

Famuli Vestrae Pietatis

Pope St. Gelasius I

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INTRODUCTION

by Edmund Waldstein, O.Cist.

Pope St. Gelasius I's letter to the Emperor Anastasius I *Famuli vestrae pietatis*, better known as *Duo Sunt*,¹ written in 494, is the classical statement of the Church's teaching on the relation of the authority of pontiffs to the power of worldly rulers. It was to be quoted and paraphrased again and again by later popes. The key passage has been translated numerous times, but until now there have been only two complete translations into English, neither of which is in the public domain.² As the context of the letter is particularly important for understanding the meaning of the key passage correctly, we are pleased to offer the following collaborative translation of the whole letter on *The Josias*.³

ST. GELASIUS'S LIFE AND TIMES

St. Gelasius reigned from 492-496, when the Roman Empire had collapsed in the West, and Italy was ruled by barbarians, who stood in an ambiguous relationship to the Byzantine emperor—at times recognizing his authority, at other times styling themselves “kings” of Italy. In 476 (conventionally seen as the end of the Empire) Odoacer, who was already in

¹ Sometimes also as *Ad Anastasium, Epistle XII* (Thiel), or *Epistle VIII* (Migne).

² Matthew Briel, trans. in: George E. Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter: Apostolic Discourse and Papal Authority in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), pp. 173-180; Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen, trans., *The Letters of Gelasius I (492-496)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), pp. 73-80.

³ The translation was made by numerous online friends of *The Josias* in a shared google spreadsheet. The style is therefore uneven. For technical reasons we used Migne's edition in PL 59, col. 41-47, but we have corrected it in some places with reference to Thiel's critical edition: Andreas Thiel, ed., *Epistolae Romanorum pontificum genuinae et quae ad eos scriptae sunt: a S. Hilario usque ad Pelagium II.*, vol. 1 (Braunsberg: E. Peter, 1867), pp. 349-358. For the paragraph numbering we have followed Thiel.

power, had forced Romulus Augustulus to abdicate. In 493, the year after St. Gelasius's accession to the See of Peter, the Arian Ostrogoth Theodoric the Great killed Odoacer, and established his rule in Italy.⁴ In the unsettled situation of Italy, the pope was an important source of order for the city of Rome and beyond. Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen have shown how St. Gelasius was a “micro-manager” of the ecclesiastical, social, and political affairs of Rome in a manner reminiscent of St. Gregory the Great a century later.⁵

Gelasius was “a Roman born,” as he himself testifies (§1 below), and the *Liber pontificalis* notes that he was “of African nationality.”⁶ In “the African Gelasius,” writes Hugo Rahner, in the slightly histrionic tone of his book on the liberty of the Church, “the ideals of Augustine and the devotion of Leo for the Roman See were combined with a will of steel and eloquence of style.”⁷ Not everyone has been so admiring of Gelasius’s style.⁸ Nor has everyone credited him with a will of steel.⁹ But it is certainly true that Gelasius was formed in the traditions of St. Augustine and of St. Leo the Great. Dionysius Exiguus, who probably did not know Gelasius personally, but knew many others who had known him, writes of him in glowing terms as an exemplary pastor and scholar.¹⁰

THE ACACIAN SCHISM

Although Gelasius was pope for less than five years, a large number of documents from his pontificate have come down to us,¹¹ as well as several letters thought to have been drafted by him as a deacon under his predecessor Pope Felix II/III (reigned 483-492).¹² *Famulae*

⁴ For an account of the period, see: Guy Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376–568* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), chs. 9-10.

⁵ Neil and Allen, trans., *The Letters of Gelasius I*, Introduction.

⁶ Neil and Allen, trans., *The Letters of Gelasius I*, p. 71.

⁷ Hugo Rahner, S.J., *Church and State in Early Christianity*, trans. Leo Donald Davis, S.J. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1961), p. 151. As Rahner notes, his book was originally written at a time “when the struggle between Church and state in Nazi Germany was at its height” (p. xi), which goes somewhat in explaining its tone.

⁸ Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen call it “sententious and pompous” and complain that it is repetitive and overburdens subordinate clauses: *The Letters of Gelasius I*, p. 67.

⁹ George Demacopoulos portrays him as an ineffectual blusterer *The Invention of Peter*, ch. 3.

¹⁰ See: Aloisius K. Ziegler, “Pope Gelasius I and His Teaching on the Relation of Church and State,” in: *The Catholic Historical Review* 27.4 (1942), pp. 412-437, at pp. 416-417.

¹¹ Thiel’s edition contains 43 letters, 49 fragments, and six tractates, filling over 300 pages: Thiel, *Epistolae*, vol. 1, pp. 285-618.

