

THE TOTAL MEANING OF MAN AND THE WORLD¹

• Henri de Lubac •

“To remind man what constitutes his final end is not to tell him something that substantially fails to interest him. . . . It is rather to illuminate the total meaning of his being by helping him to find and then to interpret the inscription written into his heart by his Creator.”

1. *Two intersecting problems*

By offering us the initial outline of a Christian anthropology, as many council fathers requested, the constitution *Gaudium et spes* has invited us to reflect on the phenomenon of contemporary atheism, which it presented as the most essential and urgent task confronting us today.² This reflection is meant to guide our attitude and our

¹This text is a translation of the first four (of six total) sections from chapter two of de Lubac’s *Athéisme et sens de l’homme: une double requête de Gaudium et Spes*, in vol. 4 of his *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris: Cerf, 2006), 471–500. Original publication *Coll. Foi Vivante* 67 (1968). Bracketed material in footnotes reproduce handwritten notes de Lubac intended for a later edition and were added to the present text by the editors of the complete works. The final three sentences of the fourth section have also been removed, since they serve as a transition to the section that follows. Translated and published by kind permission of Les Éditions du Cerf.

²Cf. Jean Mouroux, “Situation et signification du chapitre 1,” in *L’Église dans le monde de ce temps* (Paris: Cerf, 1967), vol. 2, 229–30: “It should be noted that this anthropology is neither historical, nor phenomenological, nor philosophical; it is theological, insofar as it proceeds from revelation in order to illuminate human

behavior as believers with respect to the phenomenon. It is a task so fundamental and so vast that it would be impossible to do anything more in the present context than to point out its general orientation.

Let us take up the constitution once again and consider a little more closely the relationship between its two parts. At first glance, it seems that the second part follows the first as an application of the general principles that had initially been established to a few particular problems. This impression is not false, and it can justify itself by referring to the explanation given by the reporter to the conciliar assembly,³ and also to the very terms of the paragraph that serves as a transition:

This council has set forth the dignity of the human person, and the work which men have been destined to undertake throughout the world both as individuals and as members of society. There are a number of particularly urgent needs characterizing the present age, needs which go to the roots of the human race. To a consideration of these in the light of the Gospel and of human experience, the council would now direct the attention of all. (GS, 46)

Be that as it may, the relationship between the two parts is more complicated, and could be interpreted in a slightly different way. The title of the first part has a certain ambiguity, even more in French than in Latin, and this ambiguity was no doubt necessary in order to allow it to cover the entire field of what was being presented. “Man’s calling” here means the calling of man (*vocatio hominis*). Now, this vocation of man—as everything that follows makes clear—is not only human, but also divine.⁴ “For faith throws

reality and experience. . . . It is Christian in the sense that: a) it is based on revelation . . . ; b) it opens up the human data and values that are accessible to reason, and recognizes them as forming a rational infrastructure that it respects even as it deepens it and integrates it into its own vision (this is especially characteristic of the Catholic approach as such); c) it finds its fulfillment explicitly in Jesus Christ, on whom it has rested already from the beginning and through the whole of its trajectory.”

³Msgr. Hengsbach, bishop of Essen, *Relatio* from 24 September 1965: the first part “*potius principia generalia exponit*”; the second “*ad orientationes magis particulares descendit*.”

⁴Msgr. Charles Moeller spontaneously translates it as “man’s divine calling” in his study on *Gaudium et spes* that appeared in *Lumen vitae* 21 (1966): 200.

a new light on everything, manifests God's design for man's total vocation," and it is by virtue of this that it "directs the mind to solutions which are fully human" (GS, 11).⁵ Created in the image of God, man is called to eternal life, in God—and this is why, by way of a sort of indirect or ascending path, each of the four chapters culminates in an evocation of the return of the Lord and of the Kingdom to come.⁶ The second part, conversely, starting with Christian principles and proceeding in their light, descends back to questions of the temporal order, which it in fact envisages in their most urgent contemporary form, with the aim of discovering appropriate responses.

