

The Church in the Modern World

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Gaudium et Spes *Then and Now*

Michael G. Lawler, Todd A. Salzman,
and Eileen Burke-Sullivan



A Michael Glazier Book

LITURGICAL PRESS

Collegeville, Minnesota

www.litpress.org

A Michael Glazier Book published by Liturgical Press

Cover design by Jodi Hendrickson. Illustration by Susan R. Lawler.

Excerpts from documents of the Second Vatican Council are from *The Documents of Vatican II: With Notes and Comments by Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Authorities*. Walter J. Abbot, SJ, General Editor, Very Rev. Msgr. Joseph Gallagher, Translation Editor. © 1966 The America Press.

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Lawler, Michael G.

The church in the modern world : Gaudium et spes then and now /

Michael G. Lawler, Todd A. Salzman, Eileen Burke-Sullivan.

pages cm

"A Michael Glazier book."

ISBN 978-0-8146-8270-8 — ISBN 978-0-8146-8295-1 (ebook)

1. Vatican Council (2nd : 1962–1965 : Basilica di San Pietro in Vaticano). Constitutio pastoralis de ecclesia in mundo huius temporis.

2. Church and the world. I. Title.

BX8301962.A45 C9746 2014

261'.1—dc23

2014010550

To Fr. Dennis Hamm, SJ,
esteemed friend and colleague

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Prologue

The question of the relationship between the Christian Church and the world, understood as humanity in its historical existence with all the social, political, and economic structures which shape that existence, has not always been an issue for Christians. The earliest Christians took for granted that the Church was predominant, an attitude neatly summed up in the second-century *Didache*: “Comes grace and the world passes.”¹ All that really counted was the spiritual world. When the empire became Christian, however, and the Christian movement had taken root, the question of the relationship had to be faced. At the end of the fifth century, it was forcefully articulated by Pope Gelasius I (492–496): “Two things are the principle of the rule of this world, the sacred authority of pontiffs and royal power.”² Gelasius left no doubt about the relationship of these two things: “Though you [the Emperor] take precedence over the human race in dignity, nevertheless you bend your neck in devout submission to those who preside over things divine.” This hierocratic prioritization was continued and solidified and promulgated as “tradition” well into the Middle Ages,³ when there was the beginning of a profound change.

The twelfth century saw the first stirrings of modern science, that is, the study of the nature and the value of things in themselves.⁴ Political rulers also began to reflect on their own nature and value at this time. They sometimes saw their power and their function of governance as entirely independent of pontiffs, a doctrine that led to several notorious confrontations: between the Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV and Pope Gregory VII, Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II and Innocent IV, and

¹ *Didache*, X, 6.

² Thiel, *Epp. RR. Pontif.*, I, 350.

³ See Hugh of St. Victor, *De Sacramentis* II, 4, PL 176, 418; Also Boniface VIII, Bull *Unam Sanctam* (1302): temporal power is subject to spiritual power.

⁴ See Marie-Dominique Chenu, *La théologie au XIIIe siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 1957).

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Philip the Fair and Boniface VIII.⁵ Theologians Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas participated in the development of the autonomy of natural realities, including social and political realities, but their immediate disciples did not pursue this freedom of the natural from the ecclesiastical,⁶ and the predominance of ecclesiastical power continued, though more and more challenged.

The growth of the autonomy of temporal realities and the consequent emergence of genuine pluralism in the nineteenth century accentuated the theological discussion of the relationship between ecclesiastical and natural, including political, power. This theological discussion ended with the Second Vatican Council, which boldly and clearly acknowledged the autonomy of temporal and natural realities. This can be seen in the Vatican II documents *Lumen Gentium* (the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church [LG] 36) and *Gaudium et Spes* (the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World [GS] 36, 41, 56, 76).⁷ For example,

If by the autonomy of earthly affairs we mean that created things and societies themselves enjoy their own laws and values which must be gradually deciphered, put to use, and regulated by men, then it is entirely right to demand that autonomy. . . . For by the very circumstances of their having been created, all things are endowed with their own stability, truth, goodness, proper laws and order. (GS 36)

The debate on the relationship between the spiritual and natural spheres was greatly advanced by the council: both spheres were autonomous but related. The specification of their relationship was further advanced by the popes immediately succeeding the council, Paul VI and John Paul II. The council taught that “a secular quality is special and proper to laymen” (LG 31) and that the laity are “bound to penetrate the world with a Christian spirit” and are “to be witnesses to Christ in all things in the midst of human society” (GS 43). Paul VI repeated this teaching after the council, asserting that the Church “has an authentic

⁵ See Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 97–143.

⁶ See Etienne Gilson, “Pourquoi St. Thomas a critiqué St. Augustin,” *Archives d'histoire doctrinales et litteraire du Moyen Age* (1926), 6–127.

⁷ All citations for Vatican II documents are taken from *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott (New York: America Press, 1966). We have selected this translation because of its precise translation of the original Latin texts.

secular dimension, inherent to her inner nature and mission, which is deeply rooted in the mystery of the Word incarnate."⁸ Both the nature and the mission of the Church are rooted in the incarnation, that core Christian doctrine that confesses that God became man in Jesus of Nazareth. In the incarnation, Dermot Lane writes, "the gulf between heaven and earth, between God and man, between the supernatural and the natural, between the sacred and the secular . . . has once and for all been overcome, so that now we can glimpse heaven on earth, God in man, the supernatural in the natural, the sacred amidst the secular."⁹

The secular character of the Church and particularly of the laity is to be understood, John Paul II insisted, with a *theological* and not just a *sociological* meaning. "The term *secular* must be understood in the light of the act of God . . . who has handed over the world to women and men so that they may participate in the work of creation, free creation from the influence of sin, and sanctify themselves" (*Christifideles Laici* 15). The Church's service in and for the world, no matter what service it is, is not just *secular* service in the sense that it falls outside God's plan of salvation. It is also *salvation* service in the sense that it is for the sanctification and salvation of the world and its inhabitants. John Paul returned to this theme again and again.¹⁰ A theological characteristic of laity is that they live in the world, know the world, value the world, and seek to permeate the world with the Spirit of Christ and Christ's Gospel. In the end, the Church and the world are one as the human person is one, the Church being the soul that animates the world to become its best self "as it is to be renewed in Christ" (GS 40). It is also, "by her relationship with Christ, both a sacramental sign and an instrument of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind" (GS 42; see also LG 1).

The theological secularity of the laity was already common theological currency long before the 1960s and the Second Vatican Council. Pius XII described the essential mission of the Church as including the building up of the human community according to Christian principles. The lay faithful, he insisted, "are in the front line of the Church's life; through them the Church is the vital principle [the soul] of human

⁸ *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 64 (1972): 208.

⁹ Dermot Lane, *The Reality of Jesus* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), 137.

¹⁰ See, for example, John Paul II, "Unity in the Church's Mission with Diversity in Apostolates," *L'Osservatore Romano* 723, no. 8 (February 22, 1982): 6; "On Liberation Theology," *Origins* 8 (1979): 23; "The Church in Rural Africa," *Origins* 10 (1983): 23; "Specialis Filia Romanae Ecclesiae," *Catholic International* 4 (1993): 5.

society.”¹¹ In the 1950s, Yves Congar and Karl Rahner wrote in the same vein. After the ravages of World War II, the relationship of the Church and the world was even more pressing. Why, then, was there no document on that relationship among the preparatory documents of the council? The way the council developed clearly illustrates the answer to that question.

Pope John XXIII announced on January 25, 1959, he would convoke a council. The council convened on October 11, 1962. In the almost four-year interim between the announcement of the council and its opening there was a ferment of preparatory activity. The pope appointed ten commissions to sift the suggestions of topics that should be discussed at the council and to sort them into thematic documents to be debated and voted on. Sixty-seven such documents were prepared, most of them couched in condemnatory language far from the positive and reconciling approach enunciated by John in his opening speech, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* (Mother Church Rejoices). There was no document dealing with the Church in the modern world, but there were four dealing with issues that would eventually be incorporated in altered forms into *Gaudium et Spes*: the Moral Order; Chastity, Marriage, Family, and Virginity; the Social Order; the Community of Nations.

Even before the council began, it quickly became apparent that there would be serious disagreement regarding its content, tone, and shape. The text on the moral order, for example, had been composed mainly by a subcommission of Roman theologians and was classicist neo-Augustinian in structure. That is, it was based on the prevailing Catholic teaching of an objective, absolute, and immutable moral order. Theologians of a more historically conscious, neo-Thomist perspective were explicitly excluded from the subcommission. This preconciliar disagreement between classicist neo-Augustinians and historically conscious neo-Thomist theologians would serve as a paradigm for the disagreements that would occur throughout the length of the council itself.¹² Indeed, the debates over the schema and on the documents themselves, including one on the Church in the World of this Time, would repeatedly be played out along similar neo-Augustinian and neo-Thomist lines.

¹¹ *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 38 (1946): 149.

¹² For a discussion of the neo-Augustinian and neo-Thomist perspectives, see Joseph A. Komonchak, “Augustine, Aquinas, or the Gospel *sine glossa*?” in *Unfinished Journey: The Church 40 Years after Vatican II: Essays for John Wilkins*, ed. Austin Ivereigh (New York: Continuum, 2005), 102–18.

It should probably not be a surprise that there was such division among the Church leaders. By 1959, the historical situation of the previous several decades had left the world in a traumatized state. Europe had recently emerged from a war of unparalleled savagery and was still reeling from the horror of the “final solution” to the “Jewish problem” in Nazi Germany. The end of that war had given way to a “cold war” between the Western allies and the Soviet Union, a war that reached its moment of greatest anxiety shortly after the opening of the council in a standoff between the Soviet Union and the United States of America, the former seeking to install in Cuba nuclear missiles that could reach the United States, the latter resolutely vetoing such a move with a determined blockade. Colonialism was crumbling worldwide, with the former colonial powers leaving behind chaotic and poor countries. The former French colony of Vietnam collapsed under the strain of nationalism into a civil war which was already being waged when the council opened. The omnipresent scourge of racism was rampant, and civil rights struggles were being violently resisted in many places, the United States and South Africa being the most publicized. The world was living in fear and asking both what could be done and who could do it—ecclesiastical powers, political powers, or some combination of both.