¹² See: Mario Spinelli, s.v. “Gelasius I,” in: *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 3rd ed., vol. IV, eds. Walter Kasper, et al. (Freiburg: Herder, 1995), col. 401-402.

vestrae pietatis is by far the most famous of his letters. It was written in the context of the Acacian Schism, the first major schism between Rome and Constantinople.

The schism had originated in the Emperor Zeno's attempt to reestablish ecclesial unity with the many Egyptian Christians who had rejected the Council of Chalcedon (451). Chalcedon had condemned the monophysite heresiarch Eutyches, and deposed the Alexandrian patriarch Dioscurus, appointing Proterius in his stead.¹³ In 457 the Alexandrian mob elected Timothy the Cat patriarch, and murdered Proterius.¹⁴ Timothy died in 477, and his followers elected his ardent disciple Peter the Hoarse to succeed him.¹⁵

In 482 Zeno sent out a formula of faith, the *Henotikon*, to the Egyptians.¹⁶ The document was not heterodox in its Christological statements. But it was unacceptable to Rome from an ecclesiological point of view. Its underlying assumption was that the emperor could define the faith ("Caesaropapism"). Moreover, it was "political theology" in the derogatory sense, seeing the unity of faith as being ordered to the unity of the empire, "the origin and composition, the power and irresistible shield of our empire."¹⁷ But what was least acceptable to Rome was its cavalier dismissal of Chalcedon, the great triumph of the teaching of Pope Leo. After emphasizing that the *only* creed is the one defined at Nicea I and Constantinople I, Zeno writes, "But we anathematize anyone who has thought, or thinks, any other opinion, either now or at any time, *whether at Chalcedon or at any Synod whatsoever.*"¹⁸

Peter the Hoarse accepted the *Henotikon*, and Acacius, Patriarch of Constantinople accepted him into communion, and was therefore excommunicated by Pope Felix II/III in 484.¹⁹ This was the beginning of the Acacian Schism, which was to last till 519. Acacius himself died in

¹³ Dioscurus had (verbally) agreed with Eutyches that there was only one nature in Christ. In Alexandria this was held to be the orthodox position, since St. Cyril of Alexandria had used the formula *μία φύσις τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου σεσωρχωμένη* ("one incarnate nature of God the Logos"). Chalcedon, however, defined that Christ was in two natures (*ἐν δύο φύσεσιν*). It is now generally held that the disagreement is based on an equivocal use of the word *φύσις* (nature). See: Theresia Hainthaler, s.v. "Monophysitismus," in: *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. VII, (1998), col. 418-421; W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement: Chapters in the History of the Church in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

¹⁴ Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, p. 155.

¹⁵ Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, p. 174.

¹⁶ For the story of the Henotikon see: Ibid., pp. 174-183.

¹⁷ Zeno, *Henotikon*, in: *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Scholasticus*, trans. Michael Whitby (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), III,14; pp. 147-149, at p. 147.

¹⁸ Zeno, *Henotikon*, p. 149.

¹⁹ One of the orthodox "Sleepless Monks" was able to pin the pope's excommunication to Acacius's vestments during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy: Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*, pp. 182-183.

489.²⁰ His successor, Fravitta tried to assure both Pope Felix and Peter the Hoarse that he was in communion with them.²¹ In 491 the Emperor Zeno was succeeded by Emperor Anastasius I (491-518), who had monophysite sympathies and continued Zeno's policy.²²

FAMULI VESTRÆ PIETATIS

When Gelasius was elected to the See of Peter in 492 he did not write to the Emperor Anastasius to announce his election, as was customary. But two Romans, Faustus and Irenaeus, having been in Constantinople as part of a legation from Theodoric the Great, brought word to him that the Emperor was offended by his failure to write. This was the occasion of *Famuli vestræ pietatis*.

Gelasius begins the letter by excusing himself for not having written before and addresses the Emperor patriotically as the Roman *princeps*. He hints that his desire to supply “something (however little) lacking from the fullness of the Catholic Faith” in Constantinople, by which he means that he wants to bring the schism to an end (§1). He then clarifies his right to do this by explaining the relation of his “sacred authority” to the “royal power” of the Emperor—this is the celebrated *locus classicus* for the relation of lay and clerical authority (§2). He further explicates this by laying out the primacy of the Apostolic See—the “firm foundation” laid by God (§3). He then tries to persuade the Emperor to end the schism, by having Acacius’s name deleted from the *diptychs*, the lists of names prayed for in the Divine Liturgy (a sign of ecclesial communion). Acacius was in Communion with heretics and should be condemned with them. (§§4-9). He rebuffs the objection that removing Acacius from the diptychs would cause a rebellion at Constantinople, and urges the emperor that he is even more bound to combat heresy than he would be bound to combat offenses against temporal laws (§§10-11). Finally, he defends himself against the charge of arrogance, by turning the accusation against those who, contrary to the tradition of the Fathers, refuse to submit to the Apostolic See (§12).