Hence the two great problems raised in the two parts of the constitution, which cross one another from different directions. They are presented to theologians to investigate over the course of the coming years, in order to provide, as far as possible, a rationally reflected justification for the teachings that the council promulgated, which it was given to do in the form of a simple exposé and by its authority.

On the one hand, the point is to provide a foundation, based on the reality of man, for the obligation incumbent upon man to pursue, in the freedom of his personal life, the divine end that Jesus Christ reveals to him and promises to him through the mediation of his Church. Or again, to borrow the words that open the constitution, in light of the joys and hopes, but also of the griefs and anxieties that beset man today, the point is to remind man of "an infinitely more profound distress, but also of a promise that is infinitely greater than all of the distresses and all of the promises of the time in which he lives"⁷; —and not only to remind him, as the constitution itself does, but, as we will explain in just a moment, to give a theological account, in an endeavor to understand *the faith*, which is at the same time an endeavor to understand reality *in the light of faith*. The first task is closely connected to that of philosophy; it is distinct, but it converges with the task of philosophy and completes it. Its goal is to lead man, who is so often absorbed by various anxieties and the problems that present themselves to him in

⁵Cf. GS, 3: "*Sacra Synodus . . . asseverans . . .*"

⁶We note that the constitution *Lumen gentium* follows a parallel course.

⁷Cited from Karl Barth, *Introduction à la théologie évangélique*, 64.

the day-to-day organization of his earthly existence, to “wonder about the whole of his being, and about the meaning, simply put, no longer of the functional relationships among the elements of his universe and of his existence, but about the meaning of the whole.”⁸

On the other hand, assuming this great problem has been resolved, which is indissolubly the problem of man and the problem of God, it will be a matter, from the opposite perspective, of founding in reason, on the basis of faith itself, the interest that the Christian nevertheless has in the contingent realities of this world; even more, the duty incumbent upon him simply by virtue of his faith and his hope, of working in every domain for the temporal development of humanity.⁹

Two intersecting problems, as we have seen. For the theologian, these are two very different tasks, though at the same time there is a strict unity between them. If he takes them in their pure logic, he will first seek, through the first, to show to his interlocutor, whom we suppose to be still an unbeliever, that he is unable to avoid the problem of his ultimate destiny, and then to disclose to him the data of this destiny in such a way that he will be able to prepare himself, in advance so to speak, to listen to the Good News;¹⁰ while, through the second task, standing once again with the Christian, he will attempt to justify in his eyes the value of the things of the earth and of the temporal order, precisely in relation to the supernatural vocation that was revealed to him, in relation to the supernatural life which he received as a gift from Jesus Christ and in relation to that eternity he seeks. Even more, the theologian will have to show that the Christian vocation is the ultimate reason, the

⁸Karl Rahner, cited in *Concilium* 16, 143 by Ingo Hermann, “L’Humanité totale, signal utopique entre coexistence et pluralisme.”

⁹See M.-D. Chenu, in *La Théologie du renouveau*, 1, ed. Laurence K. Shook and Guy-M. Bertrand (Paris: Cerf, 1968), 25: the constitution compels us to raise “the problem of bringing into harmony (within the Christian) his participation in the building up of the world and his communion in the divine life in Christ’s kingdom.”

¹⁰What we mean here is “manifesting, through a reflection on human existence, an ontological presentiment of what is spoken about in the Christian message, or to illuminate ‘the relationship between human existence and the Christian message considered as a call’: this is what constitutes an understanding of the possibility, and of the fittingness, of faith.” Cf. Henri Bouillard, “Croire et comprendre,” in *Mythe et Foi* (1966): 300.

only fully satisfying reason, for the *navitas humana*, that is to say, of the earthly activity of man, of the individual and collective efforts that, beyond immediate necessities, are supposed to be made on behalf of natural progress.¹¹

In fact, however, the path of the spirit is never so straight. If these two problems, considered in the abstract, are distinct and move in opposite directions, they nevertheless cross over into one another. We discover that they are constantly implicated in one another, and it is simply for the sake of clarity of exposition that, by simplifying things, we view them here as separate to some extent.

