

*Catholic Cosmopolitanism and Human Rights*. By Leonard Francis Taylor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. 300. \$110.00 (cloth); \$88.00 (digital). ISBN: 9781108486125.

The relationship between the Enlightenment and Roman Catholicism has historically been convoluted. In *Catholic Cosmopolitanism and Human Rights*, Leonard Francis Taylor successfully claims that there can be a fruitful dialogue between the two if both agree on moderating their discourses. As Taylor shows, contrary to what most people believe—that the exchange only started in the twentieth century—Roman Catholicism is inherently universal and therefore cosmopolitan. Hence, the relationship is meant to be a natural one. The book comes out in a moment in which Pope Francis is deepening the cosmopolitan trend of Catholicism and is committing himself and the whole church to a sincere conversation with secular modernity by engaging leaders of other religions, meeting with different Christian churches, visiting small countries, and dialoguing with heads of state. This work is therefore an excellent tool to understand this papacy and the role of Catholicism in the contemporary world.

The book is based on Taylor's PhD dissertation at the Irish Centre of Human Rights, National University of Ireland Galway, and his reflections as a lecturer in human rights law and social justice theory. Taylor's work is a reliable source for a wide range of disciplines. Legal scholars, philosophers, theologians, and historians will find in it an excellent overview of Roman Catholicism's cosmopolitan project. The structure of the book, although not chronologically linear as it connects different historical periods, makes clear for the reader the significant historical stances of Catholicism regarding secular politics throughout its five chapters, showing its bright and dark points.

This book will surprise the readers who think that the Catholic cosmopolitan project has been possible only since the twentieth century, after the endorsement of human rights by Pope John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris* in 1963.<sup>1</sup> Taylor shows the Catholic cosmopolitan project's long history by tracing developments from the very beginning of Catholic political thinking with the Two Swords theory and Saint Augustine's political views juxtaposing the secular and the spiritual under the framework of "the City of Heaven and the City of the World" (72). He develops this cosmopolitan genealogy with attention to three critical aspects of Catholic cosmopolitanism: church-state relations, international law, and human rights.

One of the critical elements of Catholic cosmopolitanism is church-state separation, which, as Taylor points out, Pope Gregory XV had already fostered in 1075 through his *Dictatus Papae* (84). Later, Taylor notes, the 1122 Concordat of Worms allowed the pope to "act as [a] universal legislator over Christians" (84), protecting the church and the state from each other's interference. In this same line of argument, Taylor offers another example in the work of the Jesuit theologian Robert Bellarmine who, in 1596, published his *Controversiae*, wherein he advocated for a cosmopolitan order through limitation of the pope's sovereignty (99). As Taylor explains, Bellarmine also believed in government legitimacy, even when the government was not Christian. In the context of the sixteenth century, such theories anticipated a clear distinction between church and state that,

1 Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* [Encyclical on establishing universal peace in truth, justice, charity, and liberty (April 11, 1963)], [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_11041963\\_pacem.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html).

unfortunately, the Catholic Church embraced formally only in the twentieth century. As Taylor acknowledges, the relationship between church and state has often been a fraught one. Church and state have lived different phases throughout history before arriving at our current legally established separation in Western societies. Many pluralistic societies now reject the possibility of returning to an alliance of the throne and the altar, as it is contrary to the right to religious freedom and it would be seen as an imposition of the state, thus threatening religious diversity. By tracing the history of the complex relationship between church and state, Taylor shows the reader that the cosmopolitan project is an identity feature of Catholicism.

Taylor also gives an excellent account of the Catholic theological foundations of international law in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, focusing mainly on Catholic philosophers and theologians. International law theory in Europe, like Christian theology, experienced a split after Martin Luther's reforms, with Francisco Suárez and Francisco de Vitoria on the Catholic side, and Hugo Grotius and Alberico Gentili on the Reformed side. In 1648, however, the Peace of Westphalia would inaugurate a new secular trend in international law to replace the bipartisan Catholic/Reformed developments that preceded it. Pope Innocent X ferociously criticized this agreement as "null, void, invalid, iniquitous, unjust, damnable, reprobate, inane and devoid of meaning for all time" (111–12), which shows the negative reaction to new secular ideas.

The philosophical and theological debates that emerged after the Spanish conquest of the New World prepared the ground for a Catholic theory of human rights, acknowledging the inherent dignity of all human beings (47) that reemerged in the twentieth century. Vitoria analyzed the moral status of non-Europeans in America, advocated for limitations to jurisdiction and *dominium*, and proposed a law of nations or *ius gentium* (192). He even dared to challenge the idea that the popes were to permit colonizing empires based on their Christianizing, and wrote against the concept of the universal jurisdiction of the church (99).

By analyzing the thought of the School of Salamanca, Taylor counters the narrative that places the origins of cosmopolitan human rights in the French Revolution and authors like John Locke and Thomas Hobbes. While Catholicism's intellectual contribution to modernity has often been ignored in favor of the Reformed worldview that shaped contemporary international law, Taylor does justice to Catholicism and points out its strengths and contributions without downplaying its failures.

