enough the need to engage the world farther afield. When Liang Shuming and Tagore met briefly in Beijing, for example, they developed little rapport. The cosmopolitan high ground was yielded, by default, to the enthusiasts of postwar developmentalism and, in due course, liberal globalization.

The challenges of a century ago remain quite germane to our own time, however. Just as Asian intellectuals agonized over their place in an expanding and disorienting world, so too must Western traditionalists today meditate upon wider horizons. Many will read Mishra’s book and be put off by the dead-end defensiveness of the Asian nationalists and others to whom he devotes the bulk of his attention. But perhaps the most important lesson would be to avoid, today, much the same scenario of Western retreat from defunct empire into some tribalized version of “the little West.” To turn inward would be all too human, but it would still be a dead end.

In contrast to what Toynbee wrote in 1948, the West’s centrality will probably not last more than another generation. On the much flatter global landscape to come, those of us who lament the collapse of civilization and the neglect of timeless truths will hardly do justice to our cause if we ignore our natural allies. I would argue that for Western conservatives, those currents of genuine traditionalism in Asia—of the sort that Mishra rather dismisses as quaint distractions from modernization—are a promising place to look, however unfamiliar they might seem at first. Perhaps a conversation of the quaint could become the starting point of a traditionalist renaissance, across some of the boundaries that, on all sides, we too often still take for granted.

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A BENEFICIAL CONFUSION?

Gladden J. Pappin


Catholicism and Democracy is the second and final book by Emile Perreau-Saussine, whose death in 2010 cut short a life already marked by high scholarly achievement. Thanks to Richard Rex’s translation, the work of Perreau-Saussine now reaches an English-speaking audience. In it Perreau-Saussine traces the contours of Catholic political thought following the revolution of 1789 and culminating in the two Vatican Councils.

The subject of Catholic political thought has often drawn perplexed looks from the outside. Partisans of liberalism shudder at the Church’s ferocious intellectual reaction to the Revolution’s own ferocity. At least since Isaiah Berlin smeared Joseph de Maistre in 1952 with the sticky tar of fascism, that sort of antimodernism has been off-limits. Sixty years later the Catholic Church shows no signs of disintering the Syllabus. But the Church’s softening toward liberalism has

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won it only grudging accolades. To accept liberalism after initially rejecting it has the character of repentance. Similarly, the Church’s attempts to come to terms with the relationship between the two Vatican Councils is of little interest to liberals who have no stake in the matter.

Yet Perreau-Saussine uncovers a dynamic in the development of Catholic political thought that makes it of interest to liberals as well. He studies the liberalism and Catholicism of his native France because the political and intellectual events that have transpired there are of no merely parochial significance. One local phenomenon interests Perreau-Saussine above all: the set of political and ecclesiastical arrangements known as Gallicanism. Looking at the development of political thought against the backdrop of Gallicanism leads Perreau-Saussine to a number of surprising and compelling conclusions.

He begins from “a blunder of the highest order” committed at the outset of the French Revolution. The Civil Constitution of the Clergy forced the Church to accept the election of parish priests and bishops. But the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen had, in approving freedom of religion for the whole populace, incorporated non-Catholics into the body of electors. The Church was already opposed to the Civil Constitution's attempt to force elections, but it could hardly give non-Catholics the right to elect its priests. The contradiction of this “deeply revealing moment” was that the Revolution had separated religion from democracy while attempting to give the Church a democratic constitution. Recognition of the freedom of religion is in tension with the fact that the Church is a quasi-political body of its own. “In depoliticizing the church,” says Perreau-Saussine, “the state abdicated its own right to intervene, precisely because the church was now excluded from politics.” He shows the consequences of this difficulty from Napoleon’s Concordat through the Law of Separation passed in 1905. This conundrum results, as so many other difficulties do, from the Church’s claim to be a certain sort of political society.

The separation brought about by the Revolution was of a dramatically different character from the Gallican arrangement that had preceded it. The classic Gallican statement was the Declaration of the Clergy of France on Ecclesiastical Power, published in 1682 from the quill of Bossuet and immediately condemned by Rome. It restricted the papacy to its spiritual power and asserted the rightful independence of the French king, immune from papal attempts to depose him or undermine his authority. Boniface VIII was no dead memory. To secure this arrangement, France had to maintain the garb of its own independent sacrality. “Differentiation was achieved by imitation,” writes Perreau-Saussine in one of many mots justes. The divine right of kings was not so much a license as it was an obligation, “heavy with Christian symbolism and specific restraints.”

