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3. Catholic Social Teaching, *Laudato Si'*, and the Green New Deal

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Abstract

The Green New Deal (GND) is a very ambitious mission statement for a just transition to a low carbon economy whose starting point was not perceived political possibility but the boundaries of the climate system, for a functioning society, as defined by the scientific community. This paper compares modern Catholic Social Teaching, especially *Laudato Si'*, the ecological encyclical of Pope Francis, to the GND. It argues that the GND is consonant with all the relevant principles of Catholic Social Teaching: human dignity, solidarity/common good/participation, option for the poor, rights of workers, subsidiarity, economic development for the poorest countries of the world, private property and the universal destination of all goods, and peace.

Keywords: Green New Deal, Catholic Social Teaching, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis, climate change, subsidiarity

Introduction

The Green New Deal (GND) was a resolution introduced on February 7, 2019, by freshman Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Senator Ed Markey, along with 67 other co-sponsors in the House of Representatives. It became the yardstick by which those Democrats seeking the party's presidential nomination had to measure their climate proposals, with a majority of them supporting the GND. The GND has become the most widely known, at least by name, proposal to deal with the climate crisis and is the mark by which other proposals are being gauged. In light of its prominence, this paper will compare the GND to Catholic Social Teaching (CST) with a special emphasis on *Laudato Si* (*LS*), the first encyclical devoted to ecology. First, prior to turning to *LS*, this paper will introduce the major themes of CST, paying attention to texts where particular themes were emphasized. This will allow one to see how *LS* extends those themes, broadening their application to the ecological crisis. Second, I will examine how these themes are exemplified in *LS*. Third, I will compare Catholic Social Teaching and *Laudato Si* to the GND, while elucidating the major components of the GND. Here I will show how the GND is consonant with Catholic Social Teaching and could be seen as operationalizing *Laudato Si*.

Catholic Social Teaching

The body of documents that we understand as modern Catholic Social Teaching originated with Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, which addressed the exploitation of workers in the midst of the Industrial Revolution. Over the next century and a quarter, popes and a council (i.e., Vatican II) published encyclicals and constitutions addressing particular problems in the context of the gospel. CST draws upon the Christian scriptures, the tradition of Christian writings on Christian living and social life, natural law, and social analysis. In the tumultuous period of the last hundred and thirty years a host of themes have emerged that serve as principals for a just society. Here I provide a brief sketch of central themes of modern Catholic Social Teaching that are relevant to our comparison of CST, *LS*, and the GND. This brief sketch of CST will show how these themes are interrelated and fit into a coherent vision of principles that should inform a good society. In this way, crucial themes relative to the GND such as subsidiarity can be properly understood within the overall context of CST, which will allow for one to get a sense of their full meaning and importance. Without some sense of the whole of CST, discrete principals of CST could only be related in a rather mechanistic way to the GND, leaving one unaware of the meaning, significance, and force of those principals for the ordering of a just society. In addition, this introductory sketch allows one to see how Pope Francis's *Laudato Si* is grounded in the whole of CST and contradicts attempts of critics, within and outside the Catholic Church, to portray Francis as an outlier pope importing Latin American socialism into Catholicism. While outlining the historical development of these themes is beyond the scope of this essay, I will offer a more historical sense of the development of the principle of subsidiarity.

The first theme of CST is human dignity, which is grounded in the doctrines of Creation, Incarnation, grace, and eschatology. Human beings are created in the image of God "endowed

with intelligence and freedom”¹ (John XXIII 1963, 3) and their dignity is “incomparably increased” (John XXIII 1963, 10) when we recognize that they “have been ransomed by the blood of Jesus Christ” (John XXIII 1963, 10) and “grace has made them sons and friends of God, and heirs to eternal glory” (John XXIII 1963, 10).

The human being, however, is not an isolated subject but is social and interdependent. The second theme of solidarity describes not only what we are, but also is a “positive and moral value of the growing awareness of interdependence among individuals and nations” (John Paul II, 2016c, 38). Solidarity as a virtue is “not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people” (John Paul II 2016c, 38), but is a commitment to the common good (the third theme), which is “the good of all and of each individual, because we are *all* really responsible *for all*” (John Paul II 2016c, 38). The reality of human “interdependence must be transformed into solidarity [as a virtue], based upon the principle that the goods of creation are meant for all” (John Paul II 2016c, 39), including both the fruits of the earth and of human hands.