The end of the nineteenth century was incredibly hard for the Catholic cosmopolitan project, as it fought brutally against the outcomes of the Enlightenment and liberalism. With the loss of political influence, partly due to the end of the Papal States, the church turned inward and held the First Vatican Council. One of the reactions to its reduced political influence was to retain its spiritual authority, which gave birth to the idea of papal infallibility. Taylor offers that the *Syllabus of Errors*, written in 1864 by Pope Pius IX, illustrates the negative perception of cosmopolitanism and human rights (23–25). Nevertheless, as Taylor points out, the first half of the twentieth century was promising thanks to Catholic thinkers like John Maritain or Emmanuel Mounier, who worked unswervingly toward the reconciliation between Catholicism and modernity, focusing on human dignity, democracy, and the common good to promote a "secular democratic faith" (202). The contributions of these French philosophers and those of the American Jesuit John Courtney Murray were highly valued and had an enormous impact on the Second Vatican Council, especially in its 1965 document *Dignitatis Humanae* on religious freedom, a cornerstone of Catholic cosmopolitanism and its capacity to enter into dialogue with any secular actor (63–64). Taylor explains in detail how the turn from the nineteenth to the twentieth century shows the inner capacity of Catholic cosmopolitanism to reemerge despite its past setbacks.

It is worth mentioning the role that the Holy See as a *sui generis* entity has had in international relations. The constant encouragement toward peace by different popes throughout the twentieth century has given an extraordinary moral authority to the papacy and its diplomatic network. Its unique status in international law is the best sign of its genuinely cosmopolitan nature. It shows that the Holy See's primary concern is not to obtain political power but to promote human dignity, becoming an advocate for human rights and defending religious freedom everywhere. The Holy See has expressed this concern through the diversity of concordats that it has signed with secular governments, which are not merely canonical but also have international secular relevance. Thus, Taylor spends some time analyzing the role of the Holy See and its ability to deploy its cosmopolitan project across multiple cultures and engage intra- and interculturally across multiple societies.

The final chapter of the book is devoted to Ireland and Latin America, two sites significantly influenced by Catholic cosmopolitanism. In the Irish Constitution, its rights-based approach is "part of the trend to both restrain a newly forming nation-state and, at the same time, acknowledge the limits of religion in such a new political polity" (218). In other words, Catholic cosmopolitanism underpinned the Irish Constitution's reconciliation of religion, republicanism, and democracy (222). The case of Catholic cosmopolitanism in Latin America is another example of how the church could enter into dialogue with Marxism through liberation theology. Taylor points out that the work of Gustavo Gutierrez, one of the founders of liberation theology, shows the possibility of "an autonomous political action based on justice and human rights rather than on the agenda of the Church" (241). The cases of Ireland and Latin America reveal to the reader how Catholic cosmopolitanism is able not only to become a partner in addressing current political and social issues but also to make a significant contribution that promotes human dignity and human rights for all.

The most salient feature of Taylor's work is the capacity to provide the reader with a general overview of the Catholic Church's ways of entering into dialogue with the *seculo*. This book will be a reference for scholars coming from different fields of the academy interested in grasping the Catholic contribution to politics, its successes and its failures. Philosophers, lawyers, historians, and theologians will indeed find a valuable resource for their studies. The footnotes and references throughout the book open many possibilities for researchers and widen substantially the possibilities for research and discussion in this area. Taylor has given an account of Catholic thought and its impact on political events throughout the centuries, especially in Europe. He has done so in an impartial way, identifying the lights and shadows within the Catholic tradition, which non-Catholic readers will surely appreciate.

When one finishes the book, however, a question remains: Is cosmopolitanism as we understand it now in our secular societies inevitable? Seeing the decline of Catholicism in Western societies, the reader might wonder whether the church's stance toward modernity, exemplified in the Second Vatican Council, was as successful as the author seems to believe. Roman Catholicism has given shape to a great deal of historical and political events that have taken place in the West. However, the consequences of the dialogue in which Catholicism entered with the world are still unclear, as secularization grows.

In the beginning of this review, I explained Pope Francis's concern to make of Catholicism a trustworthy ally for other political actors, adding the particularly Catholic view of human dignity, human rights, and the development of peoples to global conversations. In principle, Francis's views are well received. Nonetheless, at the very heart of the Catholic Church, Francis also finds fierce opposition in conservative circles that put some of his initiatives in jeopardy. What will the future of Catholic thought look like? Despite Taylor's excellent historical account of Catholic

cosmopolitanism and human rights, the reader might miss an audacious judgment on the current situation and the foreseeable consequences of the endorsement of human rights in the last century. More than fifty years after the Second Vatican Council, we have the historical perspective to scrutinize its impact in the life of ordinary Catholics, and the current role of Catholicism in the international arena. Perhaps this issue goes beyond the scope of this splendid work, but it is undoubtedly an inevitable question for scholars of all fields who are eager to discuss the church's role in modernity, now and in the future.

*Pedro Rodriguez-Ponga, SJ*

*Research Master Student in Theological Ethics, Katholieke Universiteit te Leuven*