The question of the most pressing problems of the modern world, however, was not confronted in any preparatory Vatican document, possibly because the Roman editors of the documents did not consider the issue of sufficient importance. By contrast, there was real unease among the fathers of the council about the absence of any discussion of the issue. Soon after the council began, Pope John appointed a new Mixed Commission to develop a document on “the Church in the World of this Time.” That document would come to have a tortuous and evolving birth until, on the very last day of the council in 1965, it became *Gaudium et Spes*. It went through several tentative documents, a Roman document superseded by a Malines document superseded by a Zurich document superseded by an Ariccia document that became, after still more heated debate, the basis for the approved document *Gaudium et Spes*. The history of that development will be treated in detail in chapter 1. Suffice it here to note that, even after its overwhelming approval, *Gaudium et Spes* was still criticized as too optimistic in its outlook on the world, neglecting the evident widespread influence of sin on men and women. That critique continued and continues long after the council, but a careful reading of the document reveals that the critique is not sustainable. *Gaudium et Spes* gives plenty of attention to sin and its ravages in the human past,

present, and (most likely) future (GS 10, 11, 13, 25). The document went on to become one of the most theologically and socially influential of the council.

Gaudium et Spes is divided into two main parts. Part 1, “The Church and Man’s Calling,”¹³ is divided into four chapters: the dignity of the human person, the human community, human activity in the world, and the role of the Church in the modern world. These chapters have profound ecclesiological implications for how we think about “church” in the modern world, as well as important methodological implications for how we think about moral issues in the modern world.

From an ecclesiological perspective, *Gaudium et Spes* builds on the work of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), *Lumen Gentium*, and *Dei Verbum* (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation) to disclose a pneumatological center of a Church that only lives and functions authentically when it serves as the sacrament of Christ in the world. The emphasis is on the mission of this people to proclaim and bring to realization the reign of God on earth as it is in heaven. Accomplishing this mission presumes a deep belief in the Spirit who directs discernment of the signs of the times and a willingness to do all things in the manner of Jesus. Such a stance requires each member and the whole institution to demonstrate a willingness to speak and to listen in a generous context of dialogue that respects the other. Finally, as Pope Francis has pointed out, it requires the whole people of God to become a *practically* poor Church in service of the world, especially those who are on the margins of human culture because of their poverty or the oppression under which they must live.

Methodologically, *Gaudium et Spes* reflects a profound shift from the neo-Augustinian, classicist approach toward a neo-Thomist, historically conscious approach to moral theology. A classicist worldview asserts that reality is static, necessary, fixed, and universal. The method utilized, anthropology formulated, and norms taught in this worldview are timeless, universal, and immutable, and the acts condemned by those norms are

¹³The universal use of “man” and “men” throughout the Vatican documents might grate on contemporary minds accustomed to the liberation and equality of women. The use of the male noun, however, is not intended to suggest, as some have speculated, to embrace only males. “Man” is the English translation of both the Greek *anthropos* and the Latin *homo*, each of which embraces both females and males. While a gender-inclusive translation would be more desirable, any time we read “man” in the documents, we should read it as inclusive and not exclusive of women.

always so condemned. Historical consciousness, grounded in existentialism, fundamentally challenges this view of reality. According to a historically conscious worldview, reality is dynamic, evolving, changing, and particular. The method utilized, anthropology formulated, and norms taught in this worldview are contingent, particular, and changeable, and the acts condemned by those norms are morally evaluated in terms of evolving human knowledge and understanding.

Gaudium et Spes suggests four foundational themes that are central for ethically achieving the goals enshrined in those four chapters. First, it seeks to elaborate what constitutes the truly human (GS 26, 49, 50, 60, 73, 74) and human dignity (GS 19, 27, 39, 51, 66, 73), suggesting an objectivist metaethic that realizes that what is good or right can be defined universally in terms of human dignity or some cognate of it. Second, it offers clear indications of how human dignity is to be defined (GS 12, 24, 26, 27): right acts promote human dignity; wrong acts frustrate that dignity. Third, all men and women are called to discern what promotes and what frustrates human dignity. They are to realize that their pastors will not always be so expert as to have a ready answer to every problem (even every grave problem) that arises (GS 43). Fourth, they are therefore summoned to prayerfully discern themselves what promotes and what frustrates human dignity. Their individual decisions lead to the formation of their conscience, that most secret core and sanctuary of every person where they are “alone with God, whose voice echoes in his depths” (GS 16; see also 26 and 41). The Catholic tradition has consistently asserted, and the Second Vatican Council reaffirms, that a well-formed conscience is inviolable and is to be followed to live a moral life. The following of one’s conscience is at the very core of the moral life.

If every individual “Is bound to follow his conscience faithfully, in order that he may come to God” and “is not to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his conscience” (*Dignitatis Humanae* [DH] 3), it is inevitable that different persons will come to different conclusions about human dignity and the ethical norms that promote it. That reality is the origin of legitimate pluralism in the Church and in the world, which is not to be confused with the relativism that both John Paul II and Benedict XVI excoriate. Relativism leads to conclusions that are false. Perspectivism, i.e., different conclusions derive from different perspectives, leads to conclusions that are true but only partially true. What is required, then, is not wholesale condemnation of differing conscientious judgments but the kind of dialogue much prized by Pope Paul VI. We shall discuss fully the relationship of relativism and perspectivism in chapter 3.

A plurality of views is inevitable when one considers the conjunction of conscience and the four traditional sources of ethics, the so-called Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, tradition, secular disciplines of knowledge, and human experience. Any given person can select, prioritize, interpret, and integrate these sources in different ways, leading to plural ways of defining human dignity with consequent plural norms for facilitating its attainment. These plural definitions and norms highlight the moral imperative of *Gaudium et Spes* to constantly be attuned to the signs of the times and to dialogue about these plural, partial truths. A woman at a third-story window in a skyscraper sees only what the third-story window allows her to see of the full panorama outside the window. If she were to go up to the twentieth floor or further up to the viewing platform on the roof, she would get an ever fuller view of what lies outside the building. So it is with dialogue about inevitably partial truths regarding human dignity and the norms that promote and do not frustrate its attainment.

Part 2 of *Gaudium et Spes* addresses “Some Questions of Special Urgency” and was shaped by the Zurich text, which had five appendices that were, in fact, five “signs of the time” (GS 4) in the latter half of the twentieth century. These appendices were: The Dignity of the Human Person, the Dignity of Marriage and Family, Culture and Its Promotion, Social and Economic Life (which included discussion of the poor), and the Solidarity between Peoples (which included questions of peace and war). Questions were raised about the authority of those appendices, which were answered in the finally approved *Gaudium et Spes* by being incorporated as five freestanding chapters in its part 2.

The first of those chapters dealt with the dignity of marriage and family. Up to that time, three principles summarized the traditional Catholic teaching on sexuality and marriage. The first was that, to be moral, any sexual act must be within the context of marriage. The second was that every act of sexual intercourse within marriage must be open to the procreation of new life. The third derived from the second, namely, that among the various ends of marriage, procreation was primary. The initial schema on marriage, “Chastity, Marriage, Family, and Virginity,” prepared by the theological commission headed by Cardinal Ottaviani, prefect of the Holy Office and staffed largely by theologians from the Holy Office, focused heavily on each of these three principles. The schema, Ottaviani explained, set out “the objective order . . . which God himself willed in instituting marriage and Christ the Lord willed in raising it to the dignity of a sacrament. Only in this way can the modern errors that have spread everywhere be vanquished.”¹⁴

¹⁴ *Acta et Documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II Apparando (Praeparatoria)*, vol. 2, part 3 (Roma: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1968), 937.

The initial schema was not approved by the Central Coordinating Committee, though some elements of it were later incorporated into the chapter on marriage in *Gaudium et Spes*. Once real debate began, the neo-Augustinian classicists generally opposed the direction of the debate on the contents of the entire document—how it treated the topic of marriage and family was no exception. The neo-Augustinians thought the proposed texts did not state clearly enough what they took to be the unchangeable teaching of the Church and that the historically conscious neo-Thomists wanted to advance the Church’s teaching on the basis of largely contemporary developments. It should be noted that the text—either in its developing or final form—made no mention of birth control because of an “elephant in the room”: namely, John XXIII’s and Paul VI’s reservation of a decision on that issue to their Pontifical Birth Control Commission and themselves. This debate will be analyzed in detail in chapter 4 of this book.

In chapter 3, we examine what became part 2, chapter 2 of *Gaudium et Spes*: namely, “The Proper Development of Culture.” In examining the document’s ideas on culture, chapter 3 offers fundamental methodological consideration for doing Catholic theological ethics in the twenty-first century. The words of *Gaudium et Spes* on culture are perhaps more relevant than ever today, with the impact of globalization that highlights the fundamental interrelationship between human beings socially, politically, economically, and spiritually, as well as the various manifestations of this interrelatedness in and through culture. Humanity “can come to an authentic and full humanity only through culture” (GS 53), and human culture reveals the nature of humanity itself where “new roads to truth are opened” (GS 44). The Church must be in ongoing dialogue with culture to learn from it when it contributes to understanding human dignity and to critique it when it misunderstands this dignity.