2. Human nature and the supernatural

The first of these two problems did not arise just yesterday. It presented itself in different places and times, along a variety of paths, with respect to discussions, many of which are faded if not altogether forgotten. But in itself the problem will always remain fundamental. It consists essentially in figuring out how we ought to understand the relationship—which is simultaneously one of opposition and one of union—between these two basic realities that the Western theological tradition has customarily called (human) nature and the supernatural. Because of their abstraction and perhaps even more because of the very different usage the modern languages often make of them, a usage that occasions no end of misunderstandings, these two words no longer seem to be well-chosen.¹² We will retain them in a provisional fashion in this section because they are imposed on us by the very history that we have briefly to recount.

¹¹Cf. GS, 34.

¹²Cf. our *Summaeurel, études historiques*, “Théologie” collection (Paris: Aubier, 1946), part three: “Histoire du mot surnaturel”; and *Le Mystère du surnaturel*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 12 (Paris: Cerf, 2000). E. Schillebeeckx, *Dieu et l’homme* (1965), 131–35, 145 fn, and 163. Already in 1930, Maurice Blondel wrote about “the single word ‘supernatural,’ standing up like a scarecrow” (*Dialogues avec les philosophes*, ed. Henri Gouhier [Paris: Aubier, 1966], 213). To take a recent example: Alan Richardson, in *Le Procès de la religion*, 50, writes: “It is impossible at present for intelligent people to return to the supernaturalized metaphysical ideas of the past: people of the twentieth century know that it is germs, not demons, that cause diseases.” The word “supernatural” in the language of Catholic theology means something altogether different.

Over the course of the last few centuries, a theory began to gain credence in our classical theology according to which “nature” and the “supernatural” each constituted a self-contained “order,” the second being superadded in fact to the first, without any connection between the two other than there existing, in our nature, a vague and general “obediential potency” for being so to speak “elevated.” Being and the Christian life thus found themselves on two separate planes. Making use of his reason, man was thought to discover his “natural end,” proportionate to his nature as a finite being; but then his faith subsequently informed him that, as a matter of fact, he had been created for an altogether different end, a “supernatural” end. There is no need to insist on this dualistic conception, the “two tier” approach, which is familiar to all theologians. It seemed necessary to many people in order to secure the absolute gratuity of the divine gift in the wake of a series of serious errors, from the Baianism of the sixteenth century to the modernist immanentism of the twentieth century. In reality, because of its precedents, this approach proceeded instead on the basis of a break from the traditional dogmatic synthesis, such as the great scholastics, and Thomas Aquinas in particular, had ultimately elaborated it. This latter would never have spoken, for example, as he has been made to speak this past century, of a “supernature,” precisely because his thought was quite distant from the dualistic theory we have just described.

The difficulties such a theory generates have become sufficiently evident, and they have been denounced more than once. Already at the beginning of the century, Fr. Johannès Wehrlé, in a letter to his friend Maurice Blondel, wrote about “the hereditary fear that haunts our Catholic brains of compromising the original independence of the supernatural economy, a fear so excessive,” he went on, “that it ended by blinding us to living truths.”¹³ More than sixty years following this, Fr. Yves Congar denounced precisely the same mistake, speaking of “the extrinsicism that represents the disease of modern Catholicism in the matter of sin and grace” and which “has long blinded us to the full character of the desire of nature.”¹⁴ And it is also what Fr. Norbert Luyten observes even

¹³Letter dated 1 March 1903: *Maurice Blondel, Johannès Wehrlé: Correspondance*, vol. 1 (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1969), 160.