The twin pillars of CST are human dignity and the common good, and each one informs the other. The full flourishing of the individual person only happens in relation to others in society “for man’s social nature makes it evident that the progress of the human person and the advance of society hinge on each other” (Vatican II 2016, 25). The dignity of the human person and the full flourishing of the human person are relational and cannot be separated from the common good, while the common good must be understood as providing the conditions for the full flourishing of the irreducible subject in her profound dignity. In this way the common good is opposed to radical individualism and collectivism. In addition, the human being has a profound dignity that entails a host of rights that society must uphold while this person only becomes fully herself in relation to individual others and to society, and as such the person has a duty to promote the rights and flourishing of others. This is grounded in the Christian scriptures first and greatest commandment “that love of God cannot be separated from love of neighbor” (Vatican II 2016, 24) such that the human being “cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself” (Vatican II 2016, 24). The common good and unity of humanity within the diversity of irreducible human beings “reflects the intimate life of God, one God in three persons and is what Christians mean by the word ‘communion’” (Vatican II 2016, 38).

Since the dignity and full flourishing of the human person happens in relationship to others in the community of persons, a particular society has the responsibility to create conditions for the person to be able to fully participate in the social, cultural, economic, and political goods of that society. The person, on the other hand, has the duty to fully and responsibly participate in these goods of society. The call for full participation of all members of society as integral to their human dignity is the fourth theme of CST. Those who are poor are often marginalized from full participation in the goods of society and thus Catholic teaching has a preferential option for the poor, which is the fifth theme. This does not mean that the poor are preferred over against others; rather, it means that unless society actively

¹ All references to documents of modern Catholic Social Teaching will cite the paragraph numbers within the text. All other references will use page numbers.

reaches out to the poor creating conditions for their participation in the goods of society, the poor will remain marginalized and the common good will be undermined. As Pope Francis maintains, drawing upon the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB), “Greater attention must be given to the ‘needs of the poor, weak, and the vulnerable in a debate often dominated by more powerful interests.’” (Francis 2015, 52) Without this attention to those who are poor, the common good will not be realized. Thus the “common good immediately becomes logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters” (Francis 2015, 158).

The importance of preserving human dignity by providing a countervailing force to powerful interests was at the origins of modern Catholic Social Teaching, as Leo XIII wrote *Rerum Novarum* to address the conditions of workers; it has remained a central theme. Work, which is the sixth theme, is not simply about providing for the necessities of life (Leo XIII 2016, 130) but “belongs to the vocation of every person . . . who expresses and fulfills himself by working” (John Paul II 2019a, 6). God is supremely creative and the human being as an image of God works not only to survive, but work is also an expression of her creativity and in her creative work she shares in the creative activity of God (John Paul II 2016b, 25). This ability of the human being, as the image of God, to act in a “planned and rational way, capable of deciding about himself and with a tendency to self-realization” (John Paul II 2016b, 6) is what John Paul II called subjective work. He understood objective work, on the other hand, as the means by which humans cultivate the earth through agricultural, industrial, and technological work. This distinction between subjective and objective work advances the idea that work is not external to the person as something she does but emerges out of who she is as created in the image of God. As such it is tied in with the principle of human dignity and provides the basis for the privileging of the person (labor) over the accumulation of profit (capital). In this vein, John Paul II defends four traditional rights of labor “suitable employment for all those capable of it; just remuneration for the work done; the organization of the labor process to respect the requirements of the person and his or her life; and the right to form unions” (O’Brien and Shannon 2016, Kindle 8021).

To counteract the domination of workers by industry titans, Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum* supported state intervention to set minimum wages and to regulate working conditions and the working day. This raised questions, however, about the limits of state intervention, which was addressed by Pius XI in *Quadragesimo anno* and by subsequent popes. As we have seen, the good of the human person is relational and the person is in relation to and participates in a variety of human communities “ranging from those as small as the family to those as large as the national and global societies” (Hollenbach 1994, 195). Subsidiarity is the seventh theme of CST and is a principle that provides guidance on the proper relationships among the range of communities in society to advance the common good. The commitment to the good of all persons in their uniqueness and the plurality of historical, political, cultural, and social communities and contexts within which the common good is advanced mitigates against a monolithic understanding of the common good that would “absorb and destroy” (Pius XI 2016, 79) the individual person and smaller communities. The principle of subsidiarity holds that the larger forms of community, like political society, should support (*subsidiium*) the smaller forms of community when they are not able to make their contribution to society, they should not absorb or replace them (Hollenbach 1994, 195).