AUCTORITAS AND POTESTAS

“For there are two, O emperor Augustus, by which the world is principally ruled: the sacred authority (*auctoritas*) of pontiffs and the royal power (*potestas*).” This famous line was to be cited in favor of rival medieval theories of the relation of the two: curialists cited it in favor

²⁰ Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*,, p. 190.

²¹ Neil and Allen, trans., *The Letters of Gelasius I*, pp. 37-38.

²² Rahner, *Church and State*, pp. 154-155.

of papal supremacy while their opponents cited it to prove imperial or royal autonomy.²³ More recently, it has been cited by Whig Thomists in favor of American-style “religious freedom.”²⁴ Its meaning continues to be debated among historians.

The modern debate has tended to focus on the meaning of the terms *auctoritas* and *potestas*. Erich Caspar argued that *auctoritas* meant something like moral influence, whereas *potestas* meant coercive power:

In Roman constitutional law there was a clear distinction between the conceptually and morally superior *auctoritas*, founded on tradition and social standing, which the senate, for example, enjoyed, and a *potestas* equipped with executive power, which in republican times belonged only to the people and was delegated to their officials only for a set period of office.²⁵

Caspar approached things from a typically modern understanding of power dynamics, but a similar reading of the *auctoritas* and *potestas* distinction has been given by authors less in thrall to *Realpolitik*. Allan Cottrell notes that some see *potestas* as “the mere ability to use force without legitimate authority.”²⁶ Michael Hanby has recently argued for such a view.²⁷ According to Hanby *auctoritas* “possesses no extrinsic force,” but compels “by its own self-

²³ See: Brian Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), p. 10; Robert Louis Benson, “The Gelasian Doctrine: Uses And Transformations,” in: George Makdisi, et al., eds., *La notion d'autorité au Moyen Age: Islam, Byzance, Occident: Colloques internationaux de La Napoule, session des 23-26 octobre 1982* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982), pp. 13-44.

²⁴ See: John Courtney Murray, S.J., *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960), especially pp. 202-203; George Weigel, “Catholicism and Democracy: Parsing the Other Twentieth-Century Revolution,” in: Michael Novak, William Brailsford, and Cornelis Heesters, eds. *A Free Society Reader: Principles for the New Millennium* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2000), pp. 141-165, at pp. 150-151. Cf. my critique of the Whig Thomists: “Integralism and Gelasian Dyarchy,” in: *The Josias*, March 3, 2016: <https://thejosias.com/2016/03/03/integralism-and-gelasian-dyarchy> (accessed March 28, 2020), part 4.

²⁵ Erich Caspar, *Geschichte des Papsttums von den Anfängen bis zur Höhe der Weltherrschaft*, vol. 2 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1933), p. 67 (translation my own).

²⁶ Alan Cottrell, “*Auctoritas* and *Potestas*: A Reevaluation of the Correspondence of Gelasius I on Papal-Imperial Relations,” in: *Medieval Studies* 55 (1993), pp. 95-109, at p. 96. (This is not Cottrell’s own view).

²⁷ Michael Hanby, “For and Against Integralism,” in: *First Things* 301.4 (2020), pp. 43-50. Hanby does not explicitly mention Gelasius, but it is clear that the Gelasian teaching is in the background of his discussion of *auctoritas* and *potestas*, especially since he quotes Walter Ullmann’s interpretation of Gelasius (p. 45).

evidence.”²⁸ To the extent that it is not bound and guided by *auctoritas*, *potestas* is “an indeterminate force, the brute strength to realize arbitrary possibilities.”²⁹

Readings such as Hanby’s cannot, however, be sustained. As Walter Ullmann showed, the popes of the fifth century saw themselves as having the authority to enact laws backed up by sanctions.³⁰ That is, their *auctoritas* did possess an extrinsic *as well as* an intrinsic force. But it is clear also that Gelasius does not see the emperor’s *potestas* as mere brute force—he sees it also as a moral authority that binds the consciences of subjects: “inasmuch as it pertains to the order of public discipline, even the bishops themselves obey your laws, knowing that rule [*imperium*] has been bestowed to you from on high” (§2). *Auctoritas* and *potestas* are more similar than such authors think. Caspar himself seems to admit as much, when he goes on to argue that Gelasius’s letter was meant to bring the two concepts closer together:

What was new and important was that Gelasius I now defined the state’s *potestas* and papal *auctoritas* (which functioned as *potestas ligandi et solvendi*) as ‘the two things... through which this world is *ruled*,’ and thereby put them on the same level as commensurable magnitudes in the same conceptual category.³¹

Ullmann argued for a different interpretation of the *auctoritas-potestas* distinction. According to him, *auctoritas* meant sovereign authority, whereas *potestas* meant delegated authority:

