GEORGE W. TRUETT AND *DIGNITATIS HUMANAE*: SEARCHING FOR A THEOLOGICAL ACCOUNT OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

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One of the signature Baptist theological convictions is religious freedom, considered by many to rest at the heart of genuine Baptist life and faith. Beginning with Thomas Helwys's *A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity* (1612), Baptists have held that religious faith should be freely embraced and not coerced. In the twentieth century, many names come to mind regarding Baptist advocacy for this principle, but George W. Truett (1867-1944) has been hailed as perhaps its most prominent voice. Indeed, along with J.M. Dawson and James M. Dunn, Truett, who spent his entire career as a pastor in Texas, stands as the face of this distinctive Baptist emphasis.[1] The details of Truett's life, including his fundraising efforts to save Baylor University, his dedication to the founding of Baylor Hospital in Dallas, as well as his long pastorate at First Baptist Church in Dallas have been masterfully narrated in two biographies, one by his son-in-law, Powhatan James, and a recent volume by Keith Durso.[2] Of course, no event cemented George W. Truett's legacy in Baptist and even American life more than his speech on the U.S. Capitol steps on May 16, 1920[3] during the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting.[4] Walter Shurden notes that this address is "one of the most often quoted Baptist statements on religious liberty of the twentieth century."[5]

Clearly, Truett's significance exceeds his pastoral role, as is indicated by the numerous buildings and institutions throughout the United States that bear his name.[6] Nonetheless, while the prevalent Baptist narrative concerning religious liberty is well known, it is worth (re)considering it under a specifically theological lens. That is, while religious liberty has appeared in Baptist confessions of faith throughout the centuries, its present form must stand up to theological scrutiny, or else it becomes a distraction from central

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[1] For more on Dawson, see his *Baptists and the American Republic* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1956); for more on Dunn, see Aaron Douglas Weaver, *James M. Dunn and Soul Freedom* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2011).

[2] Powhatan W. James, *George W. Truett: A Biography* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1939); Keith E. Durso, *Thy Will Be Done: A Biography of George W. Truett* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2009).

[3] Cf. J.B. Gambrell, "A Historic Address," *Baptist Standard* 32.23 (June 3, 1920): 1; George W. Truett, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," in *God's Call to America and Other Addresses Comprising Special Orations Delivered on Widely Varying Occasions* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1923), 28-67. This sermon has been reprinted several times. Cf. George W. Truett, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," *Baptist History and Heritage* 33 (1998): 66-85; George W. Truett, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," in *Proclaiming the Baptist Vision: Religious Liberty*, ed. Walter B. Shurden (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 1997), 61-84. References here will come from *God's Call to America*.

[4] This moment was re-enacted on June 29, 2007 at the Baptist Unity Rally for Religious Liberty at Fountain Plaza of Upper Senate Park, near the US Capitol. The event, sponsored by the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, included some remarks by several U.S. Congressmen and the recitation of portions of 1920 sermon by nine Baptists. Cf. John Pierce, "Truett's Famed Religious Liberty Sermon Celebrated by Baptists in Nation's Capital," *Baptists Today* 25.8 (August 2007): 4-5.

[5] Walter B. Shurden, "Introduction," in *Proclaiming the Baptist Vision: Religious Liberty*, 5.

[6] For example, Truett-McConnell College in Cleveland, Georgia; Truett Auditorium at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas; and George W. Truett Theological Seminary on the campus of Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

Christian convictions. With this in mind, we must ask: are all forms of religious freedom the same? If not, how might Truett's articulation of religious liberty be evaluated theologically? Can an alternative account of religious freedom offer theological resources for Baptists that are currently lacking? In this article, Truett's argument for religious liberty and his understanding of the church's participation in democratic societies, which is found primarily (though not only) in his 1920 speech in Washington, will be examined via the theological categories of nature and grace. These terms, which have been used throughout the Christian tradition, point to the relation between the created order and God's economy of grace. After this treatment, this article will propose that, despite the limitations and drawbacks of Truett's form of religious liberty, the idea need not be discarded entirely. Rather, an alternative approach can be found in a more theological account of freedom in the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Religious Freedom, or *Dignitatis Humanae*.