Subsidiarity is informed by the principle of participation. In order for the person to contribute to the common good she must be allowed and encouraged to participate in the social, cultural, economic, and political life of the community and the range of communities within these different aspects of society. “It is,” as Pius XI wrote (2016, 79), “an injustice . . . and a disturbance of right order to transfer to the larger and higher collectivity functions which can be performed and provided for by lesser and subordinate bodies. Inasmuch as every social activity should, by its very nature, prove a help to members of the body social, it should never destroy or absorb them.” In a totalitarian state the individual is subsumed into the collective and their participation in different levels of community in society is hindered. This brings to mind the totalitarianism of Stalin’s Russia or Mao’s China, but recent work in political philosophy argues that a subtler version of inverted totalitarianism has emerged in the United States (Wolin 2017).

While government should not transfer functions that can be achieved by smaller organizations and must support the different smaller communities so that they can contribute to the common good, when those communities cannot realize the common good a collective with a wider range of influence must lend a hand without replacing the lower collective. Subsidiarity “does not mean that a government that governs least governs best” (Hollenbach 1994, 196); rather, “it calls for as much government intervention as necessary to enable the other parts of civil society to contribute to the common good” (Hollenbach 1994, 196). By the time of the writing of *Pacem in Terris* in April 1963 — a few months after the Cuban Missile Crisis and in the wake of the 1948 UN Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) — John the XXIII (1963, 140), referencing the principle of subsidiarity, called for an international authority because “public authorities of the individual States are not in a position to tackle” the “vast, complex, and urgent economic, social, political problems posed by the universal common good.” Popes Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict, and Francis have similarly called for “a true world political authority” (Benedict XVI 2016, 67).

While CST defends the basic right of private ownership of property and free commerce, because of the “principle that the goods of creation are meant for all” (John Paul II 2016c, 39), or the universal destination of all goods, private property is not an absolute right. This seventh theme concerns the rights and responsibilities of private property in light of the universal destination of all goods. As Paul VI (2016, 23) wrote in 1967 in *Populorum Progressio*, “private property does not constitute for anyone an absolute and unconditioned right. No one is justified in keeping for his exclusive use what he does not need, when others lack necessities.” The “right to property must never be exercised to the detriment of the common good” (Paul VI 2016, 23). And “certain forms of property must be reserved to the State, since they carry with them an opportunity of domination too great to be left to private individuals without injury to the community at large” (Pius XI 2016, 114). John XXIII thought that a symptom and cause of the multiplication of social relationships in contemporary society was “intervention of public authorities” in “more intimate aspects of personal life” such as “the care of health, the instruction and education of youth, the choice of personal career, the ways and means of rehabilitating or assisting those handicapped mentally or physically” (John XXIII 2016, 60). While he saw this development as “not without danger” (John XXIII 2016, 60), he understood it as an advance because “it makes possible . . . the satisfaction of many personal rights, especially those of economic and social life” (John XXIII 2016, 61) relating “to the

minimum necessities of human life, to health services, to the broadening and deepening of elementary education, to a more fitting training in skills, to housing, to labor, to suitable leisure and recreation” (John XXIII 2016, 61). After reiterating the principle of subsidiarity calling on authorities to be aware of “hindering smaller social communities like families, social and cultural groups, and intermediate bodies and institutions” (Vatican II 2016, 75), *Gaudium et Spes* maintains that “because of increased complexity of modern circumstances government is more often required to intervene in social and economic affairs, by way of bringing about conditions more likely to help citizens and groups freely attain to complete human fulfillment with greater effect” (Vatican II 2016, 75). John Paul II in reiterating the Catholic Church’s principle of the order of private property to the common good maintains that “the right to private property is subordinated to the right to common use, to the fact that goods are meant for everyone” (John Paul II 2016b, 14). Thus “one cannot exclude the socialization, in suitable conditions, of certain means of production” (John Paul II 2016b, 14). Such socialization would not simply involve converting the means of production to state property but would have to involve ownership by the workers. In addition, “if there should arise a conflict ‘between acquired private rights and primary community exigencies,’ it is the responsibility of public authorities ‘to look for a solution, with the active participation of individuals and social groups’” (Paul VI 2016, 23).

The eighth theme is the need for economic development for the poorest countries of the world with particular emphasis on the legacy of colonialism. In addition, the goal of right relationship and justice, where each is given what is due to her, is linked to the security and stability of communities, including the world community. Within this principle of peace is the long history of just war theory, which is beyond the scope of this paper.

Though this is not an exhaustive list of the themes of CST: human dignity, solidarity/common good/participation, option for the poor, rights of workers, subsidiarity, economic development for the poorest countries of the world, private property and the universal destination of all goods, and peace include most of the major themes of CST. These are all relevant to the Green New Deal resolution.

