

## THE REDACTION AND RECEPTION OF *GAUDIUM ET SPES*

### Tensions within the Majority at Vatican II

Joseph A. Komonchak

The Catholic University of America

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One of the most striking developments in the first decade after the close of the Second Vatican Council was the splintering of the coalition of theologians who, having helped at the first session to break the power of those who had controlled the Council’s preparation, had in the succeeding sessions played a major role in deliberations which resulted in conciliar documents marked by a quite different spirit and offering a quite different message to the Church and to the world. This splintering may be symbolized by the founding of two new theological journals, *Concilium*, whose first issue appeared in 1964, while the Council was still meeting, and *Communio*, whose first issue appeared in 1972 and whose founders included several theologians who had since resigned from the editorial board of *Concilium*. It was almost inevitable, then, that the new journal was labelled an “anti-*Concilium*.”

This development, along with the very rapid collapse of the hegemony enjoyed by the officially sanctioned neo-scholastic theology before the Council as well as the complex phenomena entailed in what has been called “*le déplacement de la théologie*,” suggest the need to study the theological dynamics of Vatican II with a heuristic model more discerning than what Giuseppe Alberigo, echoing Joseph Ratzinger, criticized as “the elementary and rough opposition that people like to make between a curial tendency and a progressive tendency.”<sup>1</sup>

It is significant that both men made this comment in the course of observations on *Gaudium et spes*. For although differences among the progressives with regard both to practical tactics and to theological orientations were not lacking in earlier moments of the conciliar deliberations, they had then been largely subordinated to the common interest of opposing the ecclesiastical and theological system that had dominated and been reflected in the official texts prepared for the Council’s discussion and expected approval. In the midst of that struggle it appeared sufficient to analyze the conciliar tension as one between “two tendencies in modern theology,” to use the title of Msgr.

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<sup>1</sup> Giuseppe Alberigo, “La Costituzione in rapporto al magistero globale del Concilio,” in *La Chiesa nel mondo di oggi: Studi e commenti intorno alla Costituzione pastorale “Gaudium et spes*,” ed. Guilherme Baraúna (Florence: Vallecchi, 1966), 184n; Alberigo cited Joseph Ratzinger, “Der Katholizismus nach dem Konzil,” *Das neue Volk Gottes: Entwürfe zur Ekklesiologie* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 19??) 302-21, at 316-17; ET: “Catholicism after the Council,” *The Furrow*, 18 (1967) 3-23, at 18; FT: *Documentation catholique*, 63 (1966) 1557-1576, at 1571.

Gérard Philips's famous essay.<sup>2</sup> But once that struggle had ended, the question arose that Joseph Ratzinger has nicely put: "... the preparatory work was unsatisfactory, and the Council rejected the extant texts. But the question at this point was: What now?"<sup>3</sup> The question arose with particular acuteness with regard to Schema 13.

It seems to me that the divisions among the progressive theologians deserve more study than they have so far received, since they are a key to the theological *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the Council. I wish in this essay to analyze these differences as they began to appear in the last stages of the preparation of *Gaudium et spes* and as they were reflected, rather consistently, also in the initial commentaries on the pastoral constitution. I will conclude with a first effort at theological analysis of underlying issues and by suggesting some "*pistes de recherche*."

### Schema 13 at the Fourth Session

After its initial discussion during the third session of the Council, Schema 13 was extensively rewritten particularly during and after the long and fruitful meeting at Ariccia (January-February 1965). A useful description of the new plan and method was provided by Msgr. P. Hauptmann shortly before the Council resumed its work.<sup>4</sup> In response to criticisms of the previous version, the redactors had constructed a Christian anthropology set out in the four chapters of the first part of the schema, which was followed by a consideration of material on some more pressing problems that previously had been treated in appendices. Addressed first to Catholics and through them to all people, the schema would take the form, not of an authoritative claim to jurisdiction over the issues discussed, but rather of a testimony, simply stating what the Church is, what it believes, and what it thinks about contemporary questions. This required a direct and simple style and form as well as a method that would begin "from facts and truths the most commonly acknowledged, would then illumine and judge them in the light of Revelation, and finally would center them upon Christ himself." The method was theologically motivated: "for facts and human development ("*devenir*") in their own way constitute a '*locus theologicus*' in which the believer must seek...the appeals and the solicitations of the Spirit." The result was "a *sui generis* type of schema."

It is well known that the Ariccia text encountered serious criticism at the meeting of German bishops in Fulda at the end of August, 1965. A set of observations prepared by Karl Rahner were discussed and in large part adopted by the German and Scandinavian bishops.<sup>5</sup> Despite the great

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<sup>2</sup> Gérard Philips, "Deux tendances dans la théologie contemporaine: En marge du IIe Concile du Vatican," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique*, 85 (1963) 225-38. Neither this nor his later article, "Les méthodes théologiques de Vatican II," in *Le service théologique dans l'Eglise. Mélanges offerts à Yves Congar* (Paris: du Cerf, 1974) 11-35, are sufficiently critical, as also is not Edward Schillebeeckx's analysis in terms of "essentialism" and "existentialism," see "The Second Vatican Council," in *The Layman in the Church and Other Essays* (Staten Island: Alba House, 1963) 67-92.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Die letzte Sitzungsperiode des Konzils* (Köln: Bachem, 1966) 28; ET *Theological Highlights of Vatican II* (New York: Paulist Press, 1966) 148.

<sup>4</sup> P. Hauptmann, "Le schéma de la Constitution pastorale 'De Ecclesia in mundo huius temporis,'" *Études et documents*, no. 10 (25 August 1965) 11pp.

<sup>5</sup> [Karl Rahner], "Anmerkungen zum Schema 'De Ecclesia in mundo huius temporis' (in der Fassung vom 28.5.65)," 20 pp. F.Hengs 122; for a discussion of Rahner's critique and the Fulda meeting, see Giovanni Turbanti, "La redazione della Costituzione pastorale 'Gaudium et spes,'" unpublished doctoral thesis, pp. 386-90.

effort that had been expended on its revision, the schema, according to Rahner, still labored under many defects. First, it lacked a sufficient “theological gnoseology” that would explain how it had arrived at its analysis of the contemporary world, how much of it had been borrowed from contemporary analysts, how much derived from the faith, and how the authors had come to the concrete and practical conclusions it stated: were these analyses and conclusions the work of the official Church itself or of individual Christians? The result was a set of vague, general, and moralizing norms that left the concrete problems unsolved. The text also ignored the complex epistemological questions that arise in moral judgements that go beyond a merely deductive logic from first moral principles.<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, Rahner argued that the schema did not adequately address the relationship between the order of creation and the order of redemption, particularly the meaning of the human activity that was profoundly transforming the world. The inner-worldly significance of this activity was neglected in favor of its immediate religious and moral significance. The concept of the “world” in the text also needed further clarification.

Thirdly, the schema lacked “a real and profound theology of sin.” It was content with lamenting immorality in a way that scarcely surpassed what mere experience might yield. The ineradicable depths of sin were overlooked. The ideology of a “better world” obtainable if people only willed it had replaced the “legitimate and necessary ‘pessimism’ that Christians must profess before the world.”

Fourthly, the schema lacked a theology of the eschatological situation in which the world and the Church stand in virtue of the incarnation, cross, and resurrection of Christ. In particular, it neglected what a Christian theology of history must acknowledge: “that the antagonism between a world under the power of the Evil One and the disciples of Christ will never be mitigated but will grow ever more bitter in the course of time.” Also missing was a confrontation between Christian eschatology and various forms of secular, this-worldly eschatology, such as Marxism.

Finally, the schema lacked the needed Christian anthropology. The idea of the “image of God” was presented too rapidly and too briefly and ignored the complexities of the notion. The reflections on human dignity were too abstract, too formal, and too oriented toward contemplation. God is invoked to explain man rather than the other way round. The result was a tedious moralizing. The text lacked a “theology of the cross” and of its implications for the history of the world and of the human race.

Rahner’s proposal was that the text either be remanded to a post-conciliar commission or that it be reduced in authority from a “pastoral constitution.”

In order to prevent these disagreements among habitual conciliar allies from endangering the text, several French- and German-speaking bishops and theologians met on September 17.<sup>7</sup> After the former defended the schema from the critiques of the latter, the common decision was made to accept the schema as a basis but to try to improve it by bringing together what Charles Moeller

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<sup>6</sup> Rahner elaborated on these problems in, “On the Theological Problems Entailed in a ‘Pastoral Constitution,’” *Theological Investigations*, vol. X (New York: Herder and Herder, 1973) 293-317 (= *Schriften zur Theologie*, VIII).