TRUETT AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

After a rousing corporate singing of "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," Truett delivered that 1920 address, entitled "Baptists and Religious Liberty," to a tremendous audience.[7] One of his most memorable statements from the speech was that "the supreme contribution of the new world to the old is the contribution of religious liberty. This is the chiefest [*sic*] contribution that America has thus far made to civilization. And historic justice compels me to say that it was pre-eminently a Baptist contribution."[8] Truett's speech remains one of the hallmarks of Baptist advocacy in this area. Virtually all articles and book chapters on the subject of Baptists and religious liberty at least mention this speech, and several treatments are relatively lengthy. In a note at the conclusion of the 1998 reprinting of Truett's address, an editor of *Baptist History and Heritage* declared that Truett's words from the Capitol steps are "a powerful statement of Baptist beliefs," and that they "[remind] Baptists of foundational principles and [defend] them eloquently and passionately."[9] Thus, Truett is generally remembered as a prominent exemplar of this "Baptist distinctive," one that has increasingly been elevated by some Baptists. Not surprisingly, Truett's address is congruent with several aspects of Baptist discourse at that time. Within the speech itself and Truett's thought as a whole, a love of democratic freedom emerges as paramount, one that dovetails nicely with Truett's (and prevailing Baptist) thought about personal salvation.[10]

For Truett, personal salvation places the focus on the individual who privately believes. He saw this emphasis as grounded in the Bible, stating, "When we turn to this New Testament, which is Christ's guidebook and law for His people, we find that supreme emphasis is everywhere put upon the individual."[11]

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[7] James, 1-2. Cf. Dawson, *Baptists and the American Republic*, 22; E.W. Stephens, "At Washington with the Southern Baptists," *The Baptist* 1 (May 29, 1920): 8.
[8] Truett, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," 32.
[9] See editor's note in Truett, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," *Baptist History and Heritage*, 85.
[10] See Lee Canipe, "The Echoes of Baptist Democracy: George Truett's Sermon at the U.S. Capitol as Patriotic Apology," *American Baptist Quarterly* 21.4 (December 2002): 418.
[11] Truett, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," 38.

Moreover, Truett elevated the individual's ability to read and interpret for him or herself, describing this as a right that was anthropologically grounded: "The right to private judgment is the crown jewel of humanity, and for any person or institution to dare to come between the soul and God is a blasphemous impertinence and a defamation of the crown rights of the Son of God."[12] Ultimately, along with fellow Southern Baptist E.Y. Mullins, Truett advocated for a direct approach to God: "Everyone must give account of himself to God. There can be no sponsors or deputies or proxies in such a vital matter."[13] Consequently, religious liberty was firmly grounded in the freedom of the individual's conscience to pursue voluntary and uncoerced belief (or lack of belief), a point that Truett makes in contrasting absolute liberty to toleration.[14]

Spurning any ecclesiology that produced a hierarchy of authority, Truett saw democracy as the hope of the church: "Christ's church is not only a spiritual body but it is also a pure democracy, all its members being equal."[15] Viewed through his focus on individualism in religion, Truett underwrites a form of political atomism, where each person and his or her actions are to be isolated as much as possible. In this way, liberty of conscience indicates that no other person can determine the truth for another, which is why toleration of others' religious beliefs is insufficient. Thus, Truett labeled the Protestant Reformation as an "arrested development," because the Reformers "turned out to be persecutors like the Papacy before them."[16] For him, then, the United States, despite retaining some of the remnants of church-state union, became a truly remarkable site where genuine religious and civil liberty could take root and flourish as the fruits of democracy, and, according to Truett, this was "pre-eminently a Baptist achievement."[17]

Truett understood separation of church and state to produce two separate realms with different functions.[18] After dividing the functions of church and state, he notes the implications of this division for Christians: "We are members of the two realms, the civil and the religious, and are faithfully to render unto each all that each should receive at our hands."[19] Consequently, each person has responsibilities to fulfill in both the religious and the civil realms. According to Truett, one does not supersede the other. Moreover, he does not indicate that these two realms will ever conflict with one another. That is, once separated, the state will never tread on the church's liberty.

With his emphasis on democracy over autocracy, both the civil and the religious arenas are constituted by individuals who participate in two different democracies, one for citizens and the other for believers. Truett's argument for the separation of church and state resonates quite strongly with the work of English philosopher John Locke (1632-1704). Moreover, even though no evidence can be provided that

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[12] Ibid., 39.
[13] Ibid., 38. Truett stated in 1939: "The late President Mullins … affirms the competency of the individual, under God, in matters of religion…. Religion is a matter of personal relationship between the soul and God, and nothing extraneous may properly intrude here" (Truett, "The Baptist Message and Mission for the World Today," 113).
[14] "Toleration implies that somebody falsely claims the right to tolerate. Toleration is a concession, while liberty is a right. Toleration is a gift from man, while liberty is a gift from God" (Truett, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," 33).
[15] Ibid., 42.
[16] Ibid., 48.
[17] Ibid., 50.
[18] Ibid., 43. To make this point, Truett references Matthew 22:21 ("Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's"; NRSV) and John 18:36 ("My kingdom is not from this world"; NRSV).
[19] Ibid., 53.

Truett actually read Locke, when viewed alongside one another, Locke clarifies and sharpens Truett's argument for religious liberty, perhaps standing far in the background of Truett's thought (i.e., influencing those whom Truett did read).