We explore in chapter 5 *Gaudium et Spes*’s “Economic and Social Life,” which focuses on the foundational call—grounded in Scripture and central to the vocation of every Christian—to seek and promote human dignity and the common good with and for the poor and excluded, a theme that will be revisited in the words of Pope Francis. Historical accounts of Catholic social teaching often begin with Pope Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* (Of New Things) and end with Pope John Paul II’s celebration of its hundredth anniversary in *Centesimus Annus* (The Hundredth Year) and include *Gaudium et Spes* as an important document in this period. The roots of this teaching, however, extend back to Sacred Scripture, the Old Testament and New Testament, and find a unique and profound expression in the life and words of Jesus. Scripture highlights that the biblical God, and the Christ whom God sent to reveal God’s self, is a God of love and justice who in real historical time stands preferentially on the

side of the poor and oppressed. All who would be truly Christian and “perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt 5:48) have no option but preferentially to do the same. Catholic social teaching, as it has come to be known, is the formulation and articulation of this foundational Gospel imperative, in dialogue with history, culture, and context. It takes on a special urgency in *Gaudium et Spes* and in the twenty-first century. The constitution notes, “If the demands of justice and equity are to be satisfied, vigorous efforts must be made . . . to remove as quickly as possible the immense inequalities which now exist” (GS 66). Pope Francis speaks out of the biblical tradition, the best of the Church tradition, and *Gaudium et Spes*, when he teaches that “alleviating the grave evil of poverty must be at the very heart of the Church’s mission. It is neither optional nor secondary.”¹⁵

Gaudium et Spes’s chapters 4 and 5, “The Life of the Political Community” and “The Fostering of Peace and the Promotion of a Community of Nations,” respectively, are treated in our chapter 6. The first part of the chapter investigates the interrelationship between Church and State and the proper role and function of each in realizing human dignity and the common good. It also investigates the active involvement of the laity and their distinct role and function, guided by conscience, in relation to Church and State. We suggest guidelines to navigate these different relationships in light of both *Gaudium et Spes* and recent Church documents on the political involvement of the lay faithful.

The second part of chapter 6 explores the methodological foundations of the just war tradition in light of the four sources of moral knowledge and traces the historical evolution in the Catholic just war tradition from focusing on just war criteria for when to go to war and how to conduct war to developing a strategy for peacebuilding. The shift from just war to peacebuilding reflects theological developments in response to *Gaudium et Spes*’s call “to undertake an evaluation of war with an entirely new attitude” (GS 80). An especially important evolution in the tradition is recognizing and explicitly articulating the causal relationship between poverty and violence. It is in recognizing this causal relationship that Catholic social teaching has much to offer in building a peaceful world in the twenty-first century by promoting human dignity and the common good through development and confronting poverty and those structures that perpetuate it.

¹⁵ See Bishop Robert W. McElroy, “A Church for the Poor,” *America* 209, no. 11 (October 21, 2013): 13.

This book celebrates the contributions of *Gaudium et Spes* as a fundamental gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church's evolving self-understanding as a pilgrim people of God. Let us continue as Church to recognize the Holy Spirit working in the Church to reform it and to enable it to more profoundly reflect God's unconditional love for all of humanity. In the words of Pope Francis, the Second Vatican Council "was a beautiful work of the Holy Spirit." Let us continue to reflect on how the Holy Spirit is communicating to us in and through the Second Vatican Council in general, and *Gaudium et Spes* in particular, in the twenty-first century. Let us also heed the warning of Pope Francis on quenching the Holy Spirit and the council's vision:

We want to tame the Holy Spirit. And that is wrong. Because He is God, and He is the wind that comes and goes and you do not know where. He is the power of God, what gives us consolation and strength to move forward. But move forward! And this bothers you. Comfort is more beautiful.

[It seems] we are all content [in the presence of the Holy Spirit]. It is not true. This temptation is still [present] today. Just one example: we think of the Council. The Council was a beautiful work of the Holy Spirit. Think of Pope John: he seemed a good pastor, and he was obedient to the Holy Spirit, and he did that. But after 50 years, have we done everything that the Holy Spirit said to us in the Council? In the continuity of the growth of the Church which was the Council?

No, we celebrate this anniversary, we make a monument, but that does not bother us. We do not want to change. What is more: there are voices that want to go back. This is called being stubborn, this is called wanting to tame the Holy Spirit, this is called becoming fools and slow of heart.¹⁶

Let us not attempt to tame the Holy Spirit, but to continue to recognize, embrace, nurture and live the gift of the Holy Spirit and what the Spirit communicated, and continues to communicate, to us in the Second Vatican Council. Let us not attempt to quench that gift out of fear of where it might lead us as Church in the twenty-first century.

¹⁶ "Pope Francis Emphasizes the Second Vatican Council Is the Work of the Holy Spirit," <http://www.catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=17610>, accessed February 7, 2014.

Chapter One

Gaudium et Spes: The History

Historical Context

The great Roman orator Cicero once declared that those who do not understand their history remain children forever. Nineteen hundred years later, at the opening of the Second Vatican Council, one of the theologians who would exert a great influence on the council in general and on *Gaudium et Spes* in particular, the French Dominican Marie-Dominique Chenu, expressed a similar opinion. “Since Christianity draws its reality from history and not from some metaphysics, the theologian must have as his primary concern . . . to know this history and to train himself in it.”¹ Chenu was one of several French theologians who popularized the theological movement called *ressourcement*, a return to the biblical and patristic sources. (Their Roman opponents derisively called it “the new theology.”) In fact, Pope Pius XII’s encyclical *Humani Generis* (1950) proscribed the new theology and all its proponents were removed from their teaching positions, only to see both themselves and their movement restored and become influential at the council.

The “return to the sources” marked a definitive methodological shift in Catholic theology from a primarily classicist to a primarily historically conscious worldview. The classicist worldview approaches reality as static, fixed, necessary, and universal. The method utilized and the norms taught within a classicist worldview are regarded as timeless, universal, and immutable. It was such a face that Catholicism offered to the world prior to the council, and it was such a face that provided a barrier to any real approach to an evolutionary modern world. By

¹ Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Une École de théologie: Le Saulchoir* (Paris: Cerf, 1985), 132. All translations from languages other than English throughout this chapter are the authors’.

contrast, the historically conscious worldview approaches reality as dynamic, evolving, changing, and particular. The method utilized and the norms taught within a historically conscious worldview are contingent, particular, and changeable. Joseph Komonchak has introduced a theological way of naming these two sides, namely, *neo-Augustinian* and *neo-Thomist*, respectively.² Neo-Augustinians see the world in a negative light; it is so steeped in sin that the best thing for the Church to do is to keep its distance from it and not be influenced by it. Neo-Augustinians are allergic to change. Neo-Thomists see the world, both external and internal, fashioned in history and, therefore, steeped in historicity. The world, again external and internal, is in a permanent state of evolution and change and, therefore, the truths, values, and meanings of the past are not necessarily the truths, values, and meanings of the present. Neo-Thomists are comfortable with change and pluralism.

It is common to describe these two sides as *conservative* and *liberal*, respectively, but we find these designations not only pejorative and false but also unhelpful. We shall describe them throughout as classicist neo-Augustinian and historically conscious neo-Thomist. These categories are not to be understood as so watertight that there can be no overlap between them so that, on a particular issue, a neo-Augustinian might act as a neo-Thomist, and vice versa. Such crossover did, in fact, occur with several prominent theologians who acted as neo-Thomists during the council and, largely disillusioned with what they saw as undue optimism toward the world in *Gaudium et Spes*, acted as neo-Augustinians after the council. The intellectual and theological battle between classicist neo-Augustinians and historically conscious neo-Thomists was an ongoing battle, as we shall see, from the council's very first to very last day.

Underlying the fierce battles over the various council documents was always the question of *change* under its softer Catholic word *development*. Development of doctrine, wrote American Jesuit John Courtney Murray, was "*the issue under all the issues*" at the council.³ Nowhere (except perhaps the furious battle for a text on a Decree on Religious Freedom in which Murray was such an influential and historically conscious participant) was that more evident than in the long battle, first, to find

²Joseph A. Komonchak, "Augustine, Aquinas, or the Gospel *sine glossa*?" in *Unfinished Journey: The Church 40 Years after Vatican II; Essays for John Wilkins*, ed. Austin Ivereigh (New York: Continuum, 2005), 102–18.

³John Courtney Murray, "This Matter of Religious Freedom," *America* 112 (January 9, 1965): 43, emphasis original.

an accepted text for a document on the Church in the Modern World and then to have the finally accepted text approved. Nothing illustrates historical consciousness and change better than this latter document, with its development from Pius IX's condemnation of "that erroneous opinion . . . called by our predecessor Gregory XVI *madness*, namely, that freedom of conscience and worship is each man's personal right which ought to be proclaimed and asserted in every rightly constituted society"⁴ to *Dignitatis Humanae's* (Declaration on Religious Freedom) unadorned declaration that "This Vatican Synod declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom" (DH 2). We will note similar changes in *Gaudium et Spes* as we go along.

Pope John XXIII celebrated the opening Mass of the council on October 11, 1962, at which he outlined his reasons for summoning a council and his expectations for it. He acknowledged the political and economic difficulties of the times without naming anything specific. They were, however, well known. Europe had not long before been devastated by a war of unparalleled savagery and was still reeling from the discovery of the horrors of "the final solution" to the Jewish community in Nazi Germany. The world was traumatized by the destructive threat of the atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and by the multiplication of nuclear weapons that could eliminate all life on earth. The end of World War II had given way to a "cold war" between the Western allies and the Soviet Union which, six years before the opening of the council (1956), had brutally suppressed a popular uprising in Hungary. Shortly after the council opened, that cold war reached its moment of greatest anxiety in a standoff between the Soviet Union and the United States of America, the former seeking to install in Cuba nuclear missiles that could reach the United States, the latter vetoing such a move with a determined blockade.

In addition to living amid the very real threat of nuclear war, the council fathers came together as colonialism was coming to an end. This shift in geopolitical reality had profound political and ecclesiastical implications, as the major industrialized nations withdrew from their African and Asian colonies, leaving behind not only poor and sometimes chaotic nations but also missionary churches deprived of government support. The most notorious of these former colonies was Vietnam, which the

⁴ Pius IX, *Quanta Cura*, in *The Papal Encyclicals 1740-1878*, ed. Claudia Carlen (Raleigh, NC: McGrath, 1981), 383.