Since the Church and the kingdom comprised the same people, the French nation became the locus of patriotic compromise between ecclesiastical and political Gallicans. But by cleaving the temporal and spiritual realms, the revolutionaries occasioned a similar move by Catholic reactionaries. In the view of the reactionaries Maistre, Bonald, and Donoso Cortès, the Revolution violated the fundamental connection of the Church with monarchy and rejected the religious restraints that alone hold governments in check. Its illegitimacy made a liberal separation of Church and state something desirable to the reactionaries as well. So too, as Perreau-Saussine notes, the example of Comte shows that the reactionaries’ insis-
tence on the religious character of society could be put to rationalist uses.

The Gallican check on papal paper reemerged in the Organic Articles unilaterally appended by Napoleon to the Concordat of 1801. But since the state had divested itself of any religious character, it couldn’t claim the distinction within unity that had been the French crown’s assertion. Separation forbade the meddling that unity had reluctantly allowed. Maistre then had to oppose political Gallicanism, which had allowed kingly inference with papal appointments, in order to oppose the democratic will that sought the same. “Thus, ironically,” says Perreau-Saussine, “the reactionaries condemned liberalism in the name of the liberty of the church.” The “core of liberalism at the heart of ultramontanism” can be seen in the twists and turns of Lamennais. At first repudiating the liberalism implicit in Louis XVIII’s acceptance of the Charter, eventually, under the reign of Charles X, he became a liberal through loss of hope in the possibility of converting the modern state.

By becoming secular, the state had forced Catholics to endorse its liberalism. In the words of Lamennais’s colleague Lacordaire, accepting censorship by the secular state would be like honoring a “golden calf” of “ministerial infallibility”: who could trust the secular state to secure the common good? The proper response to the secular state was not reactionary but liberal ultramontanism. However out of step with progress the papacy’s fulminations might have seemed, on Perreau-Saussine’s reading they fit perfectly with the postrevolutionary political situation.

Rome had become the beneficiary of the vacuum of authority in France, where the king could never rule on the same basis again and where the Church had effectively been broken. Perreau-Saussine’s signal contribution is to emphasize ultramontanism’s novel use of the situation delivered by liberalism. Here as elsewhere Perreau-Saussine delights in spotting ironic reversals. The novelty of the postrevolutionary situation allowed the papacy to claim the full rights it had asserted at Trent—appointing and deposing bishops on its own, without the interference of secular authorities. Since the nations were no longer universally Catholic, Pius IX even omitted the customary invitation of national representatives to the Vatican Council. The Revolution had allowed the papacy to mount a “refocusing on its spiritual role,” signaling a victory over Maistre by Lamennais’s L’Avenir. This account of the rise and development of ultramontanism is the greatest gift of Perreau-Saussine’s work, and it should soften liberals’ judgment of Pius IX.

Reactionary ultramontanism faced the exterior obstacle of liberalism’s triumph. Liberal ultramontanism, by contrast, accepted the state’s secularity and the papacy’s loss of indirect power. It thus exchanged a controversial political footing for no political footing at all. To respond to that situation, Perreau-Saussine promotes Tocqueville’s observation that the Christian religion favorably limits what the citizens of democracies think to do, whereas liberty on its own knows no limits. Religion gives liberty a horizon that indirectly tempers democratic ambition.

But Tocqueville brings up certain consequences that Perreau-Saussine does not. In Tocqueville’s view, the price of the religious limit to liberty is that Americans “so completely confuse Christianity and freedom in their minds that it is almost impossible to have them conceive of the one without the other.” Christianity corrals liberty and moderates its consequences. The confusion, however, works in two directions. Religion in America sees freedom as man’s “noble
exercise,” whereas freedom sees religion as its support rather than its critique. Conceiving freedom alongside religion, however, is different from conceiving freedom as religion.

Tocqueville’s suggestion makes the preservation of democracy precarious, for a confusion requires two distinct objects. Rewriting Christianity in the name of freedom would lead to the obliteration of the confusion, for there would not be two distinct things to confuse. The Americans of Tocqueville’s time linked Christianity and freedom such that their thoughts of freedom were tacitly governed by Christianity without their consciences detecting any lack of devotion to liberty. Yet religion does not simply buttress liberty, because, in the circumstances of equality to which liberty has always been allied, the spirit of religion does not pull with the same force as the spirit of freedom. Liberty presents us with a political world fashioned from our own efforts, manipulable by comparison with the retractable spiritual realm. Democracy makes action’s consequences more compelling than those of contemplation.