Locke argues that church and state should be understood as separate entities: "There is a twofold society, of which almost all men in the world are members, and that from the twofold concernment they have to attain a twofold happiness: viz. that of this world and that of the other: and hence there arises these two following societies, viz. religious and civil."[20] Following this statement, Locke systematically details the difference between "religious society, or the church" and "civil society, or the state," linking the civil sphere to the operations of the state and the religious sphere to the church.[21] In addition, Locke argues that the political point of departure (i.e., the state of nature) was one of individuality. Society, then, is constructed when "individuals come together on the basis of a social *contract*, each individual entering society in order to protect person and property."[22]

Two important points emerge from this discussion. First, civil government cannot decide on the truth of various religious claims since they are internal to each individual.[23] Second, religion is grounded in the individual who has been convinced of the truth of a particular tradition.[24] Because of this, churches serve as associations of like-minded people, choosing to assemble with one another for worship, an understanding which serves to undercut any substantive social nature of the church.[25] Finally, Locke's political philosophy offers a body/soul dichotomy,[26] articulating church/state separation so as to locate all genuine political activity in the state-centered public arena (i.e., as statecraft), leaving the church as an (apparently) apolitical, private entity concerned only for the salvation of souls.[27]

Echoing Locke, Truett argues that church and state must never be joined because the individual's liberty of conscience would be violated. He also employs a separation between body and soul, implying that responsibilities to the state are bodily while those of religion relate to the soul. For instance, while he consistently writes of the soul's uninhibited relation with God, Truett also identifies the causes worthy of giving one's physical life: "The sanctity of womanhood is worth dying for. The safety of childhood is worth

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[20] John Locke, "On the Difference between Civil and Ecclesiastical Power, Indorsed Excommunication," in *The Life and Letters of John Locke*, ed. Lord Peter King (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1858), 300.
[21] Ibid.
[22] William Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination: Discovering the Liturgy as a Political Act in an Age of Global Consumerism* (London: T & T Clark, 2002), 17. Cavanaugh notes that a less palatable, though logically similar, description of this state of nature comes from Thomas Hobbes, who argues for individual freedom and equality of all human beings by stating that human beings are in a state of *bellum omnis contra omnem* (i.e., "war of all against all") (Ibid.)
[23] Locke did, however, argue against religious toleration for Catholics and atheists.
[24] "All the life and power of true religion consist in the inward and full persuasion of the mind" [Locke, "A Letter Concerning Toleration," in John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. Ian Shapiro (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 219].
[25] "A church... I take to be a voluntary society of [people], joining themselves together of their own accord in order to the public worshipping of God" (Ibid., 220).
[26] "The care of souls cannot belong to the civil magistrate, because his power consists only in outward force, but true and saving religion consists in the inward persuasion of the mind..." (Ibid., 219).
[27] Like Truett, Locke exhibited confidence that this separation would preclude any conflicts between the civil and religious realms: "[I]f each of them [i.e., church and state] would contain itself within its own bounds, the one attending to the worldly welfare of the commonwealth, the other to the salvation of souls, it is impossible that any discord should ever have happened between them" (Ibid., 251).

dying for. . . . The integrity of one's country is worth dying for. *And, please God, the freedom and honour of the United States is worth dying for.*"[28] Curiously, Truett does not mention the Christian faith as worthy of similar bodily sacrifice.

With this divide between the body and soul, the church is left with no concerns for external (i.e., "worldly") affairs, only with saving souls. The church, as seen with Locke, is constituted as an association of like-minded individuals. Not surprisingly, Truett views Baptists as remarkably good citizens: "Happily, the record of our Baptist people toward civil government has been a record of unfading honour. Their love and loyalty to country have not been put to shame in any land."[29] Indeed, Truett does not seem to allow for the possibility that church and state might be counterposed, that love for country could come into conflict with love for Christ. Thus, rather than viewing them as opponents, he discusses the missions of church and state by using the same terminology, setting them up as parallel entities: "Democracy is the goal toward which all feet are travelling [*sic*], whether in state or in church."[30] Freedom, then, is the rhetorical link between the civil and religious spheres, as one scholar has noted: "Baptists stood for freedom in the spiritual realm, America stood for freedom in the political realm."[31] In other words, Truett was fully Baptist and fully American, indicating that the temporal and spiritual realms were separate, even if they were also parallel.

In theological terms, Truett's thought reflects a dualism between nature and grace. That is, without using these categories specifically, Truett tacitly segregated the sacred from the secular, the temporal from the spiritual. This manifests itself in a variety of ways. First, Truett deploys a dichotomy between citizen and believer, using the words of Jesus to justify this dualism. As he stated on numerous occasions, the separation of church and state is predicated upon a sharp divide between the religious and the civil realms. Even though he envisioned both arenas as democracies, they were never to be intertwined or intersect at any point. Each governed one aspect of human existence in separation from the other (e.g., body divided from soul).