¹⁴“Le moment ‘économique’ et le moment ‘ontologique’ dans la Sacra doctrina,” *Mélanges offerts à M.-D. Chenu* (Paris: Vrin, 1967), 175.

today: "Have we not yet realized how much we have had to pay for the error of affirming the supernatural at the expense of the natural? It was no doubt for the best of intentions: to protect the purity of the supernatural. But that does not make the result any less catastrophic: we have isolated ourselves, we have withdrawn from the world into ghettos that we have made our prisons."¹⁵

Consequently, it was henceforward only with great difficulty that one could see why the supernatural gift was the "Good News" *par excellence*. From this point on, this gift presented itself as something superimposed, as an artificial superstructure, indeed as an arbitrary imposition, and the nonbeliever had an easy time entrenching himself in his indifference precisely on the basis of what theology told him. If the human nature that belongs to me has its end in itself by nature, what would compel me or even simply provoke me to investigate history in order to see whether another call happened to make itself heard? Why should I lend my ears to this Church, which bears a message that has nothing at all to do with the aspirations of my being? Indeed, shouldn't the intrusion of a foreign "supernatural" be rebuffed as a kind of violation¹⁶? As for the Christian himself, all of the effort he makes at thinking through his faith, at relating it to the whole of his human knowledge and allowing it to guide his human activity, ran into the obstacle that he had set up at the outset: there was no longer any free circulation from the supernatural order to the order of nature. This Christian thus risked either closing in on himself, far from the world and from his obligations, in his well-protected (but for that very reason de-natured) faith, or departing from his faith in order to think with the world, to give himself an urbane culture and to occupy himself urbanely with the affairs of this world.

Over the past eighty years or so, the situation has changed in a profound way in this regard. Under the influence of a variety of factors, the majority of theologians have gradually returned to more traditional views, while at the same time they have attempted in a variety of ways to formulate these views in new ways.¹⁷ Here, we

¹⁵"L'Église et la culture," *Civitas*, Lucerne (August 1967): 917.

¹⁶This is the fundamental objection that Blondel sought to respond to. Cf. Henri Bouillard, *Blondel et le christianisme* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1961). See also Stanislas Breton, *La Passion du Christ et les philosophes*, 18.

¹⁷See our two volumes, *Augustinisme et théologie moderne* and *Le Mystère du*

will not enter into the proposed solutions in any detail, either on the basis of a more historical study of the ancients or on the basis of a deepened reflection; sometimes these do not differ from one another in any sense other than terminologically or in terms of a few subtle nuances. What has resulted in any event has been a more organic, more unified conception. Now, the council seems in fact to have placed the seal of its authority on this result. The pastor Henry Brunton was able to announce, as an extremely important element of the anthropology sketched by *Gaudium et spes*, what he calls “the disappearance of the distinction between nature and supernature,” or in other words, as he fortunately explains further, the suppression of “the idea of two stages, which has generated so many false problems in Catholic thought” and which finds itself finally “left behind thanks to a personalist mode of thinking that centers the mystery of man on the question of his relationship to God.”¹⁸ Specifying the matter with more nuance, Mr. Jean Mouroux likewise observes that, by deliberately avoiding the vocabulary of two “orders,” the council “took an extremely important position”; essentially, “if there are different levels of analysis in the universe (creation, sin, redemption), there are not two different orders, but a single order, that of the Covenant, of which creation is the first moment, and Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the center and the end; and this order is supernatural.”¹⁹

sumaturel, “Théologie” collection (Paris: Aubier, 1965); see also *supra*, 475, n.1. But here we are abstracting from the more personal part of our presentations.

¹⁸“L’Église et la vocation humaine,” in *Vatican II, Points de vue de théologiens protestants*, “Unam Sanctam” collection (Paris: Cerf, 1967), 192. We can see that this last phrase sufficiently presupposes that the fundamental distinction between nature and the supernatural is not eliminated, even if it ought not to be understood as a difference between two self-contained “orders” or two “stages.” Thus, we would not simply say (except in order to explain the formulation) that “the vocation of man is not to become a supernatural being, but to become truly man”: for man in fact “surpasses man,” and he is gratuitously called to participate in the divine life.