Auctoritas is the faculty of shaping things creatively and in a binding manner, whilst *potestas* is the power to execute what the *auctoritas* has laid down. The Roman senate had *auctoritas*, the Roman magistrate had *potestas*. The antithesis between *auctoritas* and *potestas* stated already by Augustus himself, shows the ‘outstanding charismatic political authority’ which his *auctoritas* contained. It was sacred, since everything connected with Roman emperorship was sacred emanating as it did from his divinity. It was therefore all the easier to transfer these characteristically Roman ideas to the function of the Pope and to his *auctoritas*.³²

While Ullmann is essentially right about how Gelasius saw his relation to the emperor, he is wrong to put so much weight on the semantic distinction between *auctoritas* and *potestas*. Ernst Stein and Aloysius K. Ziegler showed convincingly that Gelasius did not mean to make any semantic distinction between *auctoritas* and *potestas* at all. For reasons of style he did not wish to use the same word twice in the same sentence, and therefore he used synonyms. In his damning review essay on Caspar, Stein points out that in *Tractate IV*, written only two years after *Famuli vestrae pietatis*, Gelasius writes of “both powers” (*potestas utraque*), showing that he

²⁸ Hanby, “For and Against Integralism,” p. 45.

²⁹ Hanby, “For and Against Integralism,” p. 45.

³⁰ Walter Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages: A Study in the Ideological Relation of Clerical to Lay Power*, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1962), pp. 12-13, note 5.

³¹ Caspar, *Geschichte des Papsttums*, p. 66.

³² Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government*, p. 21.

was quite willing to use *potestas* to refer to the pontifical *auctoritas*.³³ Ziegler, for his part, looks at the letters of Felix II/III, drafted by Gelasius as a deacon, and finds conclusive evidence for Stein's thesis in Felix's *Epistle XV*:

These things, most reverent Emperor, I do not wrest from you as vicar of the blessed Peter, by the authority of the apostolic power as it were [*auctoritate velut apostolicae potestatis*], but I confidently implore you as an anxious father desiring that the welfare and prosperity of my most clement son endure long.³⁴

Perhaps *Epistle XV* is using the two terms in slightly different senses, but it is clear that it sees both as belonging to the Apostolic See.³⁵

GELASIUS'S INTEGRALISM

George Demacopoulos has recently argued that the scholarly focus on the semantic distinction between *auctoritas* and *potestas* is regrettable, since with "that singular focus, scholars have failed to acknowledge many of the other significant moves that Gelasius makes in the letter."³⁶ On that I think he is right. He is wrong, however, to fault Caspar and Ullmann (especially the later) for reading Gelasius too much in the light of the subsequent development of the papacy.³⁷ Demacopoulos argues on historical-critical grounds, but it is hard not to see his approach as being motivated by Greek Orthodox suspicion of Catholic teaching on the papacy. Even from a purely historical perspective, it is helpful to look at the developments to which a teaching gives rise to understand it better. As St. John Henry Newman put it, the principle that "the stream is clearest near the spring" does not apply to

³³ Ernst Stein, "La Période Byzantine de la Papauté," in: *The Catholic Historical Review* 21.2 (1935), pp. 129-163, at p. 135. Hanby complains about me: "Waldstein does not think philosophically about the distinction between *auctoritas* and *potestas*, which he treats more or less synonymously" (Hanby, "For and Against Integralism," p. 47). I wonder if he would make the same complaint about St. Gelasius in *Tractate IV*.

³⁴ Ziegler, "Pope Gelasius I and His Teaching," p. 432, note 66; the quotation from Felix can be found in: Thiel, *Epistolae*, vol. 1, p. 272; translation in: Jeffrey Richards, *The Popes and the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages, 476-752* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 62.

³⁵ In the light of the subsequent development of Church teaching one could save something like Erich Caspar's interpretation as follows: The relationship between the spiritual and temporal powers in *temporal matters* would be modeled on the relationship between the senate and the magistrates in the Republic. *Auctoritas* would mean moral authority. *Potestas* would be coercive force, *prescinding* from whether it is united to moral authority or not. So it would be wrong to see *potestas* as mere violence but violence would be included as well as rightly ordered force. The pope would have both *auctoritas* and *potestas* in the spiritual order. In the temporal order he would exercise *auctoritas*, and his *auctoritas* would guarantee the right order of the *potestas* of temporal rulers. See: Thomas Crean and Alan Fimister, *Integralism: A Manual of Political Philosophy* (Neunkirchen-Seelscheid: Editiones Scholasticae, 2020), p. 72.

³⁶ Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter*, p. 90.

³⁷ Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter*, pp. 8-9.

the development of a teaching or belief, “which on the contrary is more equitable, and purer, and stronger, when its bed has become deep, and broad, and full.”³⁸ And, of course, this is all the more true if it is a question of interpreting the authoritative teachings of the Church. Since the bishops of Rome teach under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, their pronouncements can only be adequately understood in the light of later developments. Thus Gelasius ought to be read in the light of the authoritative teachings of St. Gregory VII, Innocent III, and Boniface VIII.