French colonists left in 1954. After the French left, it was divided into a communist North Vietnam and South Vietnam, which in turn led to the Vietnam War, with the United States supporting the South against the North as a way to block the spread of communism. That war (1959–1975) was already well underway when the council opened.

Racism was rampant in the world in the first half of the twentieth century, and by the time of the council, problems related to systemic racial injustice were coming to a boil. Civil rights struggles against racism and political structures based on it were being waged both nonviolently and violently in the United States and in Sub-Saharan Africa.

There was also an important ecclesiastical context to the convening of the council. The First Vatican Council (1870) had been interrupted by the seizure of Rome by Italian troops in 1870, and its work had never been completed. Both Pius XI in the 1920s and Pius XII in the 1950s had considered calling a council to complete the unfinished business of Vatican I, but no council had ever been convoked. When John XXIII convoked a council, there were those, particularly classicist neo-Augustinians in the Roman Curia, who perceived its task as completing Vatican I's unfinished work. But there were also those, particularly among historically conscious neo-Thomist diocesan bishops and theologians in direct touch with the needs of their people, who perceived it as a challenge for reform, development, and change that would better equip the Church to both fulfill its mission of evangelization and assist the world in dealing with its multitude of problems. These two different perceptions coalesced into two different parties at the council. Their differences led to virulent debates in the council from the very first day, and those debates were very much in evidence in the creation of the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. Vatican I's definition of papal primacy and infallibility and Pope Pius X's condemnations of what he called "Modernism," which was essentially the emergence of historical consciousness in theological literature, weighed heavily on the Catholic Church prior to the Vatican Council and would continue to weigh heavily, though not definitively, on many of the discussions about the Church at the council.

In his speech opening the council, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, Pope John acknowledged these problems in "the world," but he chose to place his focus more positively on "the marvelous progress of the discoveries of human genius," distancing himself from "those prophets of gloom, who are always forecasting disaster, as though the end of the world were at hand." Mother Church's role in the world requires her to deal with both right and wrong in the world and in the past she has condemned errors

“with the greatest severity.” Nowadays, however, she prefers “to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than of severity,” showing herself to be “the loving mother of all, benign, patient, full of mercy and goodness toward the brethren who are separated from her.” Clarification and penetration of doctrine, the pope said, was to be a prime purpose of the council, but this was to be done “through the methods of research and through the literary forms of modern thought. The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way it is presented is another.”⁵

Pope John’s council was not to be a council of condemnation, though the Church was as opposed to error at the council as it was in the past. Instead, it was to be one of rediscovering and updating the essential substance of the Church’s life. This call for updating, or in Italian *aggiornamento*, which became a kind of rallying word for the council, was a call to move away from the defensive choices the Church had made since the nineteenth-century days of Pope Pius IX to protect itself from the danger of contamination from the world. It specifically encouraged those who would introduce historical consciousness and a return to the historical sources into the council’s discussions. Their efforts would eventually win the day in several important doctrinal debates. The Church, in John XXIII’s vision, was part of the world and would share, as *Gaudium et Spes* would later declare, “the joys and the hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted” (GS 1).

History of the Text

On January 25, 1959, John XXIII announced he would convoke a council. The council opened on October 11, 1962. In the almost four-year interim between the announcement of the council and its opening, there was a ferment of preparatory activity. First, a letter was sent to all the bishops and pontifical universities of the Catholic world asking them for their suggestions for what should be treated at the council and exhorting them to “complete freedom and honesty.”⁶ The responses, as one would expect from 2,150 responders, were enormously varied. Many

⁵ Citations of Pope John’s speech are taken from Walter M. Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: America Press, 1966), 710–19.

⁶ See John W. O’Malley, “Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?” *Theological Studies* 67, no. 1 (March 2006): 3–33.

called for a clear reaffirmation of the Church's *status quo*; many called for the condemnation of modern evils inside and outside the Church, including a condemnation of atheistic communism; some, mostly from Western countries where the Catholic Church was already losing many members, called for Church reform, arguing that a reformed Church would be better able to confront the contemporary world; a few were truly adventuresome, calling for greater responsibility for laity in the Church and, a very few, mostly from non-Western countries, calling for the abrogation or, at least, modification, of priestly celibacy.

Second, the pope appointed ten commissions to sift these responses and to organize them into thematic documents to be debated and voted on at the council. Sixty seven such documents were prepared, most of them couched in condemnatory language far from the positive and reconciling approach enunciated by John in his opening speech. Though there was no document dealing with the Church in the modern world, there were four dealing with issues that would eventually be incorporated in altered forms into *Gaudium et Spes*: the Moral Order; Chastity, Marriage, Family, and Virginty; The Social Order; and the Community of Nations.

The text on the Moral Order, composed mainly by a subcommission of the Roman theologians Hürth, Gillon, and Liu, was classicist neo-Augustinian in structure, based on the prevailing Catholic teaching of an objective, absolute, and immutable moral order. A fourth, extremely well-respected, historically conscious, neo-Thomist moral theologian, the German Redemptorist Bernard Häring, was explicitly excluded from this small subcommission because the others judged him a disturbing element "foreign" to their work. Häring might have qualified as "theologically foreign" because in 1954 he had published a monumental three-volume work on moral theology, titled *The Law of Christ*, which had drawn both the approbation of many Catholic moral theologians and the negative attention of Roman authorities. This preconiliar disagreement between classicist neo-Augustinians and historically conscious neo-Thomists theologians serves as a paradigm for the disagreements that would occur throughout the length of the council itself.

The preparatory schema on Chastity, Marriage, Family, and Virginty underwent the same debates between the same protagonists. Again the classicist neo-Augustinian side won and the text that was sent to the bishops was a text that was a defense of an objective, absolute, and immutable moral order. Cardinal Ottaviani, the prefect of the Holy Office, who chaired the Doctrinal Commission that approved the final version of the schema, explained that the schema laid out the "objective order . . .

which God willed in instituting marriage and Christ the Lord willed in raising it to the dignity of a sacrament. Only in this way can the modern errors that have spread everywhere be vanquished.” The most vicious of those errors are “those theories which subvert the right order of values and make the primary end of marriage inferior to the biological and personal values of the spouses, and proclaim that conjugal love itself is in the objective order the primary end.”⁷ The debate over the schema, in both the Doctrinal Commission and in the council itself when its content was being incorporated into *Gaudium et Spes*, centered around the questions of the hierarchy of the ends of marriage and birth control, specifically around the relative values of procreation, which the schema insisted was the primary end, and conjugal love, which it insisted was a secondary end. When we reach the final, approved text of *Gaudium et Spes*, we will see that the council fathers settled that debate by teaching that these two ends are both objective and equal.⁸ Schemas for the Social Order and the Community of Nations were hurriedly prepared without much discussion, possibly a sign that Ottaviani’s Doctrinal Commission did not consider them of much importance.

The decisive moment for Vatican II in general occurred in November, 1962. On November 14, the council took up the discussion of the prepared schema *De Fontibus Revelationis* (On the Sources of Revelation). On the eve of that discussion, November 13, the German Jesuit Otto Semmelroth wrote in his diary: “Tomorrow the discussion of the schema *De Fontibus Revelationis* begins. The battles will be bitter.”⁹ As an expert on the doctrinal commission, he knew firsthand that the battles over the schemata had already been bitter in that preparatory commission, and the same sides would continue the battles in the council itself. The sides were those that had already emerged during the preparatory phase, the Roman classicist neo-Augustinian theologians who had prepared the schemas for discussion, and the historically conscious neo-Thomist bishops and their theologians who were critical of the prepared schemata. Debate between the two camps quickly emerged during the early stage of the council, but a decisive shift occurred on November 19–20. The

⁷ *Acta et Documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II Apparando (Praeparatoria)*, vol. 2, part 3 (Roma: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1968), 937, 910, n. 16; and 917, n. 50.

⁸ Though we will draw attention as needed to these marital debates throughout this essay, we will defer any analysis of them to the specific chapter on marriage later in this book.

⁹ Otto Semmelroth, Unpublished *Diary* (Munich: Archiv der Deutschen Gesellschaft).

debate over the prepared schema on the Sources of Revelation and on other documents, including a document on the Church in the modern world as it slowly and painfully came to birth, was a debate between neo-Augustinians and neo-Thomists. On November 19, a question was put to all the council fathers: "should the discussion [of the Sources of Revelation] be interrupted?" An explanation was given that "interrupted" meant "redoing the schema."

The vote, an overwhelming 1,368 for interruption and 822 for continuing the debate, created major confusion and the first crisis in the council, for the regulations required a two-thirds vote (1,473) of the 2,209 votes cast to be binding and for the schema to be returned for redoing. For want of 105 votes, a trifling 4.5 percent of the votes cast, Pope John's council was faced with its first crisis, which he himself moved quickly to resolve. On November 20, he sent a note to the presidents of the council stating that, although the vote did not meet the requirement of the regulations for interruption of the debate, he was yielding to the wishes of the many, withdrawing the schema from discussion, and referring it to a new Mixed Commission to emend it and make it more pastorally suitable.

In December 1962, the Schema on the Church, considered to be the most important document of the council, suffered the same fate. It was criticized as being too clerical, too scholastic, and not sufficiently biblical and pastoral, and the debate on it was interrupted without a vote being taken. The vote of November 19 demonstrated a majority of council fathers were disposed to take the Catholic Church in a new direction. John XXIII's solution to the impending crisis on November 20 opened up the way for a comprehensive revision of the preparatory work. By the closing of the first session on December 8, 1962, all seventy of the prepared schemata had been rejected as inadequate and incapable of being improved to the satisfaction of the majority, and directions had been marked out for a new beginning. Included in that new beginning was a document on the Church in the modern world.