Second, Truett's extrinsic relationship between nature and grace is most clearly evident in his notion of freedom. Freedom for Truett meant non-interference when linked to concepts such as soul competency and individualism, which encourage caution toward social entities (e.g., church) that might usurp the proper autonomy of the individual. This bears closer resemblance to liberal democratic concepts of freedom than a positive (i.e., more teleological) view of freedom. In other words, Truett maintained a concept of freedom that is more oriented toward freedom *from*, namely, a juridical-negative form of freedom.

Third, for Truett, the goal was to safeguard the freedom of individual conscience by removing any obstacles to the individual soul's relationship with God, but while Truett argued for a "free church in a free state," his understanding of the church as an association of like-minded individuals actually left the church as a non-public entity. Truett's emphasis on individual salvation, combined with liberty of individual conscience undercuts any freedom for the church to be a formative community. Instead, other sociopolitical

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[28] Truett, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," 57; emphasis added.
[29] Ibid., 53.
[30] Ibid., 65. In another sermon, he writes that democracy "is the goal for this world of ours – both the political goal and the religious goal" [George W. Truett, "The Prayer Jesus Refused to Pray," in *Follow Thou Me* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1932), 43.
[31] Canipe, "The Echoes of Baptist Democracy," 420.

institutions (e.g., schools, American political parties and processes, economic structures and practices) and their respective ends (e.g., citizenship, profitability) garner virtually all influence of this sort. Thus, not only is citizen divided from believer, but in the temporal realm (which has rather expansive boundaries), the role of citizen (and even consumer) supersedes that of believer.

Therefore, Truett's arguments for the separation of church and state can lead Baptists to look to the nation-state as the arena of genuine political activity and ultimate guarantor of religious freedom. The church, while not entirely eliminated, is left without a politics, except insofar as it can facilitate the civil realm's achievement of its natural, political ends. Thus, Truett would benefit from a more theological notion of freedom. That is, what he lacks is a sense of the purpose of freedom (i.e., freedom *for*). Such an understanding of freedom would address the nature/grace relationship by treating the culture-forming aspects of grace that Truett neglects. Moreover, the church could play a significant role within that culture, forming the lives of Christians into conformity with the life and witness of Jesus and serving as a witness to the corporate body of Christ. This deficiency, then, is serious and requires thorough remedy, though this will take place by gesturing toward non-Baptist resources in developing a theological account of freedom that maintains an affirmation of religious liberty (i.e., non-coercion in matters religious) but also attends to the gaps in Truett's arguments.

TRUETT AND *DIGNITATIS HUMANAE*

Despite the observed problems with Truett's understanding of religious liberty, this does not mean that the concept need be abandoned altogether. Rather, an alternative to the extrinsic construal of the relationship between nature and grace can bolster efforts to put forth a theological account of freedom that could re-envision religious liberty. The groundwork for such work is found in portions of the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae* (1965). At first glance, however, placing Truett in conversation with a Catholic text might seem strange. In fact, like many of his Baptist (and Protestant) coreligionists, Truett was suspicious of Catholicism. That is to say, while his ideas cannot be reduced to mere anti-Catholicism, Truett was certainly representative of the pervasive Baptist anti-Catholic sentiments of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[32] Therefore, before discussing insights regarding a theological account of religious liberty found in *Dignitatis Humanae*, it is necessary to briefly describe the attitudes about Catholics shared by Truett and most Baptists of his time.

Extending from his emphasis on individualism, which he positioned against "absolutism," Truett saw democracy as opposed to what he considered to be autocracy, with little possibility for compromise. Even within the famous 1920 address, Truett saw the Catholic Church as antithetical to Baptist and even American ideals: "The Roman Catholic message is sacerdotal, sacramentarian and ecclesiastical. . . . The

[32] For more information, see Lee Canipe, *A Baptist Democracy: Separating God from Caesar in the Land of the Free* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2011), 138-39.

Baptist message is non-sacerdotal, non-sacramentarian and non-ecclesiastical."[33] Consequently, Truett counterposed the Catholic dogma of papal infallibility to individual interpretation of the New Testament.[34] According to Truett, not only did papal infallibility threaten unimpeded individual access to God by solidifying the place of the pope and the episcopal hierarchy as obstacles between the individual and God, but it also stood as a constituent part of the barrier to democratic religious freedom presented by the Catholic Church. Thus, Catholicism stands as the prime example of autocracy (of a spiritual variety) that is to be avoided.