<sup>7</sup> For accounts of this meeting, see Turbanti, “La redazione,” 399-402; Charles Moeller, *L’élaboration du Schéma XIII: L’Église dans le monde de ce temps* (Tournai: Casterman, 1968) 125-28.

described as “a concrete approach suffused with a certain basic ‘optimism’ and a dialectical approach marked by the paradoxical, polyvalent, aspect of the world in which the Church lives.”<sup>8</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, who was among the German critics of the text and attended the meeting, described the “new fronts [that] had emerged in the face of new tasks and new problems” as reflecting “a certain opposition between German and French theology” within the ranks of the progressives.<sup>9</sup> This description ignores another line of force that is visible in a letter written by Giuseppe Dossetti to Cardinal Lercaro as the debate on Schema 13 was about to resume where, referring apparently to what has been called “the Bolognese office,” Dossetti spoke of “our position between two fires (the conservatives and the progressives).”<sup>10</sup> This comment, along with the intervention Dossetti prepared for the Cardinal, reveals the presence of another, more radical and evangelical, approach to the questions, particularly that of war and peace. It will be useful, then, to set out the views of a representative of each of the three positions

### M.-D. Chenu

Perhaps the most enthusiastic defender of Schema 13, both during the last stages of its redaction and in his commentaries on *Gaudium et spes*, was Marie-Dominique Chenu. At a critical point of the early days of the fourth session, when the schema was coming under heavy attack, he gave a talk at the Dutch documentary center (DO-C) which was to have a powerful effect on the redactional history of the text.<sup>11</sup> As he explained in a letter to Msgr. Guano, Chenu was very pleased with the schema: its “inspiration, main lines, architecture of the parts,”<sup>12</sup> and his talk, widely distributed, was a vigorous defense of the method and the theology of the schema. In it are visible Chenu’s long-held views on the necessity of the Church’s continuing the economy of Incarnation, of being “present” in and to its world, an engagement so constitutive of the Church that it justifies entitling the text a “pastoral constitution.”<sup>13</sup> What it offered were not simple “adaptations” of “eternal truths” nor solutions dictated *ex cathedra* and from on high, but “evangelical *positions*, inspired from within, guided by the Word of God and at the same time assuming the values inscribed by the Creator in human nature, in the expansion of earthly civilizations. It expressed a twofold and yet a

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<sup>8</sup> Moeller, *L’élaboration du Schema XIII*, 128.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Die letzte Sitzungsperiode des Konzils*, 30; *Theological Highlights*, 151.

<sup>10</sup> Dossetti to Lercaro, 27 September 1965, published in *Per la forza dello Spirito: Discorsi conciliari del card. Giacomo Lercaro* (Bologna: Dehoniane, 1984) 254n.

<sup>11</sup> M.-D. Chenu, “A Pastoral Constitution of the Church,” *DO-C*, #205; reprinted in *Peuple de Dieu dans le monde* (Paris: du Cerf, 1966) 11-34. For the effect of Chenu’s speech, see Turbanti, “La redazione,” 402-407; Roberto Tucci, “Introduction historique et doctrinale à la Constitution pastorale,” in *L’Église dans le monde de ce temps*, ed. Y. Congar and M. Peuchmaurd, vol. II (Unam Sanctam 65b; Paris: du Cerf, 1967) 102n.

<sup>12</sup> See Turbanti, “La redazione,” 403.

<sup>13</sup> In a later commentary on *Gaudium et spes*, Chenu repeated this claim: the text’s references to *Lumen gentium* (#40A) “indicate the doctrinal level at which the Constitution *Gaudium et spes* was formed; it is not simply a collection of pastoral applications of an earlier Constitution nor a summary of ‘social doctrine,’ but truly an essential part of a single complete Constitution; it is constitutionally, *per natura* [sic], insofar as it is the continued mystery of Christ in history, that the Church is *in* the world, today;” “La missione della Chiesa nel mondo contemporaneo,” in *La Chiesa nel mondo di oggi*, 331-50, at 333. As we shall see, Ratzinger would present quite another interpretation of the relation between the two constitutions on the Church.

single problematic, by which grace fulfils nature, under the regime of the Incarnation, attentive to the rhythms of history.” Through this pastoral act, the Church was here in act, “a theological source of the Word of God.”

Thus all the so-called secular values, springing century after century from the consciousness of men and from the construction of the world, are recognized as so many “signs of the times” in the messianic era that has now begun. These are not a fortuitous collection of facts that act as stimulants vis-à-vis a transcendent supernatural life, but events which, in the framework of space and on the path of time, are so many landmarks in the realization of the economy of salvation, which is entirely included in the absolute Event that Jesus Christ is, who is their culminating point, their center, their historical criterion, their fulfilment.

For Chenu the great contribution of the schema lay in its Christian anthropology which relates grace to a knowledge of human nature that goes beyond the psychological to include the social and the historical. It is these latter dimensions that the schema insisted upon in discussing the contemporary human situation, the process by which *homo artifex* is gradually humanizing the world and realizing himself. The dualism and angelism that had too often marked Christian thought were overcome in an application of Thomist anthropology to the contemporary situation:

Christian anthropology registers the benefits of new sensitivity to a civilization engaged in matter and engaging matter. This is a welcome summons to a realistic faith in the Incarnation by which the coming of God into humanity leads to the resurrection of the flesh, to the establishment of new heavens and new earths. The construction of the world is reintegrated into the economy of salvation. By and in man, grace is at home in the world, that extended body of man.

For Chenu historical growth is constitutive of humanity as man progresses out of his past and into a future, and today this consciousness has taken on a collective form. The modern ideology of progress has masked the true religious and secular meaning of this historic responsibility. Perhaps aware that Karl Rahner had criticized the lack of attention to the eschatological situation, Chenu quoted the German Jesuit: “Eternity is not a sort of future addition to life, a linear prolongation of our existence *ad infinitum*; it *already* exists in man’s heart, the fruit of his spiritual action.” “Thus,” Chenu added, “for the Christian, events, day by day, entail an eschatological dimension, not by an escape out of time, but a concrete and actual reference to the absolute Event who is Christ, God come into history.” “In this sense, the *event* is the point of grace’s impact and, in the great web of history, events embracing a whole cycle of collective life, enter into the texture of the Kingdom of God.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> In another commentary on *Gaudium et spes*, Chenu would make it clear that his was a realized eschatology, yielding, not Rahner’s Christian pessimism, but a confident optimism that did not arise “by some moral, still naive, moral fervor, but by the objective truth of the Kingdom of God already come. The messianic age has begun.” That is why he believed the phrase “signs of the times,” as used in the constitution retained its eschatological and messianic biblical meaning: “we are living in the eschatological times, for the Messiah has come.... Reference to eschatology is by definition included in the messianic times; but the messianic times, which Christ will recapitulate in the consummation of his mystery, are in course today. The Kingdom is here, in the earthly community of believers;” see “Les signes des temps: Réflexion théologique,” in *L’Église dans le monde de ce temps*, II, 205-25, at 220. In the earlier commentary, Chenu refers to some opponents of the fourth chapter of the constitution, who even proposed that it be dropped because, he said,

But this is not to confuse grace and nature nor to identify human progress with the Kingdom of God. “Grace is grace, and secular history is not a source of salvation. Evangelization is of another order than civilization... To promote culture is not to convert to faith.”<sup>15</sup>

But this insuperable transcendence, both in initiative and in content, does not eliminate nature and history but on the contrary calls for...a real encounter with an interiority open to the divine love which offers itself, an effective (though not “active”) capacity to understand it and to respond to it. Human undertakings, the mastery of nature, the rising awareness of peoples, the development of minds, the haunting desire for peace, the universal solidarity of the human race, these are not some incidental matter, a condition quite extrinsic to the individual and collective life of grace. As ambiguous as they are, these are so many building blocks (*pierres d’attentes*--toothing stones?).

These events are “signs of the times,” like the *praeparatio evangelica* the Fathers found in the Roman Empire. “The Gospel has no less chance today as it faces the advent of a new age of humanity.”

In response to the severe criticisms the schema was receiving, particularly from German bishops, Chenu wrote a letter to Hauptmann in which he urged that the desire to improve the text not lead to modifications in its structure and inspiration.

It is not simply for pedagogical reasons, and to gain an audience among non-Christians, that each chapter (1,2,3) begins by observing the human condition in order then to move on to Christ. This, of course, is quite valid in a document addressed to the whole world. More profoundly, however, this progressive method is the expression of a *theology* whose object is, not to “deduce” a Christian anthropology from christology, but to discern “the signs of the times” in the concrete reality of history. This is the entire soul of the schema, in manifest continuity with the inspiration of John XXIII and with the general movement of the Council--not to present *ex auctoritate* a “social doctrine” but to discern in man today, in the great webs of historical progress (socialization, universalism, political consciousness...), appeals, capacities, obediencial potencies, “building blocks,” ways of being open, more or less consciously, to the Word of God.<sup>16</sup>

When Chenu repeated much of this in an essay written shortly after the Council closed, he again referred to the Thomist notion of “obediencial potency” to explain his point:

It is not as if grace were built on top of nature, as if the kingdom of God were built

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“in fact they were closed to an original and renewed conception of the mystery of Christ’s Incarnation in its total dimensions: the recapitulation of the activity of man and of history in the economy of redemption; “La missione della Chiesa nel mondo contemporaneo,” 333.