There is some debate as to where, and by whom, *Gaudium et Spes* was conceived. There was no such document among the preparatory schemata, though there were, as already noted, some suggestions scattered throughout several schemata. What is clear is that no council document went through such a slow, tortuous, and complex development as the document on the Church in the modern world, a development highlighted by its original anonymous and merely numerical title, Schema XVII. It could be argued that Schema XVII was conceived in the Secretariat for the Apostolate of the Laity, which called attention to some

coincidences in the preparatory schemata "On the Moral Order" and "On the Apostolate of the Laity" and proposed a new schema combining ideas from both, outlining the action of the Church in the modern world. There were two chapters in the schema "On the Moral Order," the coordinating commission was told, that could be reworked as part of a document on the Church in the modern world, and there was a long chapter in the schema "On the Apostolate of the Laity" on the activity of the laity that could be also be reworked as part of the proposed new schema. There was also a remote influence on the schema that is worthy of mention, namely, Pope John XXIII's encyclical *Mater et Magistra* (Mother and Teacher), promulgated in May 1961. *Mater et Magistra* introduced a new method for papal encyclicals, an inductive method that started from concrete current world issues rather than the traditional deductive method that started from abstract theological principles. The schema that would be developed on the Church in the modern world would replicate such an inductive method and echo some of the social and economic issues treated in *Mater et Magistra*.

At the end of November 1962, Pope John asked Cardinal Suenens of Malines, Belgium, to prepare a new program for the council, which was to include a study of the relations between the Church and the modern world. On December 4, 1962, Suenens unveiled a plan to the council that proposed that the doctrine of the Church be considered from two points of view: *ad intra* or internally, which demands a study of the nature of the Church, and *ad extra* or externally, which demands a study of the Church's mission to preach the Gospel to all nations. The *ad intra* study yielded *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. The *ad extra* study gave rise to *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. The *ad extra* study was to include the great issues of the times that John XXIII had labeled the "signs of the times." Those issues included the dignity of the human person and human life, social justice, marriage and family, the plight of the poor worldwide, and questions of war and peace. This proposal met with the approval of the council and it was greeted with such prolonged applause that the president for the day, Cardinal Caggiano of Buenos Aires, had to plead for the applause to end.

Was *Gaudium et Spes*, then, conceived originally by Cardinal Suenens, or was it conceived by the Commission on the Apostolate of the Laity? As we proceed, we hope to show that, whatever its conception, both Suenens and the Commission had important roles to play in its coming to birth. We should add here an important event that occurred in April

of 1963 which had an important influence on Schema XVII, namely, the publication of John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth), an exhortation to peace between all nations based on truth, justice, charity, and freedom. That encyclical aroused great interest in international political circles and among the editors of Schema XVII. It would have a lasting effect on the writing of the schema.

The new coordinating committee appointed by John XXIII met in January of 1963 and, after taking up and modifying Suenens's plan, decided to set up a Mixed Commission to develop a document on the Church in the world of today. This Mixed Commission, which had copresidents in Bishop Guano of Livorno and Archbishop Garrone of Toulouse and drew members from the Commission on the Apostolate of the Laity and the doctrinal commission, met daily in Rome between May 20 and 25, 1963. They settled on a not-very-clear schema of six chapters with essentially two titles, one heading the entire document, "On the Presence and Action of the Church in the Modern World," and one heading the first chapter, "On the Principles and Actions of the Church to Promote the Good of Society." This schema became known as "the Roman Schema." The Mixed Commission agreed to divide its task among six subcommissions which would each study and edit one of the chapters, which were as follows: the Vocation of Humans according to God; the Human Person in Society; Marriage, Family, and the Demographic Problem; on Rightly Promoting the Progress of Culture; the Economic Order and Social Justice; the Community of Nations and Peace. This proposed document of the Mixed Commission, known simply as Schema XVII, thanks to its numerical place in the schemata being reworked for debate at the second session of the council, already contained many ideas that, after a tortuous development, would be finally approved in *Gaudium et Spes*.

One very clear statement that survived was a statement about the immorality of the use of nuclear weapons which so threatened the world in the 1960s. "The use of arms with effects that are incalculable and cannot be rationally tempered by men exceeds just proportion and, therefore, cannot be held to be moral." This judgment turned out to be one of the most controverted in the debates on *Gaudium et Spes* but it did survive in the approved document, albeit somewhat altered (GS 80–81).

Though this Roman Schema XVII, which was largely sociological in nature, would provide the basis for further discussion, it did not receive majority support. It was criticized for lack of cohesion and a clear theological vision of the relationship between the Church and the world, between nature and grace. There continued to be contentious debate on

the third chapter on marriage which still asserted that the primary end of marriage was the procreation and education of children. That particular debate would continue until the very last public session of the council on December 7, 1965, when it was settled by the declaration that procreation and the love of the spouses were equal ends. The council's new coordinating commission considered the Roman schema at the beginning of July, rejected it as unsuitable, and requested that Cardinal Suenens of Malines produce a new schema that would be more theological and more clear. He transmitted the task to a group of theologians at the Catholic University of Louvain, situated within his diocese in Belgium, and added to the Louvain group three theologians who had distinguished themselves as theological experts during the first session: the German Jesuit Karl Rahner, the French Dominican Yves Congar, and the Italian editor of the Vatican newspaper, *Osservatore Romano*, Giuseppe Tucci. This group undertook their work under a new pope. John XXIII died on June 3, 1963, and Pope Paul VI was elected on June 21, 1963, immediately proclaiming his intention to continue the council which he wanted, he said, to throw out a bridge to the contemporary world.

Malines and Zurich Schemas

The Malines group took the new pope's intention to heart and produced a document titled "On the Active Presence of the Church in the Building Up of the World." It was divided into three parts: On the Proper Mission of the Church, On Building the World, and On the Service of the Church to the World. Part 1 was addressed exclusively to Christians, parts 2 and 3 to all men and women. Given its place of origin, this document came to be known as "the Malines Schema." Congar, who was probably the best prepared of any for a debate on the presence and action of the Church in the world, since he had published several books on the topic, argued that, to be heard by non-Christians, the schema needed to be presented as a theology of history. Rahner argued to the contrary that such an approach risked undervaluing some important theological problems, particularly those of the relationship between nature and grace and of the presence of sin in the world, on which he had written extensively. It would not do, he urged, to present an overly optimistic picture of "the world." He continued to make the same arguments all through the long gestation of *Gaudium et Spes*, and when the final document was approved and promulgated in 1965, he was still critical of it precisely because he judged that it was overly optimistic toward the world and did not give

an in-depth explanation of the relationship between nature and grace and the presence of sin in the world. When the Malines document was shared with the coordinating commission and the bishops in September 1963, it was severely criticized, among other things for being too theological. The coordinating commission distanced itself from both it and from the Roman Schema, and urged the continuation of the search for an adequate Schema XVII.

A German group submitted a proposal suggesting that the ecclesiological structure of the Malines Schema be retained but elaborated with more concrete treatment of the more pressing problems of the modern world. A key theme must continue to be the active presence of the Church in the construction of a better world. A French group submitted a schema under the title "Towards Schema XVII—On the Active Presence of a Servant Church of the Lord among Men of Good Will." This schema had much in common with a "Church of the poor" movement that had emerged at the end of the first session and with the book recently published by Congar under the title *Toward a Poor and Servant Church*.¹⁰ It would have a certain influence as Schema XVII wended its way toward final approval, especially in the consideration of what it called the two great evils of the time, hunger and war. Faced with these evils, the Church absolutely had to place itself at the service of the needs of the world.

At the end of January 1964, the subcommission officially appointed to prepare a new document unveiled a totally new one. It showed traces of the French proposal but had an entirely new structure. It was titled "The Active Participation of the Church in the Construction of the World," and had four chapters: first, an anthropological description of the condition of humankind; second, principles for the presence of the Church in the world; third, the actions of Christians in the world; fourth, the more urgent problems of the modern world. Of note is the opening of this document in which there were echoes of a passage from the council's message to the world in October 1962. "The joys and the sorrows, the hopes and the anxieties of the men of today, especially of the poor and those who suffer, are also the joys and the sorrows, the hopes and anxieties of this Assembly." This opening encapsulated the tone of the entire document and would be retained, lightly edited, to become almost two years later the opening of the finally approved *Gaudium et Spes*. This text was distributed to the members and consultors of the Coordinating

¹⁰ Yves Congar, *Pour une église pauvre et servante* (Paris: Cerf, 1963).

Commission in time for a meeting of the Commission in Zurich at the beginning of February 1964. Here the text, introduced and explained by Bernard Häring and the Dominican Raimondo Sigmund, who had been its principal editor, received much criticism. But in the end, it received substantial approval. The criticisms were largely those that Rahner had continued to make, namely, that the text was so pastoral and instructional that it had an insufficient theological foundation, and it was so optimistic about the world that it obscured the reality of evil, sin, injustice, and poverty. Nevertheless the schema, which became known as the Zurich Schema or the Häring Schema, was accepted as a basis for all further discussion of the document on the Church in the modern world.

The Zurich text sought a *via media* between the two extremes of hyper-naturalism and hyper-supernaturalism. The first was rampant in the world of the 1960s, especially in its extreme form of atheism which enclosed men within the material world and taught that there was nothing beyond that world. The second had led over the years to contempt of the world, an attitude that held that any positive valuation of human and worldly realities was a betrayal of the human's eternal vocation. The Zurich text did not use the words *materialism*, *atheism*, or *supernaturalism* so as not to raise barriers to the dialogue it was proposing as a key to the Church's relationship with the modern world. But it did propose a double vocation for humankind. Women and men are called to the kingdom of God, but they are called also to be concerned with worldly affairs in which there are many values open to the kingdom of God: values such as solidarity, justice, love, marriage and family, culture, arts and sciences.