In a 1939 speech in Atlanta, Truett elaborated: "Baptists are in conscience compelled to reject and oppose sacerdotalism that puts a priest between a soul and Christ; and sacramentarianism that makes external ordinances in themselves, vehicles of grace; and ecclesiasticism that puts a church between a sinner and salvation."[35] In short, even though Truett (echoing his Baptist forebears) defended Catholics' ability to practice their faith without imposing it on others, he saw Catholicism as in error and viewed Catholics as an "other" that stood on the fringe of (American) society.[36]

Further, Truett's views were not unique. They were also represented by the work of his friend J.M. Dawson and the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs (BJCPA), where opposition to Catholicism was a prime concern during the first half of the twentieth century. According to Baptist historian Robert Torbet, the offices of the BJCPA were "strategically located where there is need for Baptists to defend religious liberty by raising their voices against encroachments of the state upon the church, and against what Baptists regard as Roman Catholic aggression in behalf of sectarianism in education and political favor."[37] Moreover, Dawson and many Baptists were associated with another group—Protestants and Other Americans for the Separation of Church and State (POAU)—for which Paul Blanshard, an anti-Catholic secularist, was a

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[33] Truett, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," 36; such words were repeated in 1939 at the Sixth Baptist World Congress in Truett's speech, "The Baptist Message and Mission for the World Today."

[34] "You recall that in the midst of all the tenseness and tumult of that excited assemblage [at the First Vatican Council], Cardinal Manning stood on an elevated platform, and in the paper just passed, declaring for the infallibility of the Pope, said, 'Let all the world go to bits and we will reconstruct it on this paper'... But what is the answer of a Baptist to the contention made by the Catholic for papal infallibility? Holding aloft a little book, the name of which is the New Testament, and without any hesitation or doubt, the Baptist shouts his battle cry: 'Let all the world go to bits and we will reconstruct it on the New Testament'" (Truett, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," 37-38). It should be pointed out that the First Vatican Council did not initiate the Catholic understanding of papal infallibility; it dogmatically defined it. Further, the definition issued requirements that restrict the papal statements that are considered to be infallibly promulgated. That is, the definition of papal infallibility of 1870, while it was intended to solidify the papacy as an authoritative arbiter of ecclesial disputes, actually made it possible for Catholics to better distinguish between infallible statements and those that were authoritative to a lesser degree.

[35] Truett, "The Baptist Message and Mission for the World Today," 112.

[36] Recent Baptist scholars have attempted to distance themselves from Truett's apparent anti-Catholic sentiments. See the editor's note in Truett, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," *Baptist History and Heritage*, 85; and Walter B. Shurden, "Introduction," 5-6. While Canipe is dubious of these attempts to "decontextualize Truett's remarks in the name of ecumenism" (Canipe, "The Echoes of Baptist Democracy," 430n34), J. David Holcomb has offered a more sustained defense of Truett. See J. David Holcomb, "A Millstone Hanged about His Neck?: George W. Truett, Anti-Catholicism, and Baptist Conceptions of Religious Liberty," *Baptist History and Heritage* 43.3 (Summer/Fall 2008): 68-81.

[37] Robert G. Torbet, *A History of the Baptists*, 3d ed. (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1963), 455. Much of the concerns in this era centered on two Supreme Court cases, *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947) and *McCollum v. Board of Education* (1948). For more on these cases, see John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 183-85.

lawyer.[38] Like the later POAU, Truett and many of his Baptist contemporaries held suspicions about Catholics in the United States, wondering if they "really believed" in the separation of church and state, concerns that some Catholics constantly felt obligated to refute,[39] and Dawson stated that those who did not hold to strict separation had "failed to become thoroughly Americanized."[40]

With this background in place, engagement of *Dignitatis Humanae* can proceed. The Declaration on Religious Freedom was promulgated by Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965, emerging from several years of tense discussions and debates. The first half of the document (§1-8), with one exception, frames religious freedom within a constitutional argument, discussing the proper function of government and religious freedom as part of that role. Here, in language reminiscent of the First Amendment, the "free exercise of religion" is supported, and non-interference on the part of civil government is enjoined so that individual rights can be protected (§3, 6). Religious communities have freedom within society, then, to educate their adherents (including children) accordingly, with no danger of infringement by the state, except in cases where the public order is violated (§4-7). The goal of such a defense of religious freedom as a right is the protection of the "common welfare" and "genuine public peace" (§7).

The second half of the declaration is clearly more theological and notes the ways in which religious freedom aligns with the Christian tradition broadly and orthodox doctrine in particular. As the document states, "religious freedom in society is entirely consonant with the freedom of the act of Christian faith" (§9). This act of faith, though, is situated within the context of the believing church, countering any move to privatize free exercise of faith (§10). More importantly, the second half of the document proclaims that religious freedom is grounded in the life and witness of Jesus and the apostles, making discipleship the primary way to embody this liberty (§9, 11). Indeed, "the Church is following the way of Christ and the apostles when she recognizes and gives support to the principle of religious freedom as befitting the dignity of man and as being in accord with divine revelation" (§12). Finally, religious freedom underscores the fact that the church has freedom to work for the "fulfillment of her divine mission" in the world (§13-14), which may result in martyrdom when the powers of the world do not receive the church's witness favorably (§11).

