For decades, conservative movements have sought to reconstitute themselves to represent essentially secular and amoral political causes, with no clear aim beyond safeguarding individual freedoms and defending free market economic arrangements. These have their place in political discourse, and it is unsurprising that conservatives have emphasised these points in the face of ideologies which advance schemas of extreme centralisation. Nonetheless, by fixing themselves on such causes it is possible that conservative movements have bypassed the reason for their existence and become indistinguishable from the less radical movements of liberalism. By reframing themselves as watered down versions of their more radically ideological competitors, in all likelihood conservative movements will be unable to compete with those competitors. Furthermore, there is no obvious reason why they should succeed in doing so, besides the small advantage of slowing down what they set out to prevent.

In many countries, conservative-minded individuals and groups are content to be associated with the intellectual tradition with which eighteenth- and nineteenth-century liberals closely identified, namely that of Locke, Bentham, Mill and others, that is, what is termed 'classical liberalism'. Such conservative-minded people have apparently failed to see the connection between the ideas of this tradition and the contemporary progressive liberalism with which they feel so uncomfortable. Furthermore, they also resign themselves to advancing no obvious moral and spiritual vision of the human person, and consequently they in effect deny that which explains their discomfort, namely the ongoing threat to the human person. According to Deneen, conservatives must recognise that they are unable to oppose the radical liberalism with which they are so uncomfortable by adopting the principles at the origins of such liberalism. Rather, they must defend realities, actual communities, ways of life, inherited institutions, and so forth, all that Deneen calls a '*lived Burkeanism*'.[748] If conservatives are truly concerned that such realities and the values attached to them are under threat, then it is reasonable to suggest that only a conservatism both conciliatory and traditional has any future. Such a conservatism would necessarily accept, and positively advance, organic change whilst defending the existent and historically conditioned reality of the human person against the 'geometric version' of politics that threatens the person by the

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[748] Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed*, 143.

imposition of rationalistically conceived change.[749] If my thesis is correct, only such conservatism would be eligible for the name.

The question remains: *what is all this political struggle for*? In fact, in the conservative attitude, the political struggle tends not to be so important. It is seen to be a recurrent nuisance which is nonetheless necessary to get on with the more important struggle of making a home and peacefully living one's life in a world that often thwarts such simple aspirations. Hailsham captures these thoughts in the following way:

> Conservatives do not believe that political struggle is the most important thing in life. In this they differ from Communists, Socialists, Nazis, Fascists, Social Creditors, and most members of the British Labour Party… To the greatest majority of Conservatives, religion, art, study, family, country, friends, music, fun, duty, all the joy and riches of existence of which the poor no less than the rich are the indefeasible freeholders, all these are higher in the scale than their handmaiden, the political struggle.[750]

According to Hailsham, distinguishing conservatives from their ideological competitors is their hierarchy of values, which prioritises the common life of civil society over the political ordering of such a society. Conservatives believe in political life as an *expression* of civil society, which by so being does not trespass on the liberties enjoyed in civil society.[751] Conservatives are, at root, concerned with making a particular territory of this world into a *home*, and they see politics as the highest safeguarding of that endeavour.

The key insight of the early conservatives was that this world is a fallen world and does not lend itself to, as Scruton called it, *homecoming*. Furthermore, our fallen nature is ever its own worst enemy. In turn, if this world is to be a home, it must first be redeemed, and its redemption comes by its consecration. This process of redemption and consecration must begin, however, with our very selves. Newman, like any conservative, claimed that this world must become a home for us, an 'object of love' and a 'resting-place', but he also argued, in

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[749] Scruton, *Gentle Regrets*, 40.

[750] Hailsham, *The Conservative Case*, 12-13.

[751] This is perhaps what Tolkien meant when describing his own conservatism as a position situated somewhere between 'Anarchy (philosophically understood, meaning abolition of control not whiskered men with bombs)' and '"unconstitutional" Monarchy.' See J.R.R. Tolkien, 'Letter 52' in *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, edited by Humphrey Carpenter (London: HarperCollins, 2012), 63.

line with the early conservatives whom he admired, that this was only possible if the temporal world was consecrated within the Church:

> It is only in proportion as things that be are brought into this kingdom, and made subservient to it; it is only as kings and princes, nobles and rulers, men of business and men of letters, the craftsmen, and the trader, and the labourer, humble themselves to Christ's Church… that the world becomes living and spiritual, and a fit object of love and a resting-place.[752]

In other words, it is only by the temporal sphere becoming the temporal aspect of the Church that it becomes the lovable resting-place that conservatives want it to be. Scruton argued that in failing to consecrate the world, our natural desire for homecoming turns the world itself into an idol, and the result is not blessedness but worldliness.[753] The path away from this outcome, according to Scruton, is to see the world not as our final end, but as something given from the One with whom we can enjoy second-person perspective: by this approach we 'receive the world as a gift, by relating it to the transcendental subjectivity, the primordial "I".'[754] The enjoyment of such second-person perspective with God is not – conservatives have time and again concluded – something that belongs to fallen human nature, but is bound up with the redemption and supernatural transformation of human nature. In turn, the conclusion to which Scruton 'reluctantly' arrived was that the problem of our condition could be 'remedied only by grace.'[755] The conservative tradition, going back to Burke and Maistre, has insisted that the proposal of such a remedy, which strikes at the root of the human dilemma, cannot be excluded from political life but must be at its heart.

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[752] John Henry Newman, *Sermons on Subjects of the Day*, 106.
[753] Scruton, 'Man's Second Disobedience' in *Philosopher on Dover Beach*, 226.
[754] Scruton, *The Face of God*, 169.
[755] *Ibid*. 153.

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