The schema sought both to underline the duty of Christians to be involved in the world and to bring to it Christian principles and explain that this involvement in the world in no way detracted from the vocation to the kingdom of God. The kingdom, in fact, was to be found in the first instance in this world before being found definitively in the next. The schema was now in four chapters: the Integral Vocation of the Human Person, the Church in the Service of God and Humankind, the Conduct of Christians in the World, and the Chief Responsibilities of Christians Today. Attached were five Appendices: the Dignity of the Human Person, the Dignity of Marriage and Family, Culture and its Promotion, Social and Economic Life, and the Solidarity between Peoples, which included questions about war and peace. At the first assembly of the Third Session of the council on October 1, 1964, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, Superior General of the Spiritans, later to lead a schism from the Catholic Church over the council, raised a question about the authority of these

Appendices: were they official or merely private? He was told that they were more than private and that the extent of their authority would be clarified later. They were later clarified by being embraced into *Gaudium et Spes* as its part 2.

The schema was discussed at a plenary meeting of the Mixed Commission in March and again in June 1964. There was continued criticism, especially in the June meeting over what was said about marriage. Cardinal Ottaviani and the Roman Jesuit theologians, Tromp and Hürth, attacked Häring, accusing him of what they called “Häringismus,”¹¹ something to be understood as just a little short of heresy. Congar noted in his diary that “This is the great concerted offensive: Franic, Lio, Tromp—in short, the Holy Office.”¹² The coordinating commission examined the text on June 26 and, because the order for discussion of the schemas to be considered was changed, at this meeting Schema XVII became Schema XIII. So it would remain in the eighteen months until its final approval as *Gaudium et Spes*. In spite of continuing criticism that the schema was too weak and still not sufficiently theological, it eventually made its way to discussion during the council itself in the third session in the fall of 1964.

In this third session, the council fathers had before them a succession of schemas related to the world external to the Church—religious liberty, ecumenism, non-Christian religions, and Judaism—but Schema XIII had raised the most excitement and expectation, for it dealt with questions concretely relating to the women and men of the day. It was in this context that it was introduced for discussion on October 20, 1964, which continued for some three weeks. Ottaviani, president of the Doctrinal Commission, had already sent to the secretariat of the council a memo in which he distanced himself from the schema, asserting that it “had been worked out, prepared, and arranged by the Commission for the Lay Apostolate and the responsibility of the Doctrinal Commission had only been to see that it contained nothing contrary to right doctrine.”¹³

There were many contrasting, sometimes contradictory, criticisms of the schema. It was too theological; it was not theological enough; it was too naturalist; it was too supernaturalist. Again Häring was attacked, this

¹¹ See Giovanni Turbanti, *Un concilio per un mondo moderno: La redazione della costituzione pastorale “Gaudium et spes” del Vaticano II* (Bologna: Mulino, 2000), 362.

¹² Yves Congar, *My Journal of the Council* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 552.

¹³ *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Vaticani II*, III/5 (Roma: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1970), 425.

time by Cardinal Heenan of Westminster, who proclaimed (paraphrasing Virgil's "I fear Greeks bearing gifts"), "I fear experts bearing Appendices!" Heenan's concern was largely with the section on marriage, about which he had tussled with Häring in the English press earlier in the spring of the year, though he did say that the schema as a whole was unworthy of an ecumenical council and that the redactional committee had failed everyone. A powerful neo-Augustinian, Cardinal Ruffini of Palermo, agreed, charging that the schema was full of doctrinal errors and recommending that it be rejected and reorganized along the lines of the great social encyclicals of Leo XIII, Pius XII, John XXIII, and Paul VI. Many, especially from the Third World, wanted a greater attention to poverty. Some wanted a greater openness to the contemporary sciences. Bishop Spülbeck of Meissen in Germany declared that, since the Galileo case, the Church had been perceived as inimical to science and should now encourage more science, especially Catholic science. There were continuing tensions between the neo-Augustinians and the neo-Thomists, which the Dutch Dominican Edward Schillebeeckx, later summed up as tensions "between the recognition of truth that is historical and mobile [historical consciousness] and truth that is theoretical and static [classical consciousness]."¹⁴

In spite of these criticisms, the text was generally appreciated and passed on as the basis for further discussion. On November 16, 1964, just a week after the debate in the council had ended, the Mixed Commission met to review the bishops' suggestions for improvement and to plan for its task of editing and emending. Häring offered his resignation as chair of the subcommission for the ongoing editing of Schema XIII. Häring had proved too intransigent in his dealings with both the subcommission and Cardinal Ottaviani's Doctrinal Commission, and was replaced by Father Pierre Hautmann, the National Assistant of French Catholic Action. It was Hautmann who would organize the transition of Schema XIII into *Gaudium et Spes*.

Ariccia Schema

Hautmann began his work as chair of the editing subcommission by seeking to enlarge the number of theologians on the commission. He was advised by Bishop Guano, cochair of the subcommission and a

¹⁴Edward Schillebeeckx, "The Third Session of Vatican II," *Documentation Catholique* (Paris), n. 172 A.

consistent proponent of the development of Schema XIII, that he should include the French Jesuit Jean Danielou, Congar, and, given the consistent German opposition to the text, Rahner and Semmelroth. Guano also recommended Pietro Pavan, Professor at the Lateran University in Rome and a respected authority on the social teaching of the Church, who was acknowledged as one of the principal architects of John XXIII's encyclicals, *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris*. Häring advised him to also include Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI), who was the theologian of Cardinal Frings of Cologne and had influence with the German bishops. This core group would work assiduously on emending the text and would eventually bring it to completion. Throughout December 1964 and January 1965, the editing subcommission considered, mostly via an exchange of letters, the text that was discussed in council in 1964, the criticisms of it by the bishops, the many suggestions that came flooding in, and a proposal from a group working on the "signs of the times." This latter proposal would have a significant influence on the first chapter of the text the subcommission put together. This text had four chapters: first, a general introduction; second, a general look at the situation of the modern world; third, a cosmology of man in the universe; fourth, an anthropology of man in society. This text was ready to be presented to a major meeting at Ariccia, southeast of Rome.

The Ariccia meeting took place in the week of January 31 through February 6, 1965, and brought together eighty-seven persons, including thirty-five theologians and seventeen lay experts. Compared to the Zurich meeting of the previous year, where only seventeen persons had been in attendance, Ariccia was a full-scale convention that was to prove decisive for the structure and content of, first, Schema XIII and, eventually, *Gaudium et Spes*. Though there were some doubts when the meeting realized that Haubtmann's text was a substantially reorganized one (not just an edited version of the one discussed in council in 1964), there was still a favorable acceptance of it. After he read it, Congar noted in his diary: "In my view, this text is clearly better than the Zurich-Häring one. It has found the right tone, and that is half the battle. It is a text that the people will be able to read; it brings in doctrine (not enough perhaps and not sufficiently) within the context of human realities. It is more theological."¹⁵ On February 1, on behalf of the Polish bishops, the bishop of Cracow, Karol Wojtyła (later Pope John Paul II), introduced a text to

¹⁵ Yves Congar, *My Journal*, February 1, 1965, 710.

replace both the Zurich and the Haubtmann texts, but this text, which included a condemnation of communism, never gained much traction, though Wojtyła himself made a great impression.¹⁶ He was assigned along with Congar, Grillmeier, and Semmelroth to elaborate an as yet unwritten chapter on the salvific meaning of the Church in the modern world, and right up to the end of the council on December 8, 1965, he would keep the issues of communism and atheism alive.

The text approved at Ariccia retained some elements from the Zurich text accepted by the fathers in council in 1964, modified others according to the votes of that debate, and added entirely new elements to enrich the text. Among the elements retained from Zurich was an inductive approach to a Christian anthropology, one constructed from a consideration of what human beings concretely do. This approach brought to light the many problems humans face in the modern world, and consideration of those problems, in turn, brought to light possible solutions to them. Another remnant of Zurich was the five appendices which were redone and inserted into the text as chapters in its second part as "Some Problems of Special Urgency." Thus was Lefebvre's question about the authority of the appendices finally answered. Strongly debated at Ariccia was the question of contraception but, in deference to the pontifical commission which John XXIII had set up and Paul VI had enlarged to study the question, no resolution was offered. The Ariccia text did say that the actions "with which the spouses united themselves intimately are *per se* noble and worthy and, when expressed in a truly human manner, signify and promote reciprocal self-giving." This judgment made its way, lightly edited, into the chapter on marriage in *Gaudium et Spes* (GS 49). When it came to the discussion of the chapter on peace, the participants did not hide the fact that they had diverse and often contradictory advice from the third session of the council, particularly on the question of war. They contented themselves with a condemnation of modern warfare and dropped any judgment of the morality of either the possession or the use of modern arms, particularly nuclear arms. This reticence was replicated in *Gaudium et Spes* (GS 79–80).

The participants left Ariccia still uncertain as to which direction the final schema should take. They were sure that, for all its disorganization

¹⁶ Congar notes in his diary on February 2, 1965, that Wojtyła, the future Pope John Paul II, "made a very great impression. His personality is imposing. A power radiates from it, an attraction, a certain prophetic force that is very calm, but incontestable." *My Journal*, 714.

and uncertainty, this schema was the best basis they had for further positive development. Bishop Guano insisted that there were four general perspectives that ought not to be lost: a fundamental optimism founded in belief in and open to the movement of the Holy Spirit; the reality of women and men and their real problems in the world which were leading them away from the Church; the need for the text to be pastoral, and not a treatise on theology; and the issue of the presence of Christians in the world as a leaven or, as *Lumen Gentium* had already said and *Gaudium et Spes* would finally say, as a sacrament (LG 1, 9, 48; GS 42). The final editing of the text was done in Paris by Hauptmann alone, who sent the edited text out chapter by chapter for consideration by the other editors. Congar noted in his diary for February 20 that he ran into Hauptmann in Rome. "I saw Hauptmann. He is redoing the text in French; Philips will put it into Latin. . . . Hauptmann is rewriting everything. So, in the main, the time spent at Ariccia and at the Vatican has been largely wasted. It seemed to me (and I told him so) that the drafting team—that is to say, in practice himself—is taking a good deal of liberty with a text that had been discussed and accepted by the sub-commission and the commission."¹⁷

The Mixed Commission, which had originally established the editorial subcommission, considered the Ariccia text at its meeting in Rome at the beginning of April 1965. Due to Hauptmann's sustained personal editing, the text was now so new that no one at the meeting, including those who had been part of the Ariccia consultation, knew it in its entirety. There was great expectation about the schema, not only in the commission, but also in the world outside the council, for Schema XIII would be one of the most important schemas discussed in the fourth session. The major discussion centered on atheism in response to various requests, including one again from Wojtyla, for an explicit condemnation of Marxism and communism. The discussion of the second part, the original Zurich appendices, was constrained by a request from Pope Paul VI that the commission not discuss the topic of birth control, an issue which he had restricted to his pontifical commission. There were criticisms about the overevaluation of spousal love in marriage, about the nonprioritization of procreation among the ends of marriage, that the schema should speak more of forging peace rather than condemning war, and that the notion of culture was exclusively limited to Western culture.