While *Dignitatis Humanae* stands as a single declaration, it clearly has two arguments for religious liberty, both of which are evident in the history of its composition.[41] The first is represented by American Jesuit John Courtney Murray and other Catholics from the United States. This group put forth an account of a religious liberty that was juridical, constitutional, and linked to American-styled arguments for negative freedom. After the Declaration was promulgated, Murray further worked to ensure that the juridical

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[38] Several articles written by POAU leaders were printed in the *Baptist Standard*, a newspaper for Texas Baptists.

[39] American Jesuit John Courtney Murray seemed to know this experience well: "It is customary to put to Catholics what is supposed to be an embarrassing question: Do you really believe in the first two provisions of the First Amendment?" [John Courtney Murray, S.J., *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* (Lanham, Md.: Sheed & Ward, 1960; reprint, Lanham, Md.: Sheed & Ward, 2005), 62].

[40] Joseph Martin Dawson, "Temptations of the Churches," *Baptist Standard* (July 25, 1955): 6.

[41] For more about this process, see Agnes de Dreuzy, "*Dignitatis Humanae* as an Encounter Between Two 'Towering Theologians': John Courtney Murray, S.J., and Yves Congar, O.P.," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 24 (Winter 2006): 33-44. Stanley Hauerwas has described the declaration as having a distinctly divided mind [Stanley Hauerwas, "Not Late Enough: The Divided Mind of *Dignitatis Humanae Personae*," in *A Better Hope: Resources for a Church Confronting Capitalism, Democracy, and Postmodernity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2000), 110].

perspective was given primacy in reading the document. In 1966, Murray participated in an interfaith conference at Notre Dame regarding the developments of the Second Vatican Council. Murray's task was to discuss *Dignitatis Humanae*:

> [T]he Declaration presents the content or object of the right to religious freedom as simply negative, namely immunity from coercion in religious matters. Thus the Declaration moves onto the solid ground of the constitutional tradition of the West, whose development, in what concerns religious freedom, was first effected by the Constitution of the United States in 1789 and by the First Amendment in 1791.[42]

This was consistent with Murray's other remarks about the Declaration after the Council. Commenting on the text of the document elsewhere, Murray wrote, "[I]n assigning a negative content to the right to religious freedom (that is, in making it formally a 'freedom from' and not a 'freedom for'), the Declaration is in harmony with the sense of the First Amendment to the American Constitution."[43]

Likely due to his vociferous support for the juridical emphasis within the first half of the declaration, many commentators have viewed *Dignitatis Humanae* as a vindication of Murray's work. Murray attempted to shift Catholic conversations about the relationship between church and state. Previously, Catholic teaching had preferred an established union between church and state formalized through concordats. These agreements, along with territories acrtually governed and controlled by the Vatican, granted to the church substantial temporal power. When this arrangement was challenged, the Catholic Church persisted in holding on to it. Most prominently, in the *Syllabus of Errors* (1864), Pope Pius IX condemned the proposition that church and state should be separate from one another.[44] While there were principled reasons for this response, the situation in Europe in the nineteenth century also contributed to such a stance by the Catholic Church. Disestablishment of church and state in France resulted in radical anti-clerical sentiment that challenged any sizeable presence of the church in the region. Meanwhile in Germany, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* brought restrictions on Catholic activities in that country.

In light of these changing circumstances, what developed among Catholic scholars was an understanding of church/state relations where the ideal construal, or the "thesis," was a church/state harmony, but certain, limited historical circumstances could produce an acceptable, though restricted, alternative, or "hypothesis."[45] A prolific writer, Murray argued that the United States' nonestablishmentarian

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[42] John Courtney Murray, "The Declaration on Religious Freedom," in *Vatican II: An Interfaith Appraisal*, ed. John M. Miller (Notre Dame: Associated Press, 1966), 568.

[43] John Courtney Murray, "Religious Freedom," in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott (New York: Herder & Herder, 1966), 678n5.

[44] *Syllabus of Errors*, §55.

[45] In the late nineteenth century, several American Catholic prelates (e.g., James Cardinal Gibbons, John Ireland, John Keane), influenced by Isaac Hecker and Orestes Brownson, sought to deploy the "hypothesis" notion in the United States in order to make the embrace of American-style democracy (including separation of church and state) more possible. The efforts of these "Americanists" were effectively ended with the promulgation of Leo XIII's 1899 encyclical *Testem Benevolentiae*. Interestingly, William Portier notes that this "thesis/hypothesis" distinction originated with Félix Dupanloup (1802-1878), a French bishop, in response to the *Syllabus of Errors*, an interpretation that was commended by Pius IX [William L. Portier, "Theology of Manners as Theology of Containment: John Courtney Murray and *Dignitatis Humanae* Forty Years After," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 24 (Winter 2006): 85].

situation—i.e., never having an officially established church—set it apart from disestablishment (also called laicist) contexts such as France. His positions regarding church and state, however, caused suspicion in the U.S. and in Rome, prompting his Jesuit superiors to ask him to cease writing on the topic in 1955.[46] His invitation as a *peritus* at the Second Vatican Council signaled to many a rehabilitation of Murray and his ideas.