<sup>15</sup> In his commentary, Chenu repeated these comments and then added: “But to discern the signs of salvation is the operation with which evangelization begins, and the kerygma that discerns them is not merely a pre-evangelization: it is already witness: ‘Joyfully and respectfully they should discern the seeds of the Word that are latent in them’: it is one of the essential acts of witnessing, in the course of evangelization...;” “Les signes des temps: Réflexion théologique,” 222. Compare this to Ratzinger’s remarks on the kerygma as “the distinctive linguistic form of the Church,” cited below in note 19.

<sup>16</sup> Chenu to Hauptmann, 2 October 1965, as quoted in Turbanti, “La redazione,” 406; see p. 407 for a similar letter to Msgr. Hengbach.

on top of the world as the scaffolding of a city to come. As points of contact with the Gospel, all terrestrial goods develop man's capacity to open up to the divine life, for in the strongest sense of the word, man is the 'subject' of grace. He is *capax dei*, not only in his essential nature, but in this nature as it develops through time, not only in his person but in his character as a social being."

"There is," he went on, "a social dimension to obediential potency. This is a very important point to note in a period when socialization is the major and universal phenomenon of the human race."<sup>17</sup>

### Joseph Ratzinger

At the meeting of French and German bishops and theologians on the eve of the conciliar debate on Schema 13 in the fourth session, Joseph Ratzinger presented criticisms so severe that he even proposed dropping the whole first part of the schema. In his booklet on the fourth session, he elaborated on the criticisms he had offered.<sup>18</sup> Structurally, the schema was marked by the conflict between those who favored a biblical approach and those who favored one more intelligible to modern thought. While these two parties had cooperated in opposition to the prepared texts, which had been neither biblical nor modern, the discussion of Schema 13 revealed how difficult it was to unite the two approaches. The redactors of the text had favored the modern approach but in their attempt to express basic theological ideas in a modern way they had, "even more than their scholastic predecessors, reduced the biblical element to an ornamental role." They argued reasonably and politely, concerned not to frighten their audience with theological language, but then at the end, almost out of embarrassment, they had to mention that man can only be saved by Christ. The Christian message was then expressed in the language of classic theology, making it appear all the more unintelligible. Christology itself and the central Christian faith appeared to be "a kind of second world alongside the first and immediate world of ordinary daily life" and theology to be "an ideology for those who need such a refuge from reality."

In the course of the dialogue undertaken by the text a very dubious use of the term "People of God" became visible: "as if the People of God looked with pity and compassion on other people's problems and were not itself made up of frail human beings, as though the People of God were one sociological group among others, looking for contact with the other groups." If the text was correct in not wanting to indulge in authoritarian pronouncements based on natural law, it should have chosen instead of its failed form of dialogue a kerygmatic "proclamation of the Gospel--thus opening up the faith to the non-believer and abdicating all claim to authority other than the intrinsic authority of God's truth, manifesting itself to the hearer of the message."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> M.-D. Chenu, "The Signs of the Times," in *The Church Today: Commentaries on the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, ed. Group 2000 (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1968) 56-57 ("Les signes des temps," *Peuple de Dieu dans le monde*, 46-48).

<sup>18</sup> Ratzinger, *Die letzte Sitzungsperiode*, 29-43; *Theological Highlights*, 152-160, which expand on the criticisms summarized by Turbanti, "La redazione," 400.

<sup>19</sup> A year after the Council closed, Ratzinger wrote: "The core of the Church's task, the message about Jesus Christ as Savior and Redeemer, as such cannot be undertaken by the Church in the form of a dialogue; in the end it can only be preached. The kerygma remains in this sense the distinctive linguistic form of the Church, for which it is responsible before others.... This distinctive gift she cannot make an object of negotiation; she can only offer it for the

Ratzinger's principal criticism of the content of the schema concerned the Church's relationship to the world of technology. He saw the text as approaching a Teilhardian identification of Christian hope with modern confidence in progress. It displayed "an almost naive progressivist optimism which seemed unaware of the ambivalence of all external human progress." It tended "to see the real meaning of the christological in the sacred aura it confers upon technological achievement, rather than developing the christological on the very different plane of the passion of human life and human love." "The Christian message," Ratzinger concluded, "cannot have as its purpose the glorification of the technological--technology does not need that--but the provision of critical norms by which to judge it."<sup>20</sup>

Two of these criticisms, the improper use of the term "People of God" and the confusion of salvation with human progress, found their way into the intervention of Cardinal Frings when the conciliar debate on the schema began.<sup>21</sup> To these the Cardinal added a third complaint: the unclarity of the notion of the world used in the schema. In an article published during the intersession, Ratzinger had also addressed this question.<sup>22</sup> He distinguished four meanings of the word "world." In a first sense it means the external cosmos in which man finds himself, created not by him but by a good God. A second meaning intends the concrete world not only as created by God but as shaped and marked by man himself. Here Ratzinger's reflections turn immediately to the biblical image of the city founded by the fratricide Cain or by his son, symbolic symbol of the world as marked by man, "a judgment on technological realities." The biblical author sees it "as marked by human pride, by the hubris of one who wants to manage without God." To this vision of the city must be counterposed the city which descends from heaven at the end of time. The two images reflect the ambiguity of technology, culture, civilization: "These realities are at once promises and dangers."

In a third sense "world" means the set of human patterns of behavior which relates man to his environment and to his fellow human beings. In this sense the Church does not stand over and against the world; it is itself a part of the world, and a Christian who asks about the relationship between Church and world is asking how to relate the two poles of his own existence.

These increasingly anthropological meanings of the word "world" lead to the fourth sense, the one employed in the Johannine literature, the world of those who do not believe but have turned from God to the purely inner-worldly. In this sense, too, the world does not exist outside the Church nor outside the Christian, but represents a constant temptation to both. This fourth sense must be distinguished from the second and third senses outlined, which are the ones relevant to the schema

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decision of faith;" "Weltoffene Kirche? Überlegungen zur Struktur des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils," *Das neue Volk Gottes*, 294.

<sup>20</sup> See also Ratzinger's commentary on the discussion in *Gaudium et spes* of the Christian and technology, in *Die letzte Sitzungsperiode*, 45-49; *Theological Highlights*, 161-65.

<sup>21</sup> *AS*, IV/2, 405-406. See Joseph Ratzinger, "Buchstabe und Geist des Zweiten Vatikanums in den Konzilsreden von Kardinal Frings," *IKZ Communio*, 16 (1987) 251-65, esp. pp. 262-63. Here Ratzinger comments, approvingly, on conciliar interventions by Frings, several of which Ratzinger appears to have written--an oddity that occurs also in the case of Cardinal Lercaro and Giuseppe Dossetti.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, "Angesichts der Welt von heute: Überlegungen zur Konfrontation mit der Kirche im Schema XIII," *Wort und Wahrheit*, 20 (1965) 493-504; reprinted as "Der Christ und die Welt von heute," in *Dogma und Verkündigung* (München:ewel Verlag, 1973) 179-200.



on the Church in the modern world.

Ratzinger identified two distinctive characteristics of this world: the experience of the unity of the world and the experience of what he calls the *Machbarkeit* of the world. By the latter he seems to be referring to the attitude of instrumental reason, seeing the world as manipulable and shapable by man. Living in this world, the individual Christian can accept the new opportunities it offers for real human progress but should never indulge in “a naive progress-optimism” that would make him forget the foolishness of the cross and the necessity of losing himself in order to find himself. As for the Church as Church, many people wish to base their approach on the Incarnation, some deriving from it the duty to “bring it home” to Christianity, others seeing it as grounding the worldliness of the world. In his own view, the one thing that must be excluded is the construction of “a Catholic *Sonderwelt* [separate world].” The Christian’s task is “to permeate the one world of all men with the Spirit of Jesus Christ. What the Church has to give the world is not a private *Musterwelt* [ideal world] which in truth, as all previous attempts of this sort sufficiently show, would very quickly become again a quite typically human world. What the Church has to give the world is rather what it alone can give: the Word of God on which man lives no less than on the bread of this earth.”

In conclusion, Ratzinger says that “it cannot be the task of the Church (gathered in Council) to construct its own ideal world--a scientifically elaborated synthesis of all the vital questions of people today which must inspire everyone immediately. However the text turns out, in the end this Council also can offer nothing better to the world than the Word of God which lasts forever. If it succeeds in bring this genuine treasure of the Church to men’s ears and hearts, it will give it more than the most beautiful of syntheses can give.”

Less than a year after the close of the Council, Ratzinger again attempted an analysis of the theological differences that underlay the conflict over Schema 13, which, he said, had “much more profound implications than any mere sparring-match between the watchdogs of the Church’s rubrics and the champions of the modern.”<sup>23</sup> The theological development had known two phases. The first concentrated on the Incarnation as the central fact of Christianity, revealing a God who entered into the flesh and blood of human history. This yielded a vital, world-involved, world-embracing, incarnate Christianity, which looked for traces of Christianity in order to “bring them home,” to christen them, as St. Thomas had christened Aristotle.<sup>24</sup> But a corrective was brought to this orientation when it was recognized that in the Scriptures the Incarnation plays a less important role than does the Cross. This “eschatological phase” was strengthened by fears that the desired incarnate Christianity might lead to “a restoration of the Middle Ages,” so that the idea arose that the task of Christianity was not to christianize the world but to let the world be the world. “Now the change to the autonomy of the secular world...was seen as the climax of the Christian transformation of history, and the Christian horizon was given a forward orientation instead of nostalgic longing for the Middle

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<sup>23</sup> Ratzinger, “Der Katholizismus nach dem Konzil,” 314-18; “Catholicism after the Council,” 17-20; *DC*, 1568-73.