It is, therefore, all the more significant that, despite his methodological shortcomings, Demacopoulos ultimately comes to a reading of Gelasius very close to Ullmann’s. He argues, namely, that Gelasius is indeed teaching a certain subordination of the imperial under the pontifical power:

Among Gelasius’ impressive rhetorical demonstrations is his transformation of the argument for the divine derivation of imperial authority into an argument for the subordination of the emperor to the priesthood. [...] Noting that imperial governance is a *beneficium* from God for which the emperor will be accountable, Gelasius quickly notes that he too will personally be required to render an account before God for whether or not Anastasius properly administers the imperial *beneficium*. In other words, Gelasius boldly inserts himself into the ruling/responsibility paradigm to imply that his own responsibility (and, therefore, his own authority) was superior to that of the emperor. The emperor, of course, retains a certain responsibility for the Roman population, but above that hierarchical paradigm exists another, more exalted layer, placing the pope between the emperor and God.³⁹

The “hierarchical paradigm” to which Demacopoulos refers is founded on a teleological understanding of society and authority. No one grasped this more firmly than Walter Ullmann. That is why, despite his exaggeration of the *auctoritas-potestas* distinction, I still think Ullmann the best reader of Gelasius.

“Gelasius,” Ullman argues, “bequeathed to all Papal generations a set of ideas based upon an interpretation of history in the light of Christian teleology.”⁴⁰ This Christian teleology sees the Church as a body with many members who have distinct functions related to the single spiritual end of communion with God. The members of this body belong to it with all that they are: “Christianity seizes the whole of man and cannot, by its very nature, be confined to certain departmental limits.”⁴¹ The Christian Body therefore “is not merely a pneumatic or

³⁸ John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, 8th ed. (London: Longmans, Green, and co., 1891), p. 40.

³⁹ Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter*, pp. 90-91; cf. Ullmann’s similar argument in *The Growth of Papal Government*, pp. 23-26.

⁴⁰ Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government*, p. 28.

⁴¹ Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government*, p. 11.

sacramental or spiritual body, but also an organic, concrete and earthy society.”⁴² In this visible society there are certain functions which are immediately directed to its end, what Gelasius calls “the distribution of the venerable mysteries,” (*infra §2*) and there are others which are meditately directed to its end—everything, for example, that serves the preservation of bodily life. It is essential that those “temporal” functions remain meditately ordered to the final end: “in the Christian corpus the administration of the temporal things should be undertaken, in order to bring about the realization of the purpose of the corpus.”⁴³ In other words, “in a Christian society all human actions have an essentially religious ingredient.”⁴⁴ What Gelasius is doing therefore, is not clarifying the relation of church and state (as Whig Thomists suppose), but rather the relation of clerical and lay power *within* the one Christian body. In the *Henotikon* Zeno had implicitly presented himself as the head of the whole Christian *mundus*, but Gelasius is teaching his successor that he is not qualified for headship:

[Since] in a Christian society, of which the emperor through baptism is a member, every human action has a definite purpose and in so far has an essential religious ingredient, the emperors should submit their governmental actions to the ecclesiastical superiors.⁴⁵

Turning to *Tractate IV*, Ullmann shows that Gelasius saw the purpose of the royal power in the Christian world as the care of temporal matters, so that clerics “are not distracted by the pursuit of these carnal matters.”⁴⁶ Thus, Ullmann concludes,

The direction of [the] royal power by those who are, within the corporate union of Christians, qualified to do so, is as necessary as the direction of the whole body corporate. In this way this body will fulfil the purpose for which it was founded. The material or corporeal or temporal element in this body demands the guidance, that is orientation and government, by the spiritual or sacramental element of this self-same body.⁴⁷

R.W. Dyson has shown in detail how this Gelasian teaching on the relation of the temporal to the spiritual was based on premises which he found in his North African tradition: in St. Augustine’s proportioning of spiritual and carnal needs onto the offices of bishops and Roman officials. Augustine had not followed those principles through to their ultimate

⁴² Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government*, p. 3.

⁴³ Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government*, p. 12.

⁴⁴ Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government*, p. 20.

⁴⁵ Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government*, p. 22.

⁴⁶ Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government*, p. 24.