¹⁹“Sur la dignité de la personne humaine,” in *L’Église dans le monde de ce temps*, “Vatican II,” no. 65 b (Paris: Cerf, 1967), 232. [See P. Colin, “Le Concile et le sens de l’homme,” in *Recherches et débats* 57, 106: “The council, which does not at all deny the gratuity of man’s vocation to be united with God, does not feel the need, in order to affirm this gratuity, to appeal to the hypothesis . . . of an ‘order of pure nature,’” 143.]

But at the very moment in which it is thus rejected not only by certain schools, but by the most central thinking of the Church, the extreme dualism, which by separating nature and the supernatural as two “orders” fails to understand either of them, seeks for itself, here and there, a new fortune in the domain of practical action.

Out of a desire to protect the supernatural from any contamination, it had been isolated, set apart both from the living spirit and from social life, and the field was left open to the invasion of “secularism.” Today, this secularism, having often become atheistic and following its own path, is trying to invade the consciousness of Christians themselves. If one yielded to it, one would no longer content oneself with “collaborating faithfully [with the nonbeliever] in any matter good in itself or able to lead to the good,” all the while “being very careful to remain consistent with oneself and with morality,” as John XXIII recently exhorted us in the encyclical *Mater et magistra*.²⁰ One would fail to follow the wise counsel of *Gaudium et spes*, which declares that “in fidelity to conscience, Christians are joined with the rest of men in the search for truth, and for the genuine solution to the numerous problems which arise in the life of individuals from social relationships” (GS, 16), a counsel that appears again in the decree on missionary activity, charging all Christians with the obligation of “collaborating with all other people in organizing economic and social affairs in a just manner” in the countries in which they find themselves.²¹ A project of this sort would be rejected in the name of a different one, with an altogether different inspiration. Universal agreement—or to use the contemporary idiom, “openness to the world”—would be sought in an idea of human nature which is able to fit all people equally and which would be adopted by the Christian as much as by the deist or atheist. Everything that comes from Christ or that ought to lead to him, everything that reminds man that he is made for God, would from that moment on be cast so much into the shadows—“into a separate region” of the spirit—that it would run the risk of disappearing forever. The final word of progress and the achievement of maturity would seem to consist in a total “secularization” that would expel God not only from social life, but from culture and even from

²⁰N. 239; the text was repeated in *Pacem in terris*, no. 157 (Éd. de l'Action populaire).

²¹*Ad gentes*, 12.

the relationships of private life. Henceforward, no more potential conflicts, no more dramas to fear, no more religious persecutions, not even any spiritual tension any more at the heart of a society divided over the question of ultimate ends. Moral and social unity will be achieved with ease, provided that we distinguish adequately between, on the one hand, “the human hopes” [*les espoirs humains*] that set in motion a certain idea of man that is entirely human, and for which there is no need at all to make reference to God, and on the other hand “supernatural hope” [*l’espérance surnaturelle*]. The Christian will have no scruples about rallying around the former, which concern natural and earthly man, all the while keeping the latter in the back of his mind. He will thus have no trouble coming to agreement with the nonbeliever regarding the cultivation and exploitation of human values, “beyond any differences in one’s religious and philosophical choices.” In effect, if man is destined to see God, if the embrace of God is meant to be “the crowning of the human adventure,” one will nevertheless not forget that such an end is “completely gratuitous,” and using good (or bad) logic, one will try to conclude that “in the human reality, in the existing historical condition, the recognition of a ‘religious dimension’ is not at all necessary for ‘human fullness.’” It has nothing to do with the way one lives one’s life. Consequently, an “atheistic attitude” is entirely legitimate. One will even believe that one has to go further, and one will not hesitate to recognize that, regarding anything that concerns the order of this world, this attitude is the only legitimate one: “grace,” one will say, “is neither a solution to the enigma of life, nor does it compete with man’s creative autonomy”; to want to introduce grace in some manner “into the intra-worldly dynamic of human evolution” would be to make it “an alienating element” and for that reason to provoke people to condemn it as “an intrusion that would eclipse the ethical grandeur of Prometheus.”