<sup>24</sup> In “Angesichts der Welt von heute,” 504, n. 12, Ratzinger identified with this phase the work of A. Auer in *Weltoffener Christ* and “Gestaltwandel des christliche Weltverständnisses,” in *Gott in Welt*. In “Weltoffene Kirche?,” 297, he attributes to Auer the idea of “eine Verkirchlichung des Ganzen.”

Ages.”<sup>25</sup> The sharpest critique of such romanticized nostalgia Ratzinger found in the words of Pope John XXIII in which was heard “a theology of hope which sometimes seems to border on naive optimism,”<sup>26</sup> but was in fact an optimism of faith which should not be confused “with the less high-minded optimism of a progress-conscious age.”

Unfortunately, at the Council the differences between these two orientations of modern theology were obscured by the conflict between the curial tradition and modern theology, as if the first were not interested in the world while the second was. The problematic character of modern theology thus never received adequate attention. Ratzinger’s own view was then made clear: “an orientation of the Church towards the world which would mean a turning away from the Cross would lead not to a renewal of the Church but to its decline and eventual decay.”<sup>27</sup> The purpose of the Council was not to do away with this constitutive Christian scandal but to remove the secondary scandals represented by outmoded forms of the Church’s relationship with the world, particularly in the form of various types of “*non possumus* [we are unable].”

Many of these critical remarks appear in Ratzinger’s commentary on the first chapter of *Gaudium et spes*, published in the supplementary volume of the *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*.<sup>28</sup> The reduction in the final text of the role of the idea of “the signs of the times,” which had been criticized by biblical scholars and by Protestants, gave him the occasion to remark on “the dilemma presented on the one side by historical precision, which withdraws Scripture into the past and keeps it there, and on the other by the conviction that Scripture is also concerned with the present day and can be assimilated today. It became plain, as so often in the debate on the Pastoral Constitution, that we still have no rules for kerygmatic hermeneutics.”

In addressing the nature of the “dialogue” the text wishes to inaugurate, Ratzinger noted that it was undertaken not theologically but anthropologically, “anthropocentrism” representing the text’s “most characteristic option.” The whole Constitution might even be described “as a discussion between Christian and unbeliever on the question who and what man really is.” But Ratzinger found the text defective in its description of the two partners in dialogue. On the one hand, the equivalence placed between “Church” and “People of God,” both of them referring to the whole Church, turned the second of these terms “into a sort of empirical term,” with the danger of its “sinking once more into a merely sociological and even ideological view of the Church” by neglect of its theological

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<sup>25</sup> In “Angesichts der Welt von heute,” 504, n. 12, Ratzinger illustrated this view by referring to J.B. Metz, “Weltverständnis im Glauben,” *Glaube und Leben*, 35 (1962) 165-84, and “Die Zukunft des Glaubens in einer humanisierten Welt,” *Hochland*, 546 (1963/64) 377-91; see also “Weltoffene Kirche?,” 297-98.

<sup>26</sup> Ratzinger adduces as an example Roncalli’s words in his opening address to the Council: “Tantum aurora est; et iam primi orientis solis radii quam suaviter animos afficiunt nostros.”

<sup>27</sup> In “Angesichts der Welt von heute,” 504, n. 12, Ratzinger refers to Hans Urs von Balthasar’s critique of both Auer and Metz in “Die Gottvergessenheit und die Christen,” *Hochland*, 57 (1964/65) 1-11; *Rechenschaft 1965* (Einsiedeln 1965), and *Wer ist ein Christ?* (Einsiedeln 1965).

<sup>28</sup> *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil: Dokumente und Kommentare*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler, vol. III (Freiburg: Herder, 1968) 313-54; translated as *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. V (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969) 115-63.

aspects as set forth in the Constitutions on the Liturgy and on the Church.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, by referring to the other dialogue-partner as “the human race,” it almost appeared as if the Church were not part of it, an oversight which Ratzinger attributed “to the deeply-rooted extrinsicism of ecclesiastical thought, to long-standing habits formed during the Church’s exclusion from the general course of development, and to retreat into a special little ecclesiastical world from which an attempt is now being made to speak to the rest of the world.”

Turning to paragraph 12, on the image of God, Ratzinger reviewed the Germans’ sharp criticisms of the Ariccia text which they found had insufficiently overcome “a doctrine of man divided into philosophy and theology.” They thought it simply juxtaposed nature and the supernatural and that it indulged “the fiction that it is possible to construct a rational philosophical picture of man intelligible to all and on which all men of goodwill can agree, the actual Christian doctrines being added to this as a sort of crowning conclusion.” The Germans would have preferred starting “from the actual Christian creed, which, precisely as a confession of faith, can and must manifest its own intelligibility and rationality.” What was ultimately at stake in this debate, Ratzinger said, was “the whole question of the relation between faith and understanding.” The mere juxtaposition the text offered, based on the Thomist division between philosophy and theology, was inadequate: “reason pure and simple does not exist.” Still these objections came too late to change the basic method of the text, which moves “from outside inwards.”

Ratzinger’s commentary on #13 also criticizes the Ariccia text for its neglect of the notion of sin, which he attributes to the “optimistic atmosphere” created by Pope John’s opening speech, to views similar to those of Teilhard de Chardin, and to the penchant of the French authors of the schema for Thomism and the Greek Fathers rather than, say, for Luther.<sup>30</sup> This basic outlook remained, even after the addition of this paragraph on sin, which plays a less central role than it had both in Lutheran theology and in modern “Catholic Augustinianism.” The emphasis falls instead on the redemption that has already taken place, and the final text could “easily tend to give a slightly semi-Pelagian impression.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ratzinger refers here to Alberigo’s essay, “La Costituzione in rapporto al magistero globale del Concilio,” 184-92. Compare this assessment to Chenu’s comments, quoted above, on the relationship between *Gaudium et spes* and *Lumen gentium*, as well as to his approval of the use made of the idea of “People of God”: “In effect, it is to the Church as ‘People of God’ that falls the task of hearing, discerning, interpreting the signs of the times. We have here the immediate application, in the realm of evangelical witness, of the general doctrine of the Council on the Church as People of God (LG, 11);” “Les signes des temps: Réflexion théologique,” 223-24.

<sup>30</sup> In the course of these remarks, Ratzinger refers to the commentary on the same chapter by one of its redactors, Philippe Delhay, “La dignità della persona umana,” in *La Chiesa nel mondo di oggi*, 264-86. A comparison of these two commentaries will illustrate the theological differences in tension in the drafting of *Gaudium et spes*. Delhay refers to “the revision, in a pessimistic key, of November 1965” (268); with reference to #12 he writes: “Apart from the eternal conflict between optimism and pessimism, in the sphere of Christian thought itself, the question is this: sinful man certainly has ruined the divine work, but has he been able to do so to such an extent that evil now prevails over good. Is it a definitive ruin, or one that has already in principle been repaired by the Resurrection of Christ?” (270); and, referring to the “awareness of guilt,” he adds: “It is a moment in the dialectic of salvation, but there is nothing more mistaken--and more injurious to Christ and his victory--than to glory in it and take pleasure in it” (271).

<sup>31</sup> Delhay commented on the differences within Catholic theology: “The Augustinianism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries magnified the consequences of original sin and almost eliminated the effects of redemption. It denied the latter’s extension (the elect were only a small number) and force. The Greek Fathers, instead, put the Lord’s

Ratzinger found #14 generally successful in its presentation of the oneness of body and soul in man. He was in general positive with regard also to #15 on the human intellect. In its first sentence he heard “an echo of the medieval doctrine of illumination, derived from Augustine, but in its Thomistically domesticated form.” He was pleased that the text made use of the Augustinian distinction between “science” and “wisdom,” and he argued that Augustine’s “Platonically inspired conception of science as knowledge of phenomena is very close to the view held in the natural sciences, with its necessary methodological positivism and its exclusion of the question of ontological truth.” This would have to qualify what the Constitution says about scientific and technological progress; genuine human development is a matter of wisdom. But he found questionable the rather extrinsic reference to the wisdom of faith in the paragraph’s last sentence, an apparent effort to keep the natural and supernatural orders distinct, something which goes counter to Augustine’s notion of wisdom.

On the other hand, Ratzinger was more critical of the discussion of conscience in #16 which he thought oversimplified the problem, passed over epistemological questions, excluded psychological and sociological factors, and, more generally, made inadequate use of modern philosophy and allied disciplines, thus giving “an impression of pre-critical thought.” An “epistemological optimism” marks the paragraph, even when a revision attempted to express “the pessimistic aspect.” “That general crisis of the human mind in regard to moral good, which so deeply disturbed Luther’s thought, does not come into the field of vision of the conciliar text.”