***Laudato Si* and Catholic Social Teaching**

In his encyclical *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis (2015, 3) seeks to “enter into dialogue with all people about our common home.” The dialogue between different ways of knowing, different religious traditions, and between different sectors of society, which is fundamental to realizing the principle of participation, was modelled by the pope as he sought consultation from world renowned climate scientists; religious, political, and business leaders; and policy analysts in preparing his encyclical. *LS* follows the “see-judge-act” model of Catholic social action, articulated by John XXIII (2016, 236) “first, one reviews the concrete situation; secondly, one forms a judgment on it in the light of these same principles; thirdly, one decides what in the circumstances can and should be done to implement these principles.” The starting point for the document (the seeing or understanding moment in the see-judge-act model) occupies a full quarter of the document (in terms of the number of paragraphs) and is devoted to describing the crisis of environmental degradation and global inequality drawing upon the latest research in the natural and social sciences. The encyclical was published with the hope that it would “help us acknowledge the appeal, immensity and urgency of the challenge we

face” (Francis 2015, 15). The sense of urgency is a leitmotif running through the document when he writes “things are now reaching a breaking point” (Francis 2015, 61), “doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain,” and “radical change is required” (Francis 2015, 171) including “progressively replacing coal, oil, and natural gas without delay” (Francis 2015, 165). Avoiding a breaking point will require “decisive action here and now” (Francis 2015, 161) for “halfway measures simply delay the inevitable disaster” (Francis 2015, 194). The call to act decisively reflects the scientific consensus on climate change and the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and Social Sciences statement, which maintain that climate change is a “human-induced emergency” that can be avoided through existing technology while ending the most extreme forms of poverty. (Pontifical Academy of Sciences and Social Sciences 2015, 1)

Prior to the publication of *Laudato Si'*, ecological concerns did not find an extended treatment within the documents of Catholic Social Teaching. Indeed, the treatment of ecological concerns within CST would fit on a few pages. In *LS*, Francis brings the tradition of CST, in dialogue with the latest scientific evidence regarding ecological degradation, to bear on the ecological crisis and global inequality and develops an integral ecology that articulates the relation of the human beings with God, other human beings, and with the rest of creation (Francis 2015, 240).

The themes of CST outlined above are extended in *LS* to the natural world: for, “nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it” (Francis 2015, 139). Indeed, “our body itself establishes us in a direct relationship with the environment and with other living beings” (Francis 2015, 155). Not only is nature good because we are a part of it, but also it is good in itself. According to Francis (2015, 140), “we take these systems into account not only to determine how best to use them, but also because they have an intrinsic value independent of their usefulness. Each organism, as a creature of God, is good and admirable in itself; the same is true of the harmonious ensemble of organisms existing in a defined space and functioning as a system.”

The twin pillars of CST, human dignity and the common good, along with the other themes of CST that emerge from them are now understood in *LS* in relationship to the natural world of which the human being is a part. Human dignity is not only expressed in “being capable of self-knowledge, self-possession, and freely giving herself and entering into communion with others” (Francis 2015, 65), but also the capacity to recognize the goodness of non-human creatures, which are willed by God and reflect “a ray of God’s infinite wisdom and goodness” (Francis 2015, 69). The human being has the capacity and duty to “respect the laws of nature and the delicate equilibria existing between the creatures of this world” (Francis 2015, 68). The dignity of the human being is now bound up with the natural world because the human being is part of the natural world and through her intellect and will is called to know and care for the natural world which has its own intrinsic value.

Francis extends the concept of the common good to the environment. He does this in a differentiated way because even though he understands the environment as having a value in-itself, the human being has a unique and higher value. The environment is an element or aspect of the common good as one of the conditions for the common good in that Francis

understands human beings as part of the natural world (2015, 139) in their bodily existence (2015, 155) and dependent on the larger natural systems for their existence (2015, 140). Just as each human being and society has a responsibility to advance the common good, so too they have a responsibility to protect the natural environment because it is “a collective good” (Francis 2015, 95). Francis (2015, 23) further specifies the climate system as “a common good, belonging to all and meant for all . . . a complex system linked to many of the essential conditions for human life.” The earth is our common home and damaging the earth damages future generations so Francis (2015, 159) extends the common good to future generations and calls for intergenerational solidarity while also calling for “a renewed sense of intragenerational solidarity” (Francis 2015, 162).