⁴⁷ Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government*, p. 28.

conclusions, but it was an easy step for Gelasius to take, since it is obvious that spiritual goods exceed bodily ones.⁴⁸

The same point was made earlier by Hugo Rahner:

What Augustine regarded as a lofty ideal, Gelasius made tangible: the ideal of the state as the Church's helper, of two powers in peaceful collaboration "ruling the world". Gelasius' genius lay in the fact that he did not declare that the two powers deriving directly from God, Creator and Savior, should exist side by side, an impossible situation and one repugnant to God's will, but rather that they should be hierarchically ordered, like soul and body, the spiritual superior to the material, because only in subordination is the material power's true worth maintained.⁴⁹

The functional division of the two powers is not a division into separate spheres that never overlap. While Gelasius sees the purpose of the emperor as being primarily the regulation of temporal affairs, he is also emphatic that the emperor must use imperial force to help the Church more directly in the preservation of the faith from charity. In *Famuli vestrae pietatis* he argues that just as Anastasius curbs popular tumults arising from secular causes, so *much more* should he restrain heretics, and thereby "lead them back unto the Catholic and Apostolic communion" (§10). He is essentially calling for the emperor to act as *bracchium saculare* of the Church:

If anyone perhaps were to attempt something against public laws (perish the thought!), for no reason would you have been able to suffer it. Do you not reckon it to concern your conscience that the people subject to you should be driven back from the pure and sincere devotion of Divinity? (§10)

Far from being a Whig *avant la lettre*, Gelasius was in fact what we would now call an integralist.

⁴⁸ Robert W. Dyson, *St. Augustine of Hippo: The Christian Transformation of Political Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2005), ch. 5.

⁴⁹ Rahner, *Church and State*, p. 157.

FAMULI VESTRÆ PIETATIS

Translated by HHG et al.

Pope Gelasius to the Emperor Anastasius.

§1 Your Piety's servants, my sons, the master Faustus and Irenaeus, illustrious men, and their companions who exercise the public office of legate, when they returned to the City, said that Your Clemency asked why I did not send my greeting to you in written form. Not, I confess, by my design; but since those who had been dispatched a little while ago from the regions of the East had spread [word] throughout the whole City that they had been denied permission of seeing me by your commands, I thought that I ought to refrain from [writing] letters, lest I be judged burdensome rather than dutiful. You see, therefore, that it came not from my dissembling, but rather from proper caution, lest I inflict annoyance on one minded to reject me. But when I learned that the benevolence of Your Serenity had, as indicated above, expected a word from my humility, then I truly recognized that I would not unjustly be blamed if I remained silent. For, glorious son, I as a Roman born love, honor, and accept you as the Roman Prince. And as a Christian I desire to have knowledge according to the truth with one who has zeal for God. And as the Vicar of the Apostolic See (of whatever quality), whenever I see something (however little) lacking from the fullness of the Catholic Faith, I attempt to supply it by moderate and timely suggestions. For the dispensing of the divine word has been enjoined on me: «woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel» (1 Cor 9:16). Because, if the vessel of election, blessed Paul the Apostle, is afraid and cries out, how much more urgently must I fear if in my preaching I omit anything from the ministry of preaching which has been divinely inspired and handed down by the piety of the fathers.

§2 I pray your Piety not to judge [my] duty toward the divine plan as arrogance. Far be it from the Roman Prince, I beg, that he judge the truth that he senses in his heart to be an injury. For there are two, O emperor Augustus, by which the world is principally ruled: the sacred authority of pontiffs and the royal power. Among which how much heavier is the burden of priests, such that they will have to render an account to the Lord at the time of judgment even for those very kings. For you know, O most merciful son, that although by dignity you preside over the human race, nevertheless you devoutly bow your neck to the leaders of divine matters, and from them you await the causes of your salvation, and you recognize that, in partaking of the celestial sacraments, and being disposed to them (as is appropriate), you must be submitted to the order of religion rather than rule over it. Therefore you know that in these matters you depend on their judgement, not willing to force them to your will. For if, inasmuch as it pertains to the order of public discipline, even the bishops themselves obey your laws, knowing that rule [*imperium*] has been bestowed to

you from on high, lest they seem in mundane things to oppose the eminent sentence; with what passion, I ask, does it become you to obey those, who have been assigned for the distribution of the venerable mysteries? Just as the danger does not fall upon pontiffs lightly, to have been silent on behalf of the cult of the Divinity, which is fitting; thus there is no slight peril to those who (perish the thought!) when they ought to obey, look askance. And if it is settled that the faithful submit their hearts to all the priests in general who pass on divine things rightly, how much more must they submit to the prelate of that See, whom the highest Divinity willed also to be preëminent above all priests, and which the piety of the universal Church subsequently celebrated.

§3 Clearly, wherever Your Piety turns, no one at all has been able to raise himself to the privilege or confession of that one, whom the voice of Christ has put over all, who has been always confessed and venerated by the Church, and has the first devotion. Those things which have been constituted by divine judgement can be attacked by human presumption, but they cannot be conquered by any power. And if only boldness would not be so pernicious against those struggling, as those things which have been fixed by the very founder of sacred religion cannot be dislodged by any force: the foundation of God stands firm (2 Tim 2:19). For is religion, when it is infested by some [persons], able to be overcome by novelties? Does it not rather remain unconquered by the thing supposed to be able to defeat it? And I ask you therefore, may they desist, who under your aegis run about headlong seeking the disruption of the church, which is not permitted: or at least that these should in no way achieve those things which they wickedly desire, and not keep their measure before God and men.