Even severer criticisms were directed at the discussion of freedom in #17, “one of the least satisfactory in the whole document.” The New Testament doctrine of freedom is excluded, and the failure to develop the idea of the image of God on christological bases here shows its consequences. A specifically Christian approach is left aside in order to work from outside in, thus leaving the reader unprepared for the discussion of Christ at the end of the chapter. The citation from Sirach reflects an “ethical optimism,” a kind of *ethica naturalis* [natural ethics], to the neglect of more powerful biblical aspects. The result is “a colorless philosophical doctrine of freedom” which is unhistorical and unreal. The whole modern philosophical discussion of freedom is overlooked as are the theological issues raised by Luther’s one-sided doctrine of *servum arbitrium* [the enslaved will]. “It even falls into quite Pelagian terminology,” not balanced by an at best “semi-Pelagian” mention of the need for grace. It is “an ethics modelled on the Stoa,” ignoring all that Marxism could teach “about the extent of human alienation and decadence.”

After generally favorable comments on #18, which treats of death, and #19-20, which begin the discussion of atheism, Ratzinger had more critical things to say about #21, in which he found a surprisingly unqualified “optimism in regard to the possibility of knowing God,” a failure to make it plain “that the question of God both positively and negatively stands outside the realm of demonstrative thought.” The paragraph did not advance on what Vatican I had said; it ignored the theological question as posed by Karl Barth’s critique of the *analogia entis* [analogy of being]; it ignored the tradition of the *theologia negativa* [negative theology]; it omitted “Augustine’s epistemology, which is much deeper than that of Aquinas.” In all these ways the paragraph lost an

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Resurrection and his victory in the first place, while St. Francis de Sales offered an open Christian humanism...;” “La dignità della persona umana,” 270n. Several notes later he adds: “But certain basic positions have a long life” (272).

opportunity “of manifesting the positive service to faith performed by atheism,” just as it also omitted the “deeper examination of conscience” that is required in response to failures of Christians to work for justice and love.

Finally, Ratzinger’s commentary is generally quite positive on #22 and its christological anthropology, “a new type of completely Christocentric theology. On the basis of Christ this dares to present theology as anthropology and only becomes radically theological by including man in discourse about God by way of Christ, thus manifesting the deepest unity of theology.”

Since the question of war and peace plays so crucial a role in Dossetti’s assessment of *Gaudium et spes*, it is worth summarizing Ratzinger’s remarks on the point.<sup>32</sup> He notes, on the one hand, that the classical just-war theory had become doubtful because of the horrors of modern war but, on the other, that “it would be no less perilous and oversimplified were we to condemn all the political leaders and the citizens who agree with them, who still conscientiously see defense of ultimate values as a moral necessity.” In this circumstance, if the Council did not “issue unequivocal and final directives on the application of modern armaments,” it did move away “from the static morality of the just war toward a dynamic morality of emergency.” It recognized that “the alternative ‘all or nothing at all,’ for all its seeming rectitude, turns out to be ultimately destructive of all moral effort. Therefore, the attempt must be made to approach as closely as possible what is morally desirable. Thus we can at least assert moral demands, even though we cannot achieve our ultimate moral objectives. This kind of procedure is wholly in harmony with the pedagogical approach of God as revealed in the scriptures.” While apparently meager in its solution, Ratzinger concluded, “I feel that, despite its vagueness, the text is good in that it attempts to do the possible. Thus it actually achieves more than would be achieved by a demand for the impossible.”<sup>33</sup>

And this leads to a concluding observation that reveals something of Ratzinger’s basic theological vision:

If we meditate on the Council’s statement, we become immediately aware how suited it really is to lead us from what seems to be an almost secular consideration into the very heart of Christianity. The whole of human action is shown to be abysmally deficient when we begin to confess that our ethics in this matter, and actually in all other matters as well, is far from what it should be. We recognize that the righteousness we manage to build up in ourselves is nothing but an emergency morality in the midst of our radical unrighteousness. We are directly and forcefully reminded of St. Paul when we find ourselves forced from behind our shell of protective speculation, forced to admit that our righteousness is nothing but a temporary expedient in the midst of our unrighteousness, so that we find ourselves crying for mercy to him who makes just the unjust. The realism of the man who acknowledges reality with no excuses is itself a hidden cry to the mercy of the mystery which has appeared to faith in Jesus Christ. The foremost intention of the Council was to reveal this

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<sup>32</sup> *Die letzte Sitzungsperiode*, 53-58; *Theological Highlights*, 168-71.

<sup>33</sup> See also the comments of Dominique Dubarle: “From this point of view, the conciliar text is still the expression of an idea that is making its way and that is trying to progress according to the rhythm of human affairs themselves, without wishing to get too far ahead of them in an ideal, without wanting also to accept stagnation in a state of affairs which is going to change rather rapidly, with the danger of greater evils;” “La suavegarde de la paix et la construction de la communauté des nations,” in *L’Église dans le monde de ce temps*, II, 571-630, at 572.

need for Christ in the depth of the human heart so as to make man able to hear Christ's call. The Council has attempted to put the ministry of faith at the service of mankind in a new way in this historic hour in order by serving men to serve the God who himself chose to become a man.

### Giuseppe Dossetti

An equally critical evaluation of Schema 13 was offered by Giuseppe Dossetti, trusted adviser to Cardinal Lercaro. For the debate on the schema at the fourth session, Dossetti prepared two interventions. The first was given in aula by Msgr. G. Amici, archbishop of Modena, in the name of the bishops of Emilia and Flaminia.<sup>34</sup> Because expectations had become so high for this text, Amici said, he would refrain from what otherwise would be his recommendation, "a profound revision and transformation of the whole text." But he would indicate the meaning and limits of his approval. The schema represents only the beginning of a dialogue with the world, but in both form and substance it falls short, since in neither of its parts "does it state the more profound and more original substance of revelation and above all of the Gospel, but instead offers simple common-sense propositions that are obvious to everyone." Amici agreed that the text had to be intelligible to people today and that it should not proceed "dogmatically, authoritatively, ecclesiastically, but rather problematically and heuristically." "But," he said, "this does not necessarily mean, as has happened in the schema, that one should start out first and principally with arguments drawn from reason, present the various problems almost always with a human language and method, attempt above all a synthesis of natural truths at the level of journalistic popularization, and then at the end add on some reference to revealed truths to confirm or buttress arguments drawn from elsewhere."

Another method could have been possible: "begin not with dogmas but with concrete problems and immediately give in the most direct and simplest terms the response of revelation and above all of the Gospel, not in some academic theological re-elaboration, but in the immediacy and relevance of its most vigorous statements: *sine glossa* [without commentary]. Only then, and in second place, show how the evangelical solution may agree with and be confirmed by the data of experience and common reason." As written, the schema will satisfy neither Christians, who are looking for "the authentically Christian vision of life and existence today," nor unbelievers, who will find in it too many theological postulates and dogmatic biases and nothing of the rigor expected at least by the most qualified representatives of the secular culture. Given the present state of reflection on human progress and the concrete problems the text addresses, Christians and non-Christians alike would have preferred it "if for every problem the schema had started from the surest and most rigorous data of the Gospel and expressed them straightforwardly and coherently, *sine glossa*."

For Cardinal Lercaro Dossetti wrote an intervention that used the schema's chapter on war

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<sup>34</sup> For the official text, see *AS*, IV/2, 34-36; for the Italian version, cited here, see *Per la forza dello Spirito*, 337-42; see p. 51n for the statement that "the text was written in close contact with Cardinal Lercaro and with the technical help of the 'Bologna office,'" a comment that justifies, I think, my including it here as an illustration of Dossetti's views.

and peace to call the whole schema into question by illustrating all its “defects and ambiguities.”<sup>35</sup> Near the beginning the Cardinal offered a succinct statement of these:

Naturalistic ambiguity and lack of deep and original Christian convictions; a certain, almost blushing, restraint in references to the Gospel and at times absence of real cultural rigor and of courageous response to the soundest aspirations of the majority of men; lack of real universalism and instead a horizon restricted to some sectors of the problematic and of the cultural and political mentality of the West alone.

Lercaro declared that he certainly wished the Council to offer a truly optimistic and positive message; but, he said, there is a great difference between “an utterly supernatural Christian optimism” which is not content with natural initiatives and developments but rather “for everything expects all to come from a transfiguration and regeneration that is like a resurrection from the dead, solely in virtue of the blessed passion of Christ,” and “a naturalistic optimism that facilely and timidly follows and indulges in a phenomenology of human progress and ignores or flees the principle that everyone and everything must be ‘salted with fire’ (Mk 9:49), by the fire of the Cross and of the Spirit of Christ.” The schema was offering an “insipid optimism..., an uncritical optimism, an optimism of timidity and conformism to common opinions; it has no supernatural nor truly rational basis, and for that reason it is sure to be turned upside-down--as indeed happens in this treatment of the very difficult problem of peace and war--to be turned upside-down into a pessimism of resignation in face of the gravest threat of annihilation human civilization has ever faced.”