However, as has been noted, the juridical/constitutional argument for religious freedom is not the only one found in *Dignitatis Humanae*. The theological argument of the second half of the document was represented by Dominican Yves Congar and other French participants, who emphasized that religious freedom was grounded in revelation (and teleology). This approach employed Scripture much more (fourteen total references) than its constitutional counterpart (only one reference). Specifically, "Congar suggested that after a short introduction there should be a section on the biblical concept of freedom, starting with the idea of the original freedom given by God to humanity and of the development of the history of salvation."[47]

French-speaking theologians, such as René Coste, continued their work following the Council, attempting to either invert the arguments within the declaration or move beyond the document altogether.[48] These theologians, while sharing Americans' displeasure with church/state union, had a much different experience within France than Murray in the United States. Joseph Komonchak has described theology in France during the early twentieth-century as a discourse in exile.[49] Thus, theologians who emerged from this context (including Congar, Coste, and Jesuit Henri de Lubac) had to navigate the church/state union proposed by the pro-fascist French nationalist movement *Action Française* and the radical division between church and state advocated by the anti-clerical Third Republic. Murray, having only experienced the favorable conditions for religion in the United States (under church/state nonestablishment), was not able to conceive of the dangers of certain forms of church/state division in the same way as his French coreligionists. In a similar manner, Truett, whose advocacy for religious liberty in the United States goes so far as to situate both church and state along parallel tracks of freedom, does not acknowledge the potential pitfalls to his account of church/state separation.

Thus, rather than the negative freedom of the first half of *Dignitatis Humanae*, a more theological account of freedom must be embraced. The foundation of this account can be founded upon section 11 of the Declaration, which grounds non-coercion in discipleship to the life of Jesus. This, as intended by the French-speaking theologians at the Council, initiates the discussion of religious liberty within Christocentric biblical revelation. In many ways, this resonates with the affirmation of the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*) §22: "Christ, the final Adam,

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[46] McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 208.
[47] Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak, eds., *History of Vatican II* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2003), 4:535.
[48] Cf. René Coste, *Théologie de la liberté religeuse: Liberté de conscience, liberté de religion* (Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1969). For more on some of the efforts of these French-speaking theologians, see Hermínio Rico, S.J., *John Paul II and the Legacy of* Dignitatis Humanae (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 41-51.
[49] See Joseph A. Komonchak, "Theology and Culture at Mid-Century: The Example of Henri de Lubac," *Theological Studies* 51 (1990): 579-602.

by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear."[50] In other words, Christ displays what it means to be authentically human, providing a *telos* for human existence. As the Declaration states, "God has regard for the dignity of the human person who He himself created" (§11). Thus, efforts to ground religious freedom in anthropology and nature without a link to a Christologically-shaped doctrine of creation are deficient and disordered. Therefore, in terms of nature and grace, an extrinsic link between the two is rejected by underscoring the ways in which revelation speaks to the truth of nature and the relationships found therein. Put differently, religious freedom cannot be established on the merits and dignity of the human person or society alone. Rather, the content of revelation discloses the true reality of both nature and grace, with religious freedom's shape and significance illuminated by the intrinsic relationship between the natural and the supernatural.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY, NATURE/GRACE, AND THE BAPTIST DILEMMA

Once this theological form of freedom, based on an intrinsic construal of nature and grace, is embraced, markedly different cultural results are produced without compromising Truett's initial goal of resisting formal union between church and state.[51] Of course, establishment of a state church is still rightly avoided, guaranteeing non-coercion in religious matters. Moreover, the church is still enabled to pursue its mission, but this will involve a more critical, though no less engaging, role within the world. That is, discourse concerning freedom will not be viewed as outside the church's competence (i.e., it is not simply a juridical, constitutional issue). With Truett, the church's freedom was restricted in the temporal realm by a dualistic relationship between nature and grace. The parallel trajectories of citizen and believer left the church as an apolitical entity, resting on statecraft as the only avenue for a viable political voice within society. By contrast, when nature and grace, while distinct, maintain an intrinsic relationship, the political is not disconnected from the theological. In other words, rather than simply establishing the church as free from state control, the church is free for embodying a way of life faithful to Christ. Along these lines, de Lubac writes,

> The authority of the Church is entirely spiritual and is exercised only on consciences. But it does not follow that there are areas of thought or human activity that ought to be, a priori, closed to it. Because there is no activity, however profane it may appear, where the Faith and morality guarded by the Church cannot in one way or another, one day or another, be involved. Christianity is universal not only in the sense that all men have their Savior in Jesus Christ but also in the sense that *all of man* has salvation in Jesus Christ. . . . And it is hard to see why "politics" should be an exception to this principle.[52]

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[50] *Gaudium et Spes*, §22.
[51] Cf. David L. Schindler, *Heart of the World, Center of the Church:* Communio *Ecclesiology, Liberalism, and Liberation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 84.
[52] Henri de Lubac, "The Authority of the Church in Temporal Matters, Supplement: The Church's Invention in the Temporal Order," in *Theological Fragments*, trans. Rebecca Howell Balinski (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 230.