The solution is certainly a simple one. But in the Christian’s spirit it rides roughshod over the unity that, embracing the inner distinctions and even the oppositions, ought to set its seal on all thought, as well as all existence, worthy of this name. It is an easy solution. But, by excluding the Gospel from life, it reinforces all the inclinations there may be to abandon it. It is already an abandonment of the Gospel. In the absoluteness of its separatism, it forces the Christian into a genuine schizophrenia, which he can be healed of only by rejecting it. It resurrects within the politico-social and moral realm the “double truth” theory, such as it had already been applied

in the past by the spiritual heirs of Siger de Brabant.²² This solution neutralizes Christianity, by compelling the Christian to “forget that he is Christian in order to think and act politically” or socially.²³ Today, it accepts militant atheism’s definition of religion—“a private matter” (Lenin)—and it does so without realizing that this atheism keeps for itself *all* the truth of nature and of history. It subscribes in practice to the very clear, though very caricatured, explanation that Mr. Jules Moch gave of religion with respect to socialism, but which could be applied to other cases, with respect to other doctrines or other endeavors: “Socialism and religion cannot come into conflict because of the fact that their zones of action do not overlap. . . . Religions attempt to explain infinity: the infinity that lies before birth and that comes after death; but socialism occupies itself only with the period that comes between birth and death.”²⁴

On the other hand, if this is the sort of solution we were meant to accept, it is evident that the larger part of the constitution *Gaudium et spes* would have no point. It would be undermined in its very foundation. The Church would have nothing to say to us about the things of this world, because the guidance of these things would have no light to receive from the Gospel. . . . The teaching of John XXIII, like that of his predecessors, was exactly the opposite. “What is required from the Church at the present time,” he said in the papal bull *Humanae salutis* (25 December 1958), “is that she infuse the unchanging, vital, divine force of the Gospel into the veins of the contemporary human organism. . . . In the temporal affairs as well, the Church appears as mother and teacher”; finally, “it is by appreciating the true value of the Kingdom of God and only thus that the human condition and its needs will be understood . . . in their totality.” The same can be said of the council’s teaching. The Church’s mission, according to the constitution, is “to shed on the whole world the radiance of the Gospel message”; “Hence under the light of Christ, the image of the unseen God, the firstborn of every creature, the council wishes to speak to all men in order to shed light

²²Cf. Georges Dusdorf, *Les Origines des sciences humaines* (Paris: Payot, 1967), 221–22.

²³Cf. Étienne Borne, “Le M.R.P. et l’engagement politique des chrétiens,” in *La Croix*, 7 October 1967, 5.

²⁴*Socialisme vivant. Dix lettres à des jeunes* (Paris: Laffont, 1960), 135, cited by André Manaranche, *op.cit.*, 85. Cf. our *Méditation sur l’Église*, 145–48.

on the mystery of man and to cooperate in finding the solution to the outstanding problems of our time” (GS, 10, 92).²⁵ And the decree on the apostolate of the laity explains that the Church of Christ is meant to “penetrate and perfect the temporal order with the spirit of the Gospel”; for the “spiritual” and the “temporal” order, “although distinct, are so connected in the singular plan of God that He Himself intends to raise up the whole world again in Christ and to make it a new creation, initially on earth and completely on the last day. In both orders the layman, being simultaneously a believer and a citizen, should be continuously led by the same Christian conscience.”²⁶

A commentator on *Gaudium et spes* unfolded its teaching on this point quite well: “In order to give direction to the activity of its members, the conciliary Church at first takes a position that is at the same time both bold and nuanced with respect to the ‘autonomy’ of human tasks. It is legitimate to affirm this autonomy if the word means that these activities have their own structures, rules and norms, which are consistent, and which people are able to define on the basis of the resources of a properly human rationality.²⁷ If by contrast what one means by the ‘autonomy’ of human tasks is their independence with respect to the Creator and their systematic lack of reference to the ultimate end, this autonomy is false and dangerous. In combating it, the Church is defending man, because she is defending the reality of his total vocation,²⁸ and by that very fact she protects and promotes his personality.²⁹”

²⁵Cf. no. 72 and no. 40; no. 33.