The Church and the Council, the schema says, “does not wish to judge anyone,” but there is a judgement that the Church has to state in the name of Christ, a judgement on the competition for the goods of the earth, on “the deep roots of the imbalances and contentions among peoples,” and above all “on some crucial, supreme points in the present dialectic of war. This judgement cannot be the timid discourse of the schema, which is moralistic, casuistic, full of analytical descriptions and over-subtle distinctions which leave too much room for dissimulation and ambiguity. Instead, the discourse should be absolute, synthetic, evangelical, which is the only discourse that can respond today to the anxiety of the peoples and that for all its apparent unlikelihood, is the only true one, the only one that can banish war and make peace, not by human calculation but by the creative force of the Word of God.”

This entails three basic statements. First, the supernatural unity of the human race requires that no people be excluded from the community of nations for ideological or political reasons. Second, not only the use but the very possession of weapons of indiscriminate destruction must be condemned, and with them the logic of the balance of terror. “This is the task of the Church; it belongs to the knowledge and conscience of responsible leaders to draw out its practical

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<sup>35</sup> The official text is in *AS*, IV/3, 761-64; for the Italian original, see *Per la forza dello Spirito*, 253-61. See also Giuseppe Dossetti, *Con Dio e con la Storia: Una vicenda di cristiano e di uomo*, ed. Angelina and Giuseppe Alberigo (Genoa: Marietti, 1986) 167-69, which reproduce a letter from Dossetti to Lercaro urging the latter to speak (“I think it proper that this be for all a *unique* occasion, one that for everyone comes only once in a lifetime: either we say these things now or we will never again be able to say them”); see also Dossetti, “Alcune linee dinamiche del contributo del Cardinale G. Lercaro al Concilio ecumenico Vaticano II,” in *Il Vaticano II: Frammenti di una riflessione*, ed. F. M. Broglio (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996) 103-90, where Dossetti reviews Lercaro’s activities and interventions, many of these inspired, if not written, by Dossetti himself.

consequences. This is the only true realism which not only respects principles but also can work to make peace possible.” Third, it is not only indiscriminately destructive acts of war that must be condemned; war itself, however initiated, today is contrary to the Gospel of Christ. “Certainly resistance to an unjust aggressor can be legitimate and a duty; but only the resistance of the spirit, of superior wisdom, of magnanimity, of courage, of national solidarity, while violent resistance, war, even defensive war...appears ever less possible in the light of the Gospel of which humanity is becoming more and more conscious by the breath of the Spirit.”

This is, Lercaro concluded, the indispensable minimum the Council should say:

Not only for the problem, so urgently universal, of peace and war, but also for the sake of something which is even more important, that is, in the end, for the sake of witness--what the whole Church today is historically called to give--witness to its faith in Jesus Christ. We can give contemporary atheism no response more simple, more expressive, more coherent than this one: in this extreme danger to humanity, entrust yourself not to defense by arms and by political prudence, but only to the protection of the Lord Jesus.

This passionate plea was to have even less effect on the final text of *Gaudium et spes* than did Lercaro’s earlier call that the whole conciliar agenda be reoriented around the theme of the Church of the poor.<sup>36</sup> This lack of effect was in Dossetti’s mind when, a year after Vatican II concluded, he offered a long series of reflections on the Council, a large section of which was devoted to *Gaudium et spes*.<sup>37</sup> On the document’s general orientation, he asked whether it had succeeded in going beyond the modern “so-called Catholic social doctrine,” which he described as having been constructed in opposition to modern ideologies and movements constructed outside and often against Christianity.<sup>38</sup> The Pastoral Constitution certainly expanded the horizon beyond the question of economics, particularly by its efforts in the first part to construct a general view of the vocation of man and the relationship between Church and humanity, between Church and history. But the text was marked, and marred, by an unresolved inner dialectic between an anthropology constructed on grounds of reason and a supernatural anthropology derived from the center of the faith, a dialectic, Dossetti suggests, still affected by the premises of modern neo-scholasticism. *Gaudium et spes* left undiscussed and unstated the theology on which rested this tense relationship

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<sup>36</sup> As Giuseppe Alberigo notes in his introduction to *Per la forza dello Spirito*, 54n, “The speech had no effect on the text of the Constitution;” see p. 21 for the effects of Lercaro’s last speech at the first session. For evidence of support among other important conciliar fathers for a position on nuclear weapons similar to that of Lercaro, which shows that he was not “an inveterate and isolated utopian,” see Giuseppe Dossetti, *Il Vaticano II: Frammenti di una riflessione* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996) 180-82.

<sup>37</sup> Giuseppe Dossetti, “Per una valutazione globale del magistero del Vaticano II,” in *Vaticano II: Frammenti di una riflessione*, 23-102, at 82-100.

<sup>38</sup> For a similar analysis of the origins of Catholic social doctrine and its links with the ecclesiology of the *societas perfecta*, see Giuseppe Alberigo, “La Costituzione in rapporto al magistero globale del Concilio,” 186-87. Note that while Dossetti and Alberigo regret that *Gaudium et spes* did not break more completely with the “social doctrine” along the lines initiated by Pope John XXIII in *Mater et magistra*, Anton Rauscher found the constitution “an excellent exposition of Catholic social teaching as it has been systematically developed and explained since Leo XIII,” an expression of the Council’s awareness that, “to use the words of John XXIII, ‘the social teaching of the Catholic Church is an integral part of the Catholic conception of life;”” see Wilhelm Weber and Anton Rauscher, “La comunità degli uomini,” in *La Chiesa nel mondo di oggi*, 287-307, at 296.



between “a natural and rational anthropology and a supernatural, deliberately Christian, anthropology.” This implicit theology might rest on certain recent views on progress and creation (perhaps he was thinking of Teilhard and Chenu?), but he regretted that the Council had not had the opportunity to undertake a serious exploration on the great tradition.

Turning to the internal argument, Dossetti claimed that “the method, the arguments, and the motivations on which its statements are based are often procedures of a rational character, doubtlessly drawn from a certain common-sense sociology (“*una certa sociologia del buon senso*”); they are very modest and in some cases quite poor and weak,” not likely to be taken seriously by specialists, and in this respect they do not go beyond classic Catholic social doctrine toward that “secularization” that Pope John had begun to effect in *Mater et magistra*. Even more serious, however, was the use the constitution made of the distinctive criteria that should yield a Christian anthropology, the Scriptures and the great Tradition. No serious investigation of the Tradition had been undertaken, and “the scant and meager character of this document’s biblical inspiration is so evident that it does not need to be emphasized.”<sup>39</sup> There remains the great problem of “a theology of Tradition, as also, inevitably, of a theology of the relation between secular history and the history of salvation, in order to be able to identify the deeper points of the question that is involved here and to be able to discern, within the spectrum of the spiritual traditions of the Christian churches, the part that is more authentic and more normative, more fruitful, therefore, in Christian inspirations, for the future as well, that enables us to address these problems of theology in concrete relationship to the contemporary situation.”

After briefly reviewing the limitations of the other chapters in the second part’s discussion of particular problems, Dossetti lingers over the chapter on peace and the community of nations. Here his critique becomes very severe: “In this text,” he writes, “rationality has shipwrecked and so has common sense and, to some degree, even grace and the Gospel.”

“Optimism is shattered” because a text intended to inspire an encouraging vision of the Christian meaning of history ends with a tragic pessimism “because it accepts its own inability to carry out a Christian discussion on this problem,” because it distrusts “the capacity and possibility of human rationality and of the power of the Gospel and of the Church’s vocation to carry out a certain type of discussion. The parties exchange places: the optimists reveal themselves to be pessimists on the possibility of a Christian discussion, and the pessimists become optimists because they claim the right and the ability to do so.”<sup>40</sup>

This failure of the text reveals how closely the theological and the institutional are intertwined, “how, at a certain point, theology cannot advance when there are definite institutional knots and that, in their turn, certain institutional knots cannot be untied unless we are able to go back, *beyond* reflective theological discussion, intuitively, to the Gospel. There are in fact certain Gordian knots that cannot be cut except by a sword, by the sword of the Word of God, clear and

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<sup>39</sup> For a critique of the little use of the Bible in *Gaudium et spes*, see Alberigo, “La Costituzione in rapporto al magistero globale del Concilio,” 179-81; but see also Stanislas Lyonnet, “I fondamenti biblici della Costituzione,” *ibid.*, 196-212.

<sup>40</sup> For a similar critique of the chapter on peace, see Alberigo, “La Costituzione in rapporto al magistero globale del Concilio,” 194.

simple, beyond all other theological reflection.” On the subject of peace the Council should have abandoned the level of theology and institution and “come instead to the level of elementary things intuited simply in the light of the Gospel and by the power of the Holy Spirit which has been given to the hearts of the faithful by baptism and confirmation.” Instead, “on this point, Catholics acted like accomplices, accomplices in the present situation, accomplices in attitudes which must be judged by reason and, still more, by the Gospel. And this clearly cannot but muddy our theological reflection and weaken our will before the problems of self-reform and institutional reform. The avoidance of the problem of peace with regard to its concrete determinations, the ones that would make it as effectively evangelical as is required today,...remains a sin that as it were muddies theological reflection on other points as well; it remains an obstacle to grace and to the charisms that are necessary for institutional renewal. And this is not a serious but side issue, nor a central but isolated issue; it spreads throughout the body of the Church and by its nature the incompleteness of this one text becomes the *incompleteness* of the whole Council.”