The preferential option for the poor must also be understood within ecological concerns, for “the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest” (Francis 2015, 48). Those who are poor live in areas with greater pollution (Francis 2015, 20) and climate impacts threaten “their means of subsistence” (Francis 2015, 25) leading to migration (Francis 2015, 25). Those who are poor often suffer problems with the quality (often contaminated by pollutants [Francis 2015, 29]) and access (Francis 2015, 30) to fresh water. Marginalized communities for whom environmental destruction not only effects their means of subsistence but their culture are indigenous communities, who Francis (2015, 146) in this respect calls “principal dialogue partners.” This goes to the heart of *LS* with its insistence that ecological degradation (the cry of the earth) and dehumanizing structures that lead to gross inequality and poverty (the cry of the poor) are not two crises, but rather “one complex crisis which is both social and environmental” (Francis 2015, 139). As a result, “strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature” (Francis 2015, 139). In this integrated approach, *LS* develops the other themes of CST relevant to the GND in relation to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor, including the importance of labor, subsidiarity, peace, economic development for the poorest countries of the world, and the relationship of private property to the universal destination of all goods.

The Green New Deal, *Laudato Si'*, and Catholic Social Teaching

The Green New Deal is a short resolution (14 pages) designed to express a sense of Congress; yet, despite its brevity, it is an ambitious mission statement providing a framework for future legislation to address the climate crisis and income inequality in the formation of a more just society. It can be considered a resolution operationalizing many of the principles and themes of Catholic Social Teaching. As the UN Declaration on Human Rights did not provide ultimate reasons as to why human beings have rights and why some are universal because of religious, cultural, social, and political pluralism (Glendon 1999, 2), so, too, the GND does not provide ultimate reasons for ethical concepts that undergird it.

As *Laudato Si'* began with problem of ecological degradation, with an emphasis on the climate crisis grounded in the science and reviewed by members of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, the Green New Deal begins with problem of destabilizing the climate system. As one could not understand *LS* with its call to comprehensive rethinking of the global system without understanding the urgency of ecological degradation, one cannot understand the GND with its urgency, ambition, and departure from prior attempts to address the climate

threat in the United States without understanding the problems it is trying to address as articulated in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 2018 special report "Global Warming of 1.5°C" and the US Fourth National Climate Assessment (Reidmiller et al. 2018).

The IPCC special report was prepared in response to the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement, which stated that the goal is to hold to "a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius" (United Nations 2015, 3). The special report "Global Warming of 1.5°C" reviewed the scientific literature and showed that climate impact risks were far less at 1.5°C rather than 2°C. The text of the GND draws upon these scientific reviews of the literature by highlighting how climate change at or above 2°C could substantially increase the risk of sea level rise, increased wildfires, severe storms, and droughts that "threaten human life, healthy communities, and critical infrastructure" (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 2). In light of these risks, the GND resolves to shift the US economic and political system onto a pathway to hold global temperatures to 1.5°C above preindustrial levels, which will require, according to the IPCC special report, "global reductions in greenhouse gas emission from human sources of 40 to 60 percent from 2010 levels by 2030; and net-zero global emissions by 2050" (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 3).

The starting point for the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009 (i.e., the Waxman-Markey Cap and Trade Bill) and the Clean Power Plan in 2015 was perceived political possibility. The starting point for the Green New Deal is to hold to the 1.5°C target set by the global climate science community. For the GND, staying within the boundaries of the Earth system is the starting point for how we must order our society going forward. While many press reports of the GND treated climate science as an afterthought (Spencer 2019), the centerpiece of the GND and its starting point are meeting the IPCC 1.5°C target by cutting greenhouse gas emissions at least 45% below 2010 levels by 2030. There is no more wiggle room in this target. Recent publications by some of the world's leading climate scientists reconfirmed analysis from a decade ago that "the Earth System is on a Hothouse Earth pathway driven by human emissions of greenhouse gases and biosphere degradation" (Steffen, 2018 8254), that we might already be in the range (i.e. 1° to 2°C rise in temperatures above preindustrial averages) to initiate tipping points to push us into a hot house Earth, and this "is an existential threat to civilization" (Lenton 2019, 595).

One of the criticisms of the Green New Deal is that it does not just focus on climate change but includes a host of unrelated items that are viewed by critics as "simply a classic progressive wish-list" (Spencer 2019). The IPCC special report, however, shows that to meet the radical reductions in global greenhouse gases to hold to 1.5°C by the end of the century will require "a rapid phase out of CO₂ emissions and deep emissions reductions in other GHGs and climate forcers" (Rojeli et al. 2018, 2.2.2, 2.3.3). This is attained by "broad transformations in the energy; industry; transport; buildings; and agriculture, forestry and other land-use (AFOLU) sectors" (Rojeli et al. 2018, 2.3.2). In the United States, transport accounts for 28% of emissions. Buildings (residential and commercial) account for 28% of energy consumption; when you take into account electrical energy loss in production, transmission, and distribution to buildings that number jumps to 39%. (US Energy Information Administration 2020). The agricultural sector, which "come from livestock such as cows, agricultural soils, and rice production," (Rojeli et al. 2018, 2018) accounts for 10% of

emissions. While land use and forestry account for nearly 12% of emissions. These sectors touch upon every aspect of society and each one of them are addressed by the GND: energy (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 8), industry or manufacturing (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 8, 12, 13), agriculture or farming (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 8), forestry or afforestation (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 9), and land use practices (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 8). Transport (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 9) and buildings (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 8) are dealt with in terms of meeting climate targets through reducing greenhouse gasses in these sectors and also in terms of addressing inadequate housing and transportation in the problem of context of income inequality in the US (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 3).