¹⁷ Congar, *My Journal*, February 20, 1965, 729.

On May 11, the schema was presented to the coordinating commission by Cardinal Suenens. That Commission's remit was only to consider whether the schema should be sent to the fathers for discussion at the council's fourth session, but there was some discussion about its title, whether it merited the title of *Constitution* since this suggested a doctrinal clarity and authority that the present text did not have. That debate was unresolved and the schema was again accepted and forwarded to Pope Paul VI, who would have the final decision on its suitability to be sent to the council for debate. Paul decided on May 28 that the text could be sent to the fathers. Four years of work on a text on the Church in the modern world was almost at an end. There remained only the debate in council, which began on September 21, 1965, and the final editing which followed the further suggestions of the fathers.

Before we consider the final conciliar debate on Schema XIII, we should mention Paul VI's consistent support for a document on the Church in the modern world. He never interfered directly, as he did in November 1963 with *Lumen Gentium*, though late in November 1965, when the subcommission was doing its final editing on Schema XIII, he did submit some suggestions that he later clarified were to be treated as a bishop's suggestions and not papal orders, but he was always supportive. In his homily at the Mass of his consecration as pope, he declared he wanted the council to be a bridge to the modern world. In his speech opening the second session of the council, he laid out four objectives for the council: a complete and profound doctrine of the Church; a reform of the Church itself; a broadening of ecumenism; and a dialogue between the Church and the world. Dialogue, he argued, is the key for relating to the present age.¹⁸ The following year, his programmatic encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam*, developed the notion of dialogue between the Church and the modern world. His journey to Israel in January and his meeting with Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople concretized the importance of dialogue in his eyes. On February 16, Hauptmann was summoned to an audience with the pope, who insisted that he wanted a pastoral document, one that could be understood in depth, though he commented that we might not always know how to respond to the questions of the modern world. The pope expressed his satisfaction both with the experts who had worked on the text and with the text they had produced, and he used his influence to bring together the critics and the editors of the

¹⁸See *Acta Synodalia*, II/1, 195.

Ariccia document so that they could dialogue about their differences. It is probably too strong to claim that *Gaudium et Spes* would not have happened without Paul VI, but it is not too strong to claim that he was a strong supporter during the several years of its gestation.

Conciliar Discussion of Schema XIII

On his way to Rome for the fourth session of the council, Congar met up with Bishop Elchinger, the auxiliary bishop of Strasbourg, and notes that Elchinger's impressions of the schema he had received were "excessively severe."¹⁹ The reaction of the German bishops, fueled by Rahner's continuing opposition to the edited schema, was also severe. Cardinal Döpfner had asked Rahner to prepare some observations on the schema, and Rahner had prepared a document that repeated the objections he had expressed all along: the text did not have a sufficiently theological basis, it did not take sufficient account of the supernatural elevation of all creation toward union with God or of the theological relationship between the order of creation and the order of redemption, it lacked a profound sense of sin and its effects in the world, and it did not elaborate an adequate Christian anthropology—these were topics Rahner had been writing on for some thirty years. He suggested there were two possible solutions to the schema's problems: first, the council could abstain from voting on it and assign it to a postconciliar commission which could further develop it in a calmer atmosphere; second, the council could vote on the schema and transmit it to the world as an initial step toward a more mature dialogue between the Church and the world.²⁰ Rahner's objections became the objections of the German episcopate and, right up until *Gaudium et Spes* was approved, they held fast to two points: the text was so imperfect that it was not a good starting point for dialogue between Church and world, and it should be presented as a letter from the Church to the world and not as a constitution.

The extent of the negative reaction to Schema XIII took its editors by surprise. They had worked on the assumption that, in their editing of the document, they were responding to the suggestions of the fathers from the debate in the third session, but the situation had changed. Since that debate, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church had been promulgated

¹⁹ *My Journal*, September 13, 1965.

²⁰ Karl Rahner, *Anmerkungen zum schema De ecclesia in mundo huius temporis*, 4, in der Fassung vom 28.5.65. See also Turbanti, *Un concilio per un mondo moderno*, 386–90.

at the end of the third session, and many thought that, at least, some of the teaching in *Lumen Gentium* about God's saving interventions in human life should be repeated again in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. The editors' intent had been to construct an inductive Christian anthropology, to begin with the consideration of natural truths and from there to arrive at supernatural truth to show, in the traditional Catholic formulation, how grace builds on nature. This intent was apparently not well communicated to the bishops and there were many who reproached the text with what they called *naturalism*. Hauptmann insisted on the pastoral style of the text, something entirely new in a conciliar document, and that it should be read as such. It should also be read in *Lumen Gentium's* preferred model of Church, the people of God, (LG 9–17), rather than in the traditional Vatican I model of Church as hierarchical institution.

There was no great surprise when the Italians, Cardinals Ruffini of Palermo and Siri of Genoa, made the complaint of naturalism. These two had been consistently on the minority, neo-Augustinian side of the council. When two of the leaders of the neo-Thomist majority, however, the German cardinals Döpfner of Munich and Frings of Cologne, speaking for the German-speaking episcopate, made the same complaint, there was serious doubt whether Schema XIII could even survive. Frings, in fact, asked for a radical revision of the text, which would have been very difficult in the few weeks remaining before the end of the council. If that were not possible, the Germans also suggested, then any approved text should not carry the title of *Constitution* but should be simply a *Letter* from the council, which could then be reworked and made more theologically precise after the council.

The text had its supporters too. Cardinal König of Vienna argued that there was no point including in this text what was already taught in *Lumen Gentium*, which Paul VI had declared the master text of Vatican II, in the light of which all of its other texts are to be read. Cardinal Shehan of Baltimore congratulated the Ariccia editors for not having separated the natural and the supernatural orders, for these two orders together make up human life in the world. The outcome of that debate and the final blending of the natural and supernatural can be read in *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 40. "The Church has a saving and an eschatological purpose which can be fully attained only in the future world. But she is already present in this world, and is composed of men [and women], that is, of members of the earthly city who have a call to form the family of God's children during the present history of the human race, and to keep

increasing it until the Lord returns." As it pursues "the saving purpose which is proper to it, the Church not only communicates divine life to men [and women] but in some way casts the reflected light of that life over the entire earth." The mission of the Church and *Lumen Gentium's* teaching that a "secular quality is proper and special to lay persons" (LG 31) were saved. So too was John Paul II's later definition of laity: "disciples and followers of Christ, members of the Church who are present and active in the world's heart so as to *administer temporal realities and order them toward God's reign.*"²¹

A second criticism of the Ariccia text was that it was overly optimistic about the affairs of the world and did not give sufficient place to the notion of sin. It did not highlight two ancient Catholic teachings: first, that sanctification and salvation are always graces from God, though to be saved women and men must cooperate with those gifts;²² second, that humans and the world in which they live and work out their salvation are both in a *fallen* state. They have need of grace and that ought to be stated. German criticism was again to the fore. On September 21, Cardinal Jaeger of Paderborn declared: "We must avoid all unrealistic optimism that forgets the ambiguities and dangers of progress. The scripture, above all Saint John, witness to the permanent conflict between the reign of Christ and the reign of Satan which continues throughout history and becomes ever more acute with time . . . The schema ought to mention it briefly." Döpfner of Munich followed up the following day: "the consequences of sin are not sufficiently put into evidence."

Though the criticisms that the proposed schema ignored the reality of sin were actually unfounded—for Ariccia's Schema XIII spoke often about sin and its effects in the world—to respond to the criticisms many hasty modifications were made to it. We can read a very clear one in *Gaudium et Spes's* "Introductory Statement on the Situation of Men in the Modern World." "As a weak and sinful being, he often does what he would not and fails to do what he would [Rom 7:14]. Hence, he suffers from internal divisions, and from these flow so many and such great discords in society" (GS 10). And in the introduction to part 1, "The

²¹ John Paul II, "Communion, Participation, Evangelization," *Origins* 10 (July, 31, 1980): 135, emphasis added. He repeated this idea of a Church "in the heart of the world" in an address to the bishops of Scotland in October 1992. See "Specialis Filia Romanae Ecclesiae," *Catholic International* 4 (1993): 5.

²² Henry Denzinger and Adolf Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (Herder: Freiburg, 1965), n. 396–7.

Church and Man's Calling" (GS 11), we can read about the goodness of human values which are from God, but "they are often wrenched from their rightful function by the taint [sin] in man's heart, and hence stand in need of purification." If one reads *Gaudium et Spes* carefully, one can have no doubt that the pessimism embedded in the criticism did not carry the day. Ariccia's optimism won out in the end.

Two issues dominated the discussion of Schema XIII in the council itself: the question of a condemnation of atheistic communism and the question of marriage. Communism had been condemned in the schema Wojtyla presented at Ariccia, but that approach had not gained much acceptance. The Ariccia document refrained from explicitly condemning communism because, the editors judged, such a condemnation would end any possibility of dialogue. But Wojtyla and the continuing discussion both inside and outside the council kept the question alive. Some bishops took the political route of gathering petitions for a condemnation, but the Mixed Commission resisted, and eventually, so did the council.