The failure of the Council thus described leads Dossetti finally to return to the question of how to address the problem of “an effective presence of Revelation, of grace, of the Christian as a leaven in the dough of humanity and of history.” The Christian has to choose between two different approaches and methods, a merely material presence which everyday requires accommodation to the everyday, or a presence undertaken by assuming “his Christian and evangelical responsibilities before the real problems of humanity” and living them to the full, no matter if they cost him incomprehension, rejection, the apparent loss of all power in history. In its chapter on peace, *Gaudium et spes* turned away from the true, authentic, evangelical presence. It sought to take all the circumstances into account and to be present in a manner that would not break with any of them. But this type of presence, at bottom, ends by not saying the one evangelical word that should have been said by the Council, ends, in short, by being a presence that is not a presence, that, instead of really bringing the Gospel in, chases it away.”

The religious passion that underlies this severe judgement is expressed a few pages later when Dossetti turns to more general observations on the Council. The christological hymn in Phillipians 2 reveals the way the Church must try to serve the world and history, the way that the crucified Christ reveals: “obedience, purity, poverty, peace, in the love of the Father.” These are the supreme christological categories that reveal that “in a certain sense, the way of reason and of the world diverge from the way of Christ, because it will never be possible to make the crucifixion reasonable, as poverty can never be reasonable, nor a certain type of chastity and obedience.” And this passion requires also an equally basic and distinctive theology. An assimilation of the conciliar texts will require “a deeper dependence on the Word of God, heard in its immediacy, which leads to that personal reflection which inevitably becomes, also, theology: a theology that is not articulated in an extensive series of rings and systems, but which can intuit, by the power of the Spirit, by the grace of the Lord, the realities and the basic judgements that must be passed on our behavior and the behavior of those near us, as well as on the global activity of humanity in our time.”

## **A Theological Analysis**

For these three assessments of *Gaudium et spes*, I would like to offer, as hypotheses, some attempts at theological analysis. I am not here interested in the issue of whether the pastoral

constitution is a wholly successful effort, but in the criteria which seemed to be functioning in such diverse evaluations, differences that appear within certain agreements. The three men agree, after all, on the inadequacy of the modern “Catholic social doctrine” which argued on the basis of a natural law, accessible, it was thought, to right reason, and practiced a method of deduction from rather abstract first principles. They are all opposed to an approach, from within an ecclesiology of the *societas perfecta*, that would be content with service of a separate little Catholic world. They agree on the need for a biblically inspired engagement of the Church and the Christian with the world of history. They all wish to overcome an anthropology which so stresses the distinction that it becomes a separation between nature and grace, reason and faith, world and Church. And yet, for all these agreements, their assessments of *Gaudium et spes* often differ sharply. Why is this?

Leaving aside an inevitably superficial explanation in terms of “optimism” vs. “pessimism,” one might be tempted to be content with the differences between an incarnational and an eschatological approach; but who would wish to suggest that any one of the three theologians would consider compromising either of the great mysteries, the incarnation or the cross? The relative weight given to one or the other, on the other hand, may be traceable to differences in basic theological or methodological stances.

M.-D. Chenu was, by religious commitment, by training, and by expertise, a Thomist. Within his comments on the pastoral constitution one can hear echoes of the theological epistemology and anthropology which he defended twenty-five years before the Council not only in scholarly works on Aquinas but also in works that urged a typically Thomist approach to theology for a Church that is present in and for the modern world. Then and later he saw the Thomist method as corresponding to the logic of the Incarnation and of redemption as the recapitulation of all things in Christ, including the physical universe and the embodied spirit of man. Then and later he urged that theological anthropology had to go beyond the realm of the psychological to include the social, cultural, and the historical dimensions and to see these latter, oft-neglected, dimensions not only to be constitutive of man but also the locus of those same orientations toward and created capacities for the supernatural that Thomism had defended, for example, in categories such as that of “obediential potency.” A sharp disjunction, such as the one that is content with the two categories of sin and grace, was inadequate on Thomist grounds because it neglected the created autonomy and intelligibility of the world of nature, man, and history and tended to compromise the methodological autonomy of the sciences that study it. Chenu’s defense of the basic method and orientation of *Gaudium et spes* did not derive, or did not simply derive, from his congenital optimism; it had theological grounds.

In Joseph Ratzinger’s assessment of the pastoral constitution one can see a theological method and vision that stands far closer to the streams of Augustinianism that during the Middle Ages and in the post-Reformation ear had been very reserved toward the Thomist effort. Ratzinger seems far more at home in the world of the Scriptures, the Fathers, and St. Bonaventure. In his remarks on *Gaudium et spes*, as also in many other writings, he makes clear his preference for Augustinian (and even Lutheran) notions of freedom and his belief that Thomists (if not Thomas himself) had so stressed the autonomy of the world and of human reason that the first constituted a separate world capable of being understood by the second, with the result that the world disclosed by revelation and accepted by faith appeared to be a more-or-less arbitrarily imposed alternative. To a Thomist epistemology he regards as inadequate he prefers a typically Augustinian distinction

between *scientia* and *sapientia*, the former, imitated today by the necessarily reductionistic modern empirical sciences, content with mere phenomena and indifferent to the ontological truth of things, which is only apparent to the latter, itself the fruit of faith. The pastoral constitution continues to reflect the myth of pure reason which leads it to a necessarily ineffective method of dialogue that neglects that faith is not demonstrable; what is needed is kerygmatic witness, the simple presentation of the Gospel and an invitation to enter its world of intelligibility and rationality.<sup>41</sup> The basic issue remains that of the relationship between faith and understanding.

Giuseppe Dossetti is more difficult to place. At least in his participation at the Council and in his remarks on *Gaudium et spes*, he appears more as a prophet than as a scholar, less as a professor than as the engaged Christian he had been in both society and Church. He seems closer to Ratzinger, first, in his distrust of the modern self-professedly Thomist theological tradition elaborated in the service of a *societas perfecta* that he thought had compromised the evangelical engagement that should mark the Church; second, in his preference for the engagement typical of early Christianity; and, third, in his insistence on the radical rupture in intelligibility, the redefinition of rationality, required by the cross. For him, too, the primary presence of the Church must be one of testimony (a word used by all three men), but this is witness to an utterly supernatural vision and reality, which in the end cannot be rendered reasonable to non-believers. For that reason he quite disagreed with Chenu's assessment of the analysis that underlay *Gaudium et spes*, which he thinks scarcely surpasses the level of a common-sense sociology that is content with a banal general understanding and promotes a timid Christian engagement. On the other hand, he clearly disagreed with Ratzinger on what the question of war and peace required of the Council, and so far from being content with Ratzinger's apparently inconsistent resignation to the conciliar position on the question, he regards the latter as indicative of the radical incompleteness of the whole conciliar experience and achievement. For Dossetti the Council missed a unique opportunity. Underlying the failure, for him, was the Council's inability to escape, with the radicality required, from the institutional constraints and from the theology that served them, for the sake of a Gospel *sine glossa*. It must also be said that of the three men it is Dossetti who actually attempted something like a reading of the "signs of the times," while Ratzinger remained unconvinced of the very idea and Chenu was content with remarks of great generality.

Of the three men, clearly Dossetti was the most radical in the demands he placed on the conciliar fathers and in the criteria by which he subjected their achievements to judgement. There is visible in his final assessments of Vatican II a good deal of the distinct position he urged upon Cardinal Lercaro from the first session on. One will recall Lercaro's plea that the whole conciliar agenda be reconceived in terms of the problem of poverty as well as Dossetti's fierce criticism both of the method, compromising from the beginning, reflected in the decision to retain as much as possible of the preparatory schemas, and of the at best only half-successful results this fatal choice permitted. Neither in the Council's doctrinal texts nor in the texts on the Church's relationship with the modern world did Vatican II achieve the breakthrough Dossetti thought could alone correspond to Pope John's vision. It was a theological, indeed a religious, commitment that underlay Dossetti's

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<sup>41</sup> For a good statement of these issues see the first chapter of Joseph Ratzinger, *Einführung in das Christentum: Vorlesungen über das Apostolische Glaubensbekenntnis* (München: Kösel-Verlag, 1968); ET: *Introduction to Christianity* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968) 15-49.

disagreement over conciliar program and tactics, a disagreement that, as quickly became apparent, set him apart not only from the intransigent minority but within the progressive majority as well.

The final stages of the redaction of *Gaudium et spes* also revealed the sorts of disagreements within that majority that are illustrated in the figures of Chenu and Ratzinger and that, perhaps inevitably, appeared when, with the preparatory drafts rejected, the Council faced the question: What now? It was one thing to delegitimize the theological system that had guided the preparation of the Council; it was another thing to write texts that would reflect the positive and pastoral aims Pope John had set out in his opening speech. In the course of the elaboration of the texts, it is clear that there were differences within the majority now in char

ge of redacting the conciliar documents, even the ones on the Church *ad intra* but especially in those on the Church *ad extra*, to use the unfortunate division commonly invoked at the time. These differences inevitably reflected the theological background, training, and interests of the theologians employed in the tasks, as is clear from the comparison of Chenu and Ratzinger.