Therefore, theology can and should have purchase on contemporary sociopolitical concerns within the communal witness of the church. For example, the justification of a war (or the condemnation of a particular military action) would not be offered simply on the basis of national goals and interests. Instead, the means and ends of particular moments of military action should be examined and evaluated through a theological lens that, among other questions, asks whether violence is part of the church's discipleship to the crucified Lord.

Moreover, as evident from the quote by de Lubac, conscience retains an important role within theological anthropology, though it is not the virtually unfettered individual conscience found in Truett's thought. Instead, through the formative influence of the church, conscience is ordered toward the good and subject to supernatural direction.[53] Along with the corporate political witness of the church, individual Christians, fashioned in the church and inhabiting society, act as a leavening influence that shapes political structures and decisions, enacting social renewal more subtly. In this manner, de Lubac notes that the church has power "in temporal matters," without ascribing to it any form of power over the temporal. The church is not privatized, but formal church/state union is also avoided.

Further, closer contextual examination reveals de Lubac and his French co-religionists to be a timely resource for Baptists arguing for religious liberty. Truett's assessment of the United States' political landscape, even if it accurately reflected his own era, does not best fit the present circumstances of late modernity. In other words, the appeals to consensus and parallel trajectories of freedom found in Truett's thought no longer have the same relevance. Instead, fragmentation and hyperdiversity characterize American society, with clear problems even for constitutional interpretation. The French Catholic context that gave rise to the second half of *Dignitatis Humanae*, however, has much more resonance with ecclesial existence in late modernity. France, in the first half of the twentieth century, was hostile to Christianity through legal acts to separate church and state, even to the point of exiling the Jesuits' institutions of theological education from mainland France to England.[54] Moreover, Catholics' theological positions had significant bearing on his context during the Second World War. For instance, because of his theological convictions, de Lubac participated in what he called "spiritual resistance to nazism."[55] Through this and his previous work, de Lubac theologically criticized political options such as *Action Française* and Nazism itself, noting how the extrinsic relationship between nature and grace had made these political movements possible.[56] The emphasis, then, is not on whether theology and politics intertwine, but the precise nature of that entanglement and whether it coheres with the shape of Christocentric politics within the church.

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[53] Cf. de Lubac, "The Authority of the Church in Temporal Matters," 213.

[54] The Act of Separation of Church and State, passed in December 1905, formally ended the Concordat between the Catholic Church and the French Third Republic, effectually establishing secularism (or *laïcité*) in France. Cf. Stephen Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism: Mystic Modernism in Postwar Paris, 1919-1933* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 53.

[55] For more on this period in de Lubac's life and his contributions to *Cahiers du Témoignage catholique*, see Henri de Lubac, *At the Service of the Church: Henri de Lubac Reflects on the Circumstances that Occasioned His Writings*, trans. Anne Elizabeth Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 50-55, and Henri de Lubac, *Christian Resistance to Anti-Semitism, Memories from 1940-1944*. Trans. Elizabeth Englund, O.C.D. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), esp. 131-145.

[56] Cf. Schindler, 64n18.

Baptists today face a pluralistic context that, while different in key ways, more closely resembles the situation of the French Third Republic than that of Truett's United States. That is, contemporary Baptists are more likely to encounter indifference and hostility regarding the public significance of the Christian faith than consensus and acclaim. Accordingly, it is not uncommon to describe the church's position within late modern American society as one of exile. Likewise, Baptists would do well to temper the use of Truett's voice on matters of religious liberty and learn from twentieth-century Catholics (such as de Lubac and Congar) who have navigated the Scylla of overt and formal church/state union and the Charybdis of complete privatization of the Christian faith. Because they have inhabited and interacted with a context such as this, their experiences are instructive for Baptists as they present particular insights for living as what Pierre Colin has called "the presence and exercise of a spiritual power in a pluralist society."[57]

[57] Pierre Colin, *L'audace et le soupçon: la crise moderniste dans le catholicisme français (1893-1914)* (Paris: Desclee de Brouwer, 1997), 267; cited and translated in C.J.T. Talar, "Swearing Against Modernism: S*acrorum Antistitum* (September 1, 1910)," *Theological Studies* 71.3 (September 2010): 547. While these words by Colin describe the Modernist crisis of the early twentieth-century, he also notes that this crisis is the matrix of modern Catholic theology, underscoring its staying power for describing the contemporary context.