The debate on marriage was extended and sometimes intemperate. Those classicist neo-Augustinians who had written the preparatory document on "Chastity, Marriage, Family, and Virginity," which had been roundly rejected by the coordinating committee prior to the first session, continued to press their case. They were, in general, a group associated with the Holy Office and its president, Cardinal Ottaviani, who when presenting his preparatory schema had explained that it laid out the "objective order . . . which God himself willed in instituting marriage and Christ the Lord willed in raising it to the dignity of a sacrament. Only in this way can the modern errors which have spread everywhere be vanquished."²³ The cornerstone of that document and of the debate in the final session of the council was the teaching on the ends of marriage, whether procreation was, indeed, as had been traditionally taught, the primary end, and the mutual love of the spouses a mere secondary end. The Ariccia document chose a middle course, presenting the two ends as equal. This raised serious opposition from the theologians of the Holy Office, who argued such a position amounted to abandoning the established and immutable teaching of the Church. The finally-approved *Gaudium et Spes* rejected the criticisms of this minority and approved

²³ *Acta et Documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II Apparando (Praeparatoria)*, vol. 2, part 3 (Roma: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1968), 937.

the Ariccia formulation (GS 48–50). This debate and its outcome will be considered in detail in the essay on marriage later in this book.

The multiple criticisms in council might lead one to conclude that there were serious divisions among the bishops about the teaching of relationship of the Church and the modern world. That conclusion would be misleading, as is demonstrated by the final vote of approval of the document. Some 97 percent (2,309) of the bishops voted to approve it, a thoroughly overwhelming majority. Only 3 percent (75) voted against it. One could argue that the substance of the Ariccia document was always going to be maintained. The criticisms were about individual details and, when these details were modified to meet the desires of the critics, the document emerged substantially intact. The neo-Thomist majority was flexible with respect to the criticisms of the neo-Augustinian minority, and Paul VI was instrumental in both encouraging the editors to continue on their path, and bringing them to compromise with their critics. The outcome was that the document proposed to the bishops in the fourth session of the council, while it may have been disfigured a bit, was not substantially changed. Cardinal Montini had been an early proponent of a document on the Church in the modern world and, as Pope Paul VI, he brought the Ariccia document to fruition as *Gaudium et Spes*.

The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, along with three other documents, including *Dignitatis Humanae* (the Declaration on Religious Freedom), were read in the presence of the pope in the final public session of the council, December 7, 1965. The final editing of the text after the fathers comments on it in assembly was dominated by two factors; time was fast running out and did not allow for starting again from scratch, and the expectation for a document on the Church in the modern world, both inside and outside the council, would be enormously disappointed if no document was produced. The pace of work was so frenetic, indeed, that several of the experts fell ill and had to resign their tasks. The bishops voted on it as reported above. It is of historical interest that the vote on the Declaration on Religious Freedom was along the same lines, only 70 voting against it. After a frenetic, anxious, and tortuous genesis of a document on the Church in the modern world, the voice of the assembly could not have been clearer: it overwhelmingly approved a *Pastoral Constitution*, not a *letter* as had been suggested as a stopgap resort. All that remained was for Pope Paul VI to promulgate it in the established conciliar words. “Each and every single thing written in this Decree has proved pleasing to the Fathers of this

holy Council. We, together with these venerable Fathers, and with the apostolic authority entrusted to us by Christ, approve it in the Holy Spirit, recognize it, and order that it be promulgated as synodally approved for the glory of God."²⁴ The opening sentence of the document, the opening Latin words of which became its title, *Gaudium et Spes*, summed up John XXIII's pastoral vision of, and Paul VI's consistent support for, not only a document on the Church in the modern world, but also for the council itself: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men [and the women] of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the followers of Christ" (GS 1).

Conclusion

So what *aggiornamento*, updating, did the Catholic Church achieve with the promulgation of *Gaudium et Spes*? What, if anything, changed in its official teaching? The structure of the final document, perhaps, answers that question better than any other analysis, showing that the greatest change was a more positive judgment of both humans and the world in which they lived. It opens with a detailed analysis never before attempted by any Church document of "The Situation of Men in the Modern World." It proceeds to an analysis of "The Dignity of the Human Person," specifically man and woman as made in God's image. Here, the dignity of men and women, in spite of their acknowledged sinfulness, is proclaimed without reticence. "This Council lays stress on reverence for man [and woman]; everyone must consider his every neighbor without exception as another self, taking into account first of all his life and the means necessary to living it with dignity" (GS 27). The Church acknowledges this dignity and proclaims that it is in the world to promote it. "By virtue of the gospel committed to her, the Church proclaims the rights of man. She acknowledges and greatly esteems the dynamic movements of today by which these rights are everywhere fostered" (GS 41). What the Church specifically brings to men and women to illuminate their world is, as a result of the incarnation, the Gospel of "Christ as the New Man" (GS 22, 45), and by her relationship with Christ, the Church is "a sacramental sign and an instrument of union with God and of the unity of all mankind" (GS 42; see also LG 1, 9, 48).

²⁴ *Acta Synodalia IV* /7, 804.

Both Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II would later link this mission of the Church in the world specifically to laity. In 1964, *Lumen Gentium* had taught that “a secular quality is proper and special to laymen” (LG 31). A decade later, Paul VI took up this secular quality, teaching that the Church “has an authentic secular dimension, inherent to her inner nature and mission, which is deeply rooted in the Word incarnate and which is realized in different forms through her members.”²⁵ Both the nature and the mission of the Church, *Gaudium et Spes* taught in 1965, are rooted in the incarnation, that central Christian doctrine which confesses that God became man in Jesus of Nazareth. In the incarnation, Dermot Lane explains, “the gulf between heaven and earth, between God and man, between the supernatural and the natural, between the sacred and the secular . . . has once and for all been overcome so that now we can glimpse heaven on earth, God in man, the supernatural in the natural, the sacred amidst the secular.”²⁶ After, and in the light of, the incarnation, nothing in the world is ever exclusively profane or secular, certainly not humans and the world in which they live their lives and seek their salvation.

John Paul II insists that the secular character of the Church and its members is to be understood in a *theological* sense. “The term *secular* must be understood in the light of the act of God . . . who has handed over the world to women and men so that they may participate in the act of creation, free creation from the influence of sin, and sanctify themselves” (*Christifideles Laici* 15). Service in and for the world, no matter what that service is, is not just *secular* service, in the sense that it falls outside God’s plan of salvation. It is also *salvation* service, in the sense that it is for the salvation of the world and the women and men who serve in it. A *theological* characteristic of Christians is that they live in the world, know the world, value the world, and seek to show that God in Christ is incarnated in it. To be secular in this sense is, for Christians, a double badge of honor, for it bespeaks valuation of and commitment to both the world in which they live and the God who seeks to save it.

That, ultimately, is the hard-won message of *Gaudium et Spes*. The divisions and contrasting, sometimes contradictory, positions that emerged during the elaboration of Schema XIII ensured that the reception of *Gaudium et Spes* would be as difficult as its ratification, and that difficulty

²⁵ *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 64 (1972): 208.

²⁶ Dermot Lane, *The Reality of Jesus* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), 137.

perdures. Paul VI's idea of *dialogue*, however, so forcefully expressed in his opening address to the second session of the council and in his encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, as well as in *Gaudium et Spes* (GS 44), and which Pope John Paul II would later teach to be "rooted in the nature and dignity of the human person" and to be "an indispensable step along the path toward human self-realization" (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* 28), has taken deep enough root to eventually bring to fruition a positive relationship between the Church and the modern world. Nowhere was the power of that notion of dialogue demonstrated so effectively as in the council's discussion of atheism. There were constant demands for its condemnation but, powerfully influenced by John XXIII's opening speech of no condemnation and by Cardinal Šeper, archbishop of Zagreb, who had lived under an atheistic regime and yet made an impassioned plea that atheism not be condemned so that dialogue could continue,²⁷ the council refrained from condemnation. The cure for atheism, Šeper argued, is not condemnation and teaching but the living witness of Christians. It is clear from the preliminary to the final discussions of the document on the Church in the modern world that *Gaudium et Spes* was accepted, not as definitive teaching on the topic, but as an incomplete document that was the beginning of a dialogue.²⁸ The task of solidifying and developing the dialogical relationship between Church and world mapped out by *Gaudium et Spes* has not been an easy one, but it is one that needs to be done if God's plan for the fullness of time, "to unite all things in [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph 1:10), is ever to be achieved. How *Gaudium et Spes* contributes to that achievement will be illustrated as this book unfolds.

Questions for Reflection

1. How do you understand the designations *classicist neo-Augustinian* and *historically conscious neo-Thomist*? What differences do they exhibit toward an approach to the relationship between the Church and the world?
2. In your opinion, was the council convoked by Pope John XXIII a continuation of the unfinished First Vatican Council or something

²⁷ *Acta Synodalia*, IV / 2, 435–37.

²⁸ See Congar, *My Journal*, 779, September 17, 1965.

genuinely new? What difference does the choice make to Church and theology?

3. What was the first moment of crisis of the Second Vatican Council? What effect did its resolution have on the future direction and decisions of the council?
4. What progression do you see in the development of Schema XVII from its original Roman document, through the Malines, Zurich, and Ariccia documents, to the finally approved version of *Gaudium et Spes*?
5. *Lumen Gentium* (LG 31) taught that “a secular quality is proper and special to laymen [and women]” and John Paul II interpreted that secular quality to mean that God “has handed over the world to women and men so that they may participate in the act of creation, free creation from the influence of sin, and sanctify themselves.” How do you see Christian women and men exercising their secular quality in the world? How do you see their secular activity as contributing to both their salvation and the salvation of the world?