I have suggested above that their differences may be traceable to the differences between a typically Thomist and a typically Augustinian epistemology and anthropology.<sup>42</sup> Perhaps the analysis may be extended beyond these two men. Commenting on the much-reduced presence of St. Thomas Aquinas in the final conciliar texts, Yves Congar remarked that, nevertheless, “Saint Thomas, the *Doctor communis*, furnished the redactors of the dogmatic texts of Vatican II with the foundations and the structure of their thought.”<sup>43</sup> In Congar’s mind, if with *Gaudium et spes* and *Dignitatis humanae* the Council had finally broken with “political Augustinianism,” it was because it achieved something similar to what the “Albertine-Thomist revolution” had effected in the thirteenth century.<sup>44</sup>

Ratzinger, however, provided a different account of the Council’s inspiration. In a generally negative paper written ten years after the Council began, he asked what theological and spiritual resources the Church had with which to face the Council’s disappointing aftermath. The only hope lay, he thought, “in those forces that really had made Vatican II possible and shaped it but that shortly thereafter had been overrun by a wave of modernity.” This was “a theology and a piety which essentially were based on the Holy Scriptures, on the Church Fathers, and on the great liturgical heritage of the universal Church. At the Council this theology succeeded in nourishing the faith not only on the thought of the last hundred years but on the great stream of the whole tradition in order thus to make it richer and more vital and at the same time simpler and more open.” He dismissed two other options: the post-conciliar progressivism that had arisen out of J.B. Metz’s transformation of Karl Rahner’s transcendental Thomism into, first, a theology of hope and, second, a political theology. This stream Ratzinger thought had lost its usefulness because of its uncritical surrender

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. the comment of Congar, which is reflected in the debate reviewed in this paper: “There is always a parallelism between the positions one adopts on the question of faith and reason and those one takes on the question of Church and State,” which, of course, is only a part of the question of Church-and-world; see “La théologie au Concile: Le ‘théologiser’ du Concile,” in *Situation et taches présentes de la théologie* (Paris: du Cerf, 1967) 51.

<sup>43</sup> Congar, “La théologie au Concile,” 53.

<sup>44</sup> Yves Congar, “Église et monde dans la perspective de Vatican II,” in *L’Église dans le monde de ce temps*, vol. III, 31, where he adds in a note: “This point about correspondence is, of course, one of those that allows good commentators to regard GS as profoundly Thomist in inspiration.”

to vaguely Marxist analysis. As for the scholastic philosophy and theology defended by conservatives at the Council, Ratzinger said that it no longer played any role; in fact, he observed how rapidly defenders of a pedestrian scholastic theology had laid down their arms and surrendered to a vague modernism.<sup>45</sup> The omission of Thomas and the dismissal of the Thomist tradition in these remarks is notable, reflecting, one suspects, not only the state of Thomism at the time but also Ratzinger's personal and theological preferences.

These differences with regard to the theological inspiration of the texts of Vatican II suggest two lines of research which it may be useful to undertake for the history of Catholic theology in the twentieth century. The first is retrospective and concerns the nature of the theological renewal that prepared for Vatican II and which is often over-simplified today, as it was then by its critics, as "*la nouvelle théologie*," the singular term suggesting a single stream. If almost all the leaders of that renewal agreed on the necessity of a *ressourcement*, it is also clear that they drew their chief inspirations from various sources. Louis Bouyer, Jean Daniélou, Henri de Lubac, Joseph Ratzinger, and Hans Urs von Balthasar, for example, were far more at home in the mental world of the Fathers, the monastic theologians, and the medieval neo-Augustinians than they were not only in the watered down neo-scholasticism of the modern era but also in the scholastic milieu and dialectical methods of St. Thomas himself.<sup>46</sup> While certainly not neglecting the Scriptures or the Fathers or the liturgical renewal, on the other hand, Chenu and Congar were great admirers of Aquinas and of what Congar calls the "Albertine-Thomist revolution," and with them may be linked in this respect men such as Karl Rahner, Bernard Lonergan, and Edward Schillebeeckx who attempted a reconciliation of Thomism and the modern philosophical turn to the subject. Within the ranks of the leaders of the twentieth-century renewal of theology there were not insignificant differences which were almost bound to appear in full force once the hegemonic power of neo-scholasticism was broken at the Council.

My second suggestion is more prospective. It is striking to note that after the Council it was among those who chiefly promoted the recovery of the patristic and monastic traditions who were most critical of what was happening in the Church and in theology in the wake of the Council. One may think of the often very critical and at times even bitter post-conciliar writings of Bouyer, Daniélou, de Lubac, Ratzinger, and von Balthasar.<sup>47</sup> While not uncritical of post-conciliar developments, the great promoters of Aquinas, such as Chenu, Congar, Lonergan, Rahner, and Schillebeeckx, displayed a greater sense of balance, offered more careful analyses of the problems and more nuanced responses to them, and took up a challenge which they often compared in extent and seriousness to the one that faced Aquinas in the thirteenth century.<sup>48</sup> (Appreciation of St.

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<sup>45</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, "Zehn Jahre nach Konzilsbeginn--wo stehen wir?" in *Dogma und Verkündigung*, 437-39.

<sup>46</sup> One might compare, for example, the assessment of Thomas's anthropology and epistemology offered by Henri de Lubac to those proposed by Chenu and Congar.

<sup>47</sup> See the remarks of Étienne Fouilloux at the end of his book, *La collection "Sources chrétiennes": Éditer les Pères de l'Église au X<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: du Cerf, 1995) 225-26.

<sup>48</sup> The comparison of the post-conciliar period to the crisis at the University of Paris in the thirteenth century has also been offered by Joseph Ratzinger in the preface to the American edition of his book, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1971) xiii: "In many ways those turbulent years, with the abrupt entrance of Arabian science, are similar to the post-Conciliar mood which we are experiencing at the present time." The

Thomas, of course, is not by itself the predictor of these differences in attitude, as the examples of Jacques Maritain and Étienne Gilson show, but they, of course, were philosophers, not theologians.<sup>49)</sup>

This line of research may be worth pursuing despite the fact that, as Gerald McCool has written, “The history of the modern Neo-Thomist movement, whose *magna charta* was *Aeterni Patris*, reached its end at the Second Vatican Council.”<sup>50</sup> Its place has been taken by a very diverse plurality of theological methods, no one of which has gained anything like the hegemony enjoyed by the unitary method of neo-scholasticism. This is not the place to attempt an inventory of them all. Within their often chaotic variety, David Tracy has offered a distinction,<sup>51</sup> which might usefully be considered, between a correlation-theology, the contemporary equivalent of Aquinas’s engagement with Aristotle, illustrated in the work of Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan, and an epiphanic theology, the contemporary equivalent of a more Augustinian and Bonaventuran approach, illustrated in the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar and in “*der Positivismus des Glaubens*” [a faith-positivism], as Joseph Ratzinger calls it.<sup>52</sup> What is called “post-modernity,” with its critique of universal reason and of foundationalism and its insistence on the incommensurability of linguistically mediated worlds, is often considered to resemble the latter approach with its abandonment of the myth of pure reason and its insistence on the unbridgeable gulf that the cross of Christ digs with regard to the very notion of rationality. In this line, Dossetti and Ratzinger would appear, at least temporarily, to have won the victory. One suspects, however, that Chenu would question whether this approach is faithful to the achievement of Vatican II.

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fourth chapter of this book reveals how much Ratzinger’s own theological epistemology owes to Bonaventure’s neo-Augustinianism.

<sup>49</sup> There is a certain paradox that, at least in the United States, it was Thomist philosophers who were more open to de Lubac’s interpretation of St. Thomas than were their theological counterparts, and that many of these same philosophers share his views of the post-conciliar shifts in Catholic thought.

<sup>50</sup> Gerald A. McCool, *From Unity to Pluralism: The Internal Evolution of Thomism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989) 230. See Joseph A. Komonchak, “Thomism and the Second Vatican Council,” in *Continuity and Plurality in Catholic Theology: Essays in Honor of Gerald A. McCool, S.J.*, ed. Anthony J. Cernera (Fairfield, CT: Fairfield University Press, 1998) 53-73.

<sup>51</sup> David Tracy, “The Uneasy Alliance Reconceived: Catholic Theological Method, Modernity and Post-modernity,” *Theological Studies* 50 (1989) 548-70; see also John McDade, “Catholic Theology in the Post-conciliar Period,” in *Modern Catholicism: Vatican II and After* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) 422-43.

<sup>52</sup> Ratzinger, *Einführung in das Christentum*, 32; *Introduction to Christianity*, 28. For an equivalent in the English-speaking world, one may perhaps refer to the “radical orthodoxy” that has emerged in the wake of John Millbank’s ambitious book, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); see now also *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, ed. John Millbank et al. (London: Routledge, 1999).