That difficulty concerned Leo XIII even more urgently than the fear that the American constitutional settlement would become normative for Europe. Perreau-Saussine notes that the French Revolution demanded a more extensive popular involvement in politics than ever before. The precarious situation of Christianity and liberty that Perreau-Saussine outlines toward the end of his book has at its root the difficulty of preserving each of them separately enough to maintain the “confusion” Tocqueville lauded. How did confusion dissolve into indistinction?

Perreau-Saussine’s insights into nineteenth-century Catholic thought open the way for his controversial reading of the Second Vatican Council. Three theses mark his account. The political theology of reaction, he says, led to an eclipse of the laity at the very moment that Catholics needed to engage with the temporal sphere. What is more, the French counterrevolutionary descent into Action Française and Vichy collaborationism showed “the dead-end destination of all French antiliberalisms,” Catholic as well as Marxist. Hence the Second Vatican Council’s advance toward a “reasonable” laïcité involved a partial return to the Gallican respect for the temporal, and an emphasis on the search for the truth rather than its pompous defense.

Perreau-Saussine’s account is reminiscent of Benedict XVI’s discussion of “healthy secularism” and of the “hermeneutic of continuity” between the two Vatican Councils. Although scholars of conciliarism such as Francis Oakley have pleaded for the importance of conciliarism and Gallicanism as a valid Catholic tradition, Perreau-Saussine is the first to describe modern Catholic political thought in relation to its Gallican background. Alasdair MacIntyre, the subject of Perreau-Saussine’s first book, laments in his foreword that he will never be able to ask Perreau-Saussine the questions that arose upon reading this work. With the same regret and in the spirit of further inquiry, I offer the following considerations.

The specific modification of Catholic teaching in Dignitatis humanae was a shift from limiting the public expression of religious liberty on the wider basis of the common good to limiting it on the narrower basis of public order. Perreau-Saussine does not discuss this move, but he describes a similar element of the French Declaration of 1789, which said that citizens’ religious liberty ought not be limited “provided that their expression does not disturb the public order established by law.” Had the council said only this, the controversy would have
been minor. Instead, *Gaudium et spes* provided an upbeat and buoyant analysis of the 1960s that caused the Church, in the name of religious liberty, to forgo collaboration with the state altogether. After Vatican II, the severing of concordats with Catholic countries sent a signal at odds with the Gallican tradition Perreau-Saussine says the council rekindled. In fact, the two Vatican Councils may also be seen as sequential rejections of Gallicanism: the rejection of “absolutism” at the first, the loss of preferment at the second. Since *Dignitatis humanae* was of American inspiration, its Gallican background has less explanatory power.

The confusion of Catholicism and democracy that Tocqueville saw as beneficial had led to an interpretation of the temporal as the home of the spirit, such that the spiritual in its own right was superfluous. This was the difficulty of the prêtres ouvriers: democracy or Marxism, not the liturgy, was the urgent work of God. It was also the nub of the controversy between Le Sillon and Pius X in the early 1900s, alas not discussed in the book. The Thomism Perreau-Saussine blames for feeding reactionary sentiments was also associated with a wildcat democratic interpretation perhaps even more distant from Catholic thought. The council’s consecration of liberal humanism (with no condemnation of Marxism) came right at the moment that liberal humanism was disappearing from French philosophy, as Foucault suggested, “like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea.” The doctrinal shift Perreau-Saussine describes ought to have taken place at the level of prudence. But since ultramontanism arrayed itself with anathemas, whatever the council said next would be seen as a change of doctrine, with all the accompanying effort that the analysis of doctrine requires. The council’s presentation of doctrine in a context it called pastoral only contributed to this confusion.

Like the Tocqueville he loved, Emile Perreau-Saussine saw not differently but further than the parties. Such delicacy and concision is usually the culmination of a life of thought. And it was, by fate of circumstance—a loss made bittersweet through the gift of this book. *Justum deduxit Dominus per vias rectas, et ostendit illi regnum Dei, et dedit illi scientiam sanctorum.*

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**FAMILY DISINTEGRATION AND RELIGIOUS APOSTASY**

**Bryce J. Christensen**


“T here is hardly any action,” remarks Alexis de Tocqueville, “however private it may be, which does not result from some very general conception men have of God, of His relations with the human race, of the nature of their soul, and of their duties to their fellows. Nothing can prevent such ideas from being the common spring from which all else originates.” Given its importance as the spring of all human action, belief in Deity deserves serious attention from scholars. But unbelief—the fading of

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