Laudato Si in describing the problems it is addressing begins with ecological degradation and then moves onto income inequality and the cry of the poor. Similarly, the Green New Deal begins with earth system boundaries for a functioning society and then introduces “several related crises” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 3) that it resolves to address. *LS* showed the interrelation and causes of these problems in great depth (it is twelve times longer than the GND), while the GND simply indicates the problems and the fact that they are related (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 4) and then proposes pathways for addressing these proposals. These “related crises” in the GND revolve around pay inequality, which is especially pronounced along racial and gender lines (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 4), that makes “basic needs . . . inaccessible to a significant portion of the United States population” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 3). These include clean air, clean water, healthy food; adequate health care, housing, transportation, and education; and four-decade wage stagnation from deindustrialization and an attack on labor. Like *LS*, the GND recognizes that environmental destruction effects the marginalized more profoundly and exacerbates pre-existing “systemic racial, regional, social, environmental, and economic injustices” which it refers to throughout as “systemic injustices” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 4). These systemic injustices disproportionately affect “frontline and vulnerable communities” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 4), which are “indigenous peoples, communities of color, migrant communities, deindustrialized communities, depopulated rural communities, the poor, low-income workers, women, the elderly, the unhoused, people with disabilities, and youth” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 4). As *LS* has a preferential option for the poor, so, too, does the GND with its focus on “frontline and vulnerable communities” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 4). As CST recognizes the historical roots of colonialism still informing the present income disparities between the global north and the global south, the GND recognizes the historical injustices against frontline and vulnerable communities and resolves “to promote justice and equity by stopping current, preventing future, and repairing historic oppression of . . . frontline and vulnerable communities” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 6). As Pope Francis (2015, 146) understood indigenous communities as “principal dialogue partners,” in the effort to hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor, the GND provides a special place for indigenous communities recognizing how colonialism was destructive in those communities and promising procedural justice, the honoring of all treaties, and “protecting and enforcing the sovereignty and land rights of indigenous peoples” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 14).

In response to these problems the GND calls for a “government led mobilization akin to the “mobilizations during World War II and the New Deal” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 4), which “created the greatest middle class that the United States has ever seen” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 4–5). The GND mobilization, however, will include those who “were excluded from many of

the economic and societal benefits of those mobilizations” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 5), namely, “many members of frontline and vulnerable communities” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 5).

The IPCC argues that to achieve radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions will require a social transformation and the GND sees this as a “historic opportunity” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 5) to “create millions of good, high-wage jobs, provide unprecedented levels of prosperity and economic security for all people in the United States, and to counteract systemic injustices” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 5). Meeting the climate goals through a ten-year mobilization is to occur “through a fair and just transition for all communities and workers” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 5). Indeed, while the GND has been criticized for introducing programs that do not directly deal with the problem of climate change, it must be noted that any rapid reduction in greenhouse gas emissions will require a transition of workers from fossil fuel jobs to other means of employment. The commitment of CST and *LS* to labor is clearly embodied here, though the GND does not provide the deeper rationale for these commitments.

The GND’s concern with systemic injustices, the interrelationship of multiple issues, and the need for decisive action akin to the mobilization for World War II is similar to CST’s concern with structures and system and is similar to the approach of *LS*. *LS* insists that because the problems are interrelated (Francis 2015, 137), the possibility of “dire consequences” (Francis 2015, 161) and the “scale of change, it is no longer possible to find a specific, discrete answer for each part of the problem” (Francis 2015, 139). Rather, “it is essential to seek comprehensive solutions which consider the interactions within natural systems themselves and with social systems” (Francis 2015, 139) and “strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature” (Francis 2015, 139). The urgency of the GND is also reflected in *LS* which maintains that “halfway measures simply delay the inevitable disaster” (Francis 2015, 194) and “the effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by our decisive action, here and now” (Francis 2015, 161).