²⁶*Apostolicam actuositatem*, 5. Cf. *Lumen gentium*, 48.

²⁷Cf. GS, 36.

²⁸Pierre Colin, “Le Concile et le sens de l’homme,” in *Recherches et débats*, 57, 148; [on page 149: “If the ultimate meaning of earthly deeds is their being able to be taken up again into the eternal Kingdom, the Church, responsible in Christ for guiding humanity to its final end, plays her role by reminding people that their historical dynamism needs to be even now ordered to this ultimate end—and in doing this she is doing the work of humanization, in the fullest sense of the word.”] On the Church’s relation to the world according to the New Testament, see Rudolf Schnackenburg, *L’Église dans le Nouveau Testament*, trans. R.-L. Oechslin, “Unam Sanctam” collection (Paris: Cerf, 1964), 196–207. Msgr. Gérard Philips, “L’Église dans le monde d’aujourd’hui,” in *Concilium* 6 (1965): 11–25.

²⁹Cf. M. Barthélemy-Madaule, *La Personne et le drame humain chez Teilhard de Chardin* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1967), 169: For Teilhard, “the threat of collectivism

This is why in the coming years the more the Church occupies herself with the things already discussed in the second part of the constitution, the more necessary it will be for theology to devote itself to exploring the fundamental problem, whatever names it happens to give it, of the relationship between nature and grace. Instead of speaking of the “supernatural,” some theologians, such as Fr. Schillebeeckx, prefer to say “theological order”; others prefer a more concrete vocabulary and speak of the Covenant, or even directly of the Mystery of Christ.³⁰ However it formulates the matter, theology will have to strive to show that “the theological dimension is indispensable to the constitution of a complete human being”³¹ and that it is therefore impossible, as Karl Rahner says, to understand man “other than by grasping him in his movement toward the radiant darkness of God.”³²

It will consequently be necessary, following along the same lines and taking seriously the instruction of the first Vatican Council regarding “the connection between the mysteries and man’s final end,” not only to show in man “an essential openness to what the Christian message proclaims,” but still more “to bring into relation a hermeneutics of the biblical message and a hermeneutics of human existence without confusing them with one another.” And we will in this way be able, God willing, to remedy the “great schism” introduced in the modern age, the schism that, after having produced a theology and a philosophy “separate” from one another, has “often entailed in the end on the one hand a philosophy without God and on the other a theology without thought.”³³

It is precisely this that our constitution teaches us in principle and that it invites us to elucidate, when it tells us that “it has been entrusted to the Church to reveal the mystery of God, Who is the

is not able to be transformed into the personalist promise except from within the perspective of a personal space that is an absolute.”

³⁰See Henri Bouillard, “L’idée de surnaturel et le mystère chrétien,” in *L’Homme devant Dieu* (Paris: Aubier, 1964), vol. 3, 153–66; Karl Barth, *ibid.*, vol. 2, 188–217.

³¹André Manaranche, 204.

³²Karl Rahner, *Études théologiques*, trans. Ch. Müller (1963), vol. 3, 96. See also, J.-M. Aubert, in *Les Études* (November 1966): 535–36.