§4 For this reason, before God, I beg, adjure, and exhort your piety purely and earnestly that you not receive my request disdainfully: I say again: I ask that you hear me beseeching you now in this life rather than (later) accusing you—perish the thought!—before the divine tribunal. Nor is it hidden from me, O Emperor Augustus, what the devotion of Your Piety has been in private life. You always chose to be a participator of the eternal promise. Wherefore, I pray you, be not angry with me, if I love you so much that I want you to have that reign, which you have temporarily, forever, and that you who rule the age, might be able to rule with Christ. Certainly, by your laws, Emperor, you do not allow anything to perish, nor do you allow any damage to be done to the Roman name. Surely then it is not true, Excellent Prince, who desires not only the present benefits of Christ but also the future ones, that you would suffer anyone under your aegis to bring loss to religion, to truth, to the sincerity of the Catholic Communion, and to the Faith? By what faith (I ask you) will you ask reward of him there, whose loss you do not prohibit here?

§5 Be they not heavy, I pray thee, those things that are said for your eternal salvation. You have read it written: «the wounds of a friend are better than the kisses of an enemy» (Prov.

27:8). I ask your piety to receive what I say into your mind in the same sentiment in which I say it. No one should deceive Your Piety. What the Scriptures witness figuratively through the prophet is true: «One is my dove, one is my perfect one» (Cant. 6:8), one is the Christian faith, which is Catholic. But that faith is truly Catholic, which is divided by a sincere, pure, and unspotted communion from all the perfidious and their successors and associates. Otherwise there would not be the divinely commanded distinction, but a deplorable muddle. Nor would there be any reason left, if we allow this contagion in anyone, not to open wide the gate to all the heresies. For who in one thing offends, is guilty of all (James 2:10); and: who despises little things shall little by little fall (Sirach 19:1)

§6 This is what the Apostolic See vigorously guards against, that since the pure root is the glorious confession of the Apostle, it might not be soiled by any fissure of perversity, nor by any direct contagion. For if something like that were to happen (which God forbid, and which we trust is impossible), how could we dare to resist any error, or from whence could we request the correction to those in error? Moreover, if Your Piety denies that the people of a single city can be brought together in peace, what would we do with the whole world, if (God forbid) it were to be deceived by our prevarication? If the whole world has been set right, despising the profane traditions of its fathers, how could the people of a single city not be converted if the preaching of the faith persevere. Therefore, glorious Emperor, do I not will the peace, I who would embrace it even if it came at the price of my blood? But, I prithee, let us hold in our mind of what sort the peace ought to be; not any kind, but a truly Christian peace. For how can there be a true peace where chaste charity is lacking? But how charity ought to be, the Apostle evidently preaches for us, who says, Charity is from a pure heart, and a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith (1 Tim. 1:5). How, I pray thee, shall it be from a pure heart, if it is poisoned by an external contagion? How shall it be from a good conscience, if it is commingled with depraved and evil things? How shall it be from an unfeigned faith if it remains united with the perfidious? While these things have often been said by us, it is nevertheless necessary to repeat them incessantly, and not to be silent as long as the name of “peace” continues to be put forward as an excuse; it is not for us (as the is enviously asserted) to make “peace”, but we nevertheless teach that we want that true peace, which is the only peace, apart from which none other can be shown.

§7 Certainly if the dogma of Eutyches, against which the caution of the Apostolic See vigilantly watches, is believed to be consistent with the saving Catholic faith, then it ought to be brought forward plainly and asserted and supported with as much force as possible, for then it will be possible to show not only how inimical it is to the Christian faith itself, but also how many and how deadly are the heresies it contains in its dregs. But if rather (as we are confident you will) you judge that this dogma should be excluded from Catholic minds, I ask you why you do not also suppress the contagion of those who have been shown to be

contaminated by it? As the Apostle says: Are only those who do things that ought not to be done guilty, and not also they that consent to them that do them? (cf. Rom 1:32). Accordingly, just as one cannot accept a participant in perversity without equally approving of the perversity, so too, one cannot refute perversity while admitting an accomplice and partisan of perversity.