In light of the climate crisis and the related social crises, the GND maintains “that it is the duty of the Federal Government” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 1) to respond to these problems. Similarly, Pope Francis (2015, 157) maintains in line with the tradition of CST that “society as a whole, and the state in particular, are obliged to defend and promote the common good.” The common good is one of the twin pillars of CST, and the state has a crucial role in defending and promoting the common good. Since the 1980s, the view of the role of government in the United States has been dominated by the neo-liberalism of the Reagan and Thatcher years, which is a form of laissez-faire capitalism that deregulated economies, crushed labor unions, and pushed for diminished role for the state in the workings of the economy and society. While defenders of the current neo-liberal order want to continue with a diminished role of the state, CST sees the state as playing a crucial function. Binary thinking is prevalent in much US political discourse. Either one fully leaves it up to the free market or one is a socialist in the line with the late Hugo Chavez, former president of Venezuela. Catholic Social Teaching does not fall into such binary thinking. The principle of subsidiarity, with all the implications outlined above for human dignity and the common good, allows for the role of government at different levels to be a means to achieving the common good. The GND very clearly and repeatedly does not fall prey to the caricatures of socialism understood as the government seizing control of the means of production and undermining personal liberties.

The GND reflects elements of the principles of participation, subsidiarity, and the preferential option for the poor in CST, though not explicitly grounding them in human dignity and the common good as CST does. The GND is not about command and control from Washington D.C. It repeatedly signals that it is about participation and consultation with various communities with a preferential option for frontline and vulnerable communities: “the Green New Deal must be developed through transparent and inclusive consultation, collaboration, and partnership with frontline and vulnerable communities, labor unions, worker cooperatives, civil society groups, academia, and businesses” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 10). Furthermore, the GND indicates, in line with the principles of subsidiary and the subordination of private property to the universal destiny of all goods, that it will provide financial support and technical expertise at every level of public governance and private organizations. As *LS* argues for a whole range of community engagement to deal with the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor, the GND recognizes that the federal government plays a crucial role in supporting all the levels of government from local to state to federal. The GND will require the following goals and projects — “(A) providing and leveraging, in a way that ensures that the public receives appropriate ownership stakes and returns on investment, adequate capital (including through community grants, public banks, and other public financing), technical expertise, supporting policies, and other forms of assistance to communities, organizations, Federal, State, and local government agencies, and businesses working on the Green New Deal mobilization” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 11).

Laudato Si argues that the principle of the universal destiny of all goods and “the subordination of private property to the universal destination of goods, and thus the right of everyone to their use, is a golden rule of social conduct and “the first principle of the whole ethical and social order” (Francis 2015, 93). Quoting the bishops of Paraguay, Francis points to the fact that subsistence rights come with a host of interrelated rights. A poor person living in a rural area has “a natural right to possess a reasonable allotment of land where he can establish his home, work for subsistence of his family and a secure life” (Francis 2015, 94). Without a host of other supports including “technical education, credit, insurance, and markets” (Francis 2015, 94), this subsistent right becomes illusory. Similarly, the GND transition to a low carbon economy together with the other goals to address income inequality, will require the government to provide training for workers to develop new skills. With characteristic ambition the GND calls for “providing resources, training, and high-quality education, including higher education, to all people of the United States, with a focus on frontline and vulnerable communities, so that all people of the United States may be full and equal participants in the Green New Deal mobilization” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 11–12). The GND articulates support for human dignity and labor in other ways; for the GND, mobilization guarantee employment “with a family-sustaining wage,” will create “high quality union jobs” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 12) and will support collective-bargaining, workplace safety and anti-discrimination laws, provide “adequate family and medical leave, paid vacations, and retirement security to all people of the United States” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 13). In this context, the GND again operates along the lines of the principle of subsidiarity in its call to “hire of local workers” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 12) which once again demonstrates that the GND is not calling for a centralization of authority in Washington D.C.

In providing training for workers, the GND's focus on frontline and vulnerable communities (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 11–12) is like CST's preferential option for the poor. The GND's emphasis on reaching all people of the United States is similar to CST's notion of the common good as the good of everyone and CST's principle of the universal destination of all goods both from the earth and human hands. These are not isolated statements in the GND but are repeated multiple times in a very short document. Participation, the preferential option for the poor, the concern for labor, and subsidiarity are also evident in the GND: “ensuring democratic and participatory processes [participation] that are inclusive of and led by frontline and vulnerable communities [preferential option for the poor] and workers [concern for labor] to plan, implement, and administer the Green New Deal at the local level [subsidiarity]” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 12).