§8 Certainly, by your laws, accomplices of crimes and harbourers of thieves are judged to be bound equally by the same punishment; nor is he considered to have no part in a crime, who, though he did not do it himself, nevertheless accepts the familiarity and the alliance of the doer. Accordingly, when the Council of Chalcedon, celebrated for the Catholic and Apostolic faith and the true communion, condemned Eutyches, the progenitor of those detestable ravings, it did not leave it at that, but likewise also struck down his consort Dioscorus and the rest. In this way, therefore, just as in the case of every heresy there is no ambiguity about what has always been done or what is being done: their successors Timothy [the Cat], Peter [the Hoarse], and the other Peter, the Antiochian, have been cut out—not individually by councils called again to deal with them singly, but once and for all as a consequence of the regular acts of the synod. Therefore, as it has not been clear that even those who were their correspondents and accomplices are all bound with a similar strictness, and are by right wholly separated from the Catholic and Apostolic communion, We hereby declare that Acacius, too, is to be removed from communion with Us, since he preferred to cast in his lot with perfidy rather than to remain in the authentic Catholic and Apostolic communion (though for almost three years he has been authoritatively advised by letters of the Apostolic See, lest it should come to this). But after he went over to another communion, nothing was possible except that he should be at once cut off from association with the Apostolic See, lest on his account, if We delayed even a little, We also should seem to have come into contact with the perfidious. But when he was struck with such a blow, did he come to his senses, did he promise correction, did he emend his error? Would he have been coerced by more lenient treatment, when even harsh blows left no impression? While he tarries in his perfidy and damnation, it is both impossible to use his name in the liturgy of the church, and unnecessary to tolerate any external contact with him. Wherefore he will be led in good faith away from the heretical communion into which he has mixed himself, or there will be no choice but to drive him away with them.

§9 But if the bishops of the East murmur, that the Apostolic See did not apply such judgments to them, as if they had either convinced the Apostolic See that Peter [the Hoarse] was to be accepted as legitimate, or had not yet been fully complicit in this unheard-of acceptance: just as they cannot demonstrate that he was free of heretical depravity, neither can they in anyway excuse themselves, being in communion with heretics. If perhaps they should add that they all with one voice reported the reception of Peter [the Hoarse] by

Acacius to the Apostolic See, then by the same token they know how he responded to them. But the authority of the Apostolic See—that in all Christian ages it has been set over the universal Church—is confirmed both by a series of canons of the Fathers, and by manifold tradition. But even hence, whether anyone should prevail to usurp anything for himself against the ordinances of the Synod of Nicaea, this can be shown to the college of the one communion, not to the opinion of external society. If anyone has confidence amongst them, let him go out into the midst, and disprove and instruct the Apostolic See concerning each part. Therefore let his name [Acacius] be removed from our midst, which works the separation of churches far from Catholic communion, in order that sincere peace of faith and of communion should be repaired, and unity: and then let it competently and legitimately be investigated which of us either has risen up or struggles to rise up against venerable antiquity. And then shall appear who by modest intention guards the form and tradition of the elders, and who irreverently leaping beyond these, reckons himself able to become equal by robbery.

§10 But if it is proposed to me that the character [*persona*] of the Constantinopolitan people makes it impossible (it is said) that the name of scandal, that is Acacius, be removed; I am silent, because with both the heretic Macedonius formerly having been driven out, and Nestorius recently having been thrown out, the Constantinopolitan people have elected to remain Catholic rather than be retained by affection for their condemned greater prelates. I am silent, because those who had been baptized by these very same condemned prelates, remaining in the Catholic faith, are disturbed by no agitation. I am silent, because for ludicrous things the authority of Your Piety now restrains popular tumults; and thus much more for the necessary salvation of their souls the multitude of the Constantinopolitan city obeys you, if you princes should lead them back unto the Catholic and Apostolic communion. For, Emperor Augustus, if anyone perhaps were to attempt something against public laws (perish the thought!), for no reason would you have been able to suffer it. Do you not reckon it to concern your conscience that the people subject to you should be driven back from the pure and sincere devotion of Divinity? Finally, if the mind of the people of one city is not reckoned to be offended if divine things (as the matter demands) are corrected—how much more does it hold that, lest divine things should be offended, we ought not (nor can we) strike the pious faith of all those of the Catholic name?

§11 And nevertheless these same ones demand that they should be healed by our will. Therefore they allow that they can be cured by competent remedies: otherwise (Heaven forfend!) by crossing over into their ruin, we can perish with them, whereas we cannot save them. Now here I leave to your conscience under divine judgement what must rather be done: whether, as We desire, we should return all at once unto certain life; or, as those demand, we should tend unto manifest death.

§12 But still they strain to call the Apostolic See proud and arrogant for furnishing them with medicines. The quality of the languishing often has this: that they should accuse rather the medics calling them back to healthful things by fitting observations, than that they themselves should consent to depose or reprove their noxious appetites. If we are proud, because we minister fitting remedies of souls, what are those to be called who resist? If we are proud who say that obedience must be given to paternal decrees, by what name should those be called who oppose them? If we are puffed up, who desire that the divine cult should be served with pure and unblemished tenor; let them say how those who think even against divinity should be named. Thus also do the rest, who are in error, reckon us, because we do not consent to their insanity. Nevertheless, truth herself indicates where the spirit of pride really stands and fights.