The principle of subsidiary and participation are leitmotifs of the GND. When calling for restoring ecosystems, which is crucial to pulling CO₂ out the atmosphere, the GND speaks of doing so in terms of “locally appropriate and science-based projects” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 10). When addressing the substantial emissions from agriculture the GND calls for “working collaboratively with farmers and ranchers in the United States to remove pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from the agricultural sector as much as is technologically feasible, including by supporting family farming” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 8). It also has a goal to see that “eminent domain is not abused” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 13). This is not a document calling for the government taking direct control of the economy with power centralized in Washington, D.C.; rather, it is a document that clearly shows that the federal government will support every level of government and private groups to help develop and implement the GND. This is certainly required to have a nation-wide just transition to a low carbon economy.

In outlining the crises other than the climate crisis, the GND speaks of declining life expectancy and the inaccessibility of basic needs to significant portions of the population. It understands basic needs as clean air, clean water, healthy food, adequate health care, housing, transportation, and education. In its final lines the GND has the goal of providing all people, again this is supporting the notion of the common good including everyone, “health-care, housing, economic security, clean water, clean air, health and affordable food, and access to nature” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 14). In press reports following the introduction of the resolution “the economic and social goals of the resolution were viewed as peripheral, simply a classic progressive wish-list” (Spencer 2019). Like the GND, *LS* would hold that these are not peripheral goods, but nearly all of these are basic needs. While some of these seem a stretch, like paid vacation, research shows that one of the factors for the US having much higher greenhouse gas emissions than European countries is that Americans work many more hours. This study calculates that if the United States followed the European Union and had seven additional weeks of vacation, “the United States would consume 20% less energy” (Rosnick and Weisbrot 2007, 412) While health care would fit into the crisis of basic needs it also relates very importantly to climate change resilience. The leading medical journal in the UK, the *Lancet*, has called climate change “the biggest global health threat of the 21st century” (Costello 2009, 1693). Climate resiliency from those impacts that can no longer be avoided will require healthy societies such that meeting the basic needs set forth by the GND would be a form of climate resiliency.

Catholic Social Teaching is addressing a global audience, while the GND is directed toward US policy. Nevertheless, the GND has several international components. First, the GND recognizes that the US has a particularly important role because of its historical responsibility for over 20 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions and its considerable technological capacity (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 3). Second, as CST, in this case *LS*, demands “a greater sense of responsibility for the common good from those who wield greater power” (Francis 2015, 196), the GND calls for the US to become “the international leader on climate action” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 10). Third, US leadership would involve “helping other countries to achieve a Green New Deal” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 10). As the US Green New Deal addresses the climate crisis and the problem of income inequality, the implication is that the US helping other countries achieve a GND would involve helping other countries address the climate crisis and their own systemic social injustices, which includes “stopping current, preventing future, and repairing historic oppression of . . . frontline and vulnerable communities” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 6). These “frontline and vulnerable communities” are “indigenous peoples, communities of color, migrant communities, deindustrialized communities, depopulated rural communities, the poor, low-income workers, women, the elderly, the unhoused, people with disabilities, and youth” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 4). In addition, the GND recognizes how colonialism was destructive for indigenous communities and calls for the honoring of all treaties, and “protecting and enforcing the sovereignty and land rights of indigenous peoples” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 14). In this way, the GND reflects CST’s concern for economic development for the poorest countries of the world with particular emphasis on the legacy of colonialism. In *LS* the traditional theme of CST concerning the shadow of colonialism is expanded to include the idea that there is an “ecological debt . . . between the global north and south” (Francis 2015, 51). This is particularly true with climate change as the developed countries of the global north have become rich through the burning of fossil fuels while developing countries of the global south will experience the greatest devastation from the greenhouse gas emissions of the northern countries. The US reducing its emissions in line with the science through the GND and helping other countries achieve a GND would help pay back the US’s ecological debt. Fourth, as CST recognizes the importance of peace, the GND addresses the national security implications of climate change “as a threat multiplier” “impacting the economic, environmental, and social stability of countries and communities around the world” (Ocasio-Cortez 2019, 4). In all of this, the GND is involved in “intragenerational solidarity” (Francis 2015, 162).

The GND is a very ambitious mission statement for a just transition to a low carbon economy whose starting point was meeting the targets set by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change special report “Global Warming of 1.5°C.” As such, it was a significant departure from the incrementalism of previous US proposals whose starting points were perceived political possibility. Modern Catholic Social Teaching is not a political program but is an evolving collection of teachings with a coherent set of principles that provide guidance for the formation of a just society that promotes human dignity and the common good. The GND, though not as developed as CST, is consonant with all the relevant principles of CST: human dignity, solidarity/common good/participation, option for the poor, rights of workers,

subsidiarity, economic development for the poorest countries of the world, private property and the universal destination of all goods, and peace.

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