³³Henri Bouillard, “Croire et comprendre,” *loc. cit.*, 294–300. Hence also the necessity of connecting *Gaudium et spes* with *Lumen gentium*, especially in its seventh chapter.

ultimate goal of man, she opens up to man at the same time the meaning of his own existence, that is, the innermost truth about himself,” and again that “only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light” (GS, 41, 22).³⁴ And it is thus that a theologian writes so well:

The fact of revelation means that God himself reveals, opens to man, man’s own dimension of religious depths. This means that he reveals man to himself . . . in revealing the absolute foundation of man’s being, namely, Himself, God. The revelation of salvation reaches man at the very heart of his self-knowledge. The revelation of salvation and the divine illumination of intelligence are correlative: God designs “theology” in revealing an “anthropology” and he reveals anthropology in designing theology.³⁵

There is nothing more traditional than this. But, of course, it is not possible to organize such an idea except through a theological investigation; it presupposes that the faith has already been accepted, at least to a large extent; it is an “understanding of faith.” Regarding the essence of the matter, though it may seem to be the case, this is not an endeavor that one would call apologetics in the strict sense of the word, addressing itself to a person who is still a nonbeliever in order to convince him that the “natural” desire that we would help him to discern in himself would have to lead him to an encounter with the “supernatural” truth revealed in Jesus Christ. The knowledge and the analysis of a “desire” of the sort that is posited by traditional theology does not come of course from simple psychological observation, nor even from rational reflection alone. To the extent that it pervades certain human activities, this desire always remains something ambiguous, so that it is not possible to interpret it correctly and adequately except in the light of faith. In revealing to us the God who is the end of man, Jesus Christ, the Man-God, reveals us to ourselves, and without him the ultimate foundation of

³⁴Cf. Gabriel Widmer, “Problèmes et méthodes en christologie,” *Revue de théologie et de philosophie* (1967): 236, commenting on W. Pannenberg.

³⁵Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P., “Intelligence de la foi et interprétation du soi,” in the collected work *Théologie d’aujourd’hui et de demain* (Paris: Cerf, 1957), 132. The only problem is that the author appears to yield to a tendency that is common today in seeming to believe that this is a new discovery.—It is important not to confuse this view with the thesis that would reduce faith to self-knowledge.

our being would remain an enigma to us. We thus discover here what one might call a certain “circular relationship between believing and understanding.”³⁶

The same may be said moreover for the proofs of the existence of God: all too often, these proofs become obscure in the intelligence at the very moment at which they ought to be the most helpful. Similarly, in an atheistic atmosphere, a doctrine of the “natural desire” for God no longer finds the requisite condition needed in order to impose itself in the form of an initial common idea of human nature. Christian thought needs at least to concern itself with existing as such, and, for that, it must give proof of its coherence. It needs to do this not only for the actual satisfaction of the believer, but also for the witness that it is supposed to bear to the world. And, despite all appearances to the contrary, we have to place our faith at the same time in man and in the message received from Jesus Christ. For we know that they are made for one another. To remind man what constitutes his final end is not to tell him something that substantially fails to interest him, no matter what obstacles there may be keeping him from realizing it, whether they are due to contemporary life or to the dominant ideology. It is rather to illuminate the total meaning of his being by helping him to find and then to interpret the inscription written into his heart by his Creator. It is to save him from anxiety, from despair, or from apathy, or from resigning himself to a low condition, —at the same time as it is to deliver him from harmful illusions. It is to exalt his grandeur: “*Celsa creatura, in capacitate Majestatis.*”³⁷ For the end of man is so lofty that he needs God to reach it; but in this, as our old theologians used to say, “*non vilificatur homo, sed dignificatus.*”³⁸

Once again, we are not claiming that these truths will easily be granted—nor that a philosopher would be able today to grasp

³⁶Henri Bouillard, “Croire et comprendre,” loc.cit., 292 (with respect to St. Anselm). We have addressed the positions that have been sketched out here more in depth in *Le Mystère du surnaturel*, especially in chapters 7 and 11. Cf. Joseph Moingt, on the “anthropology of faith”: “Universalité de Jésus-Christ,” *Revue de théologie et de philosophie* (1967): 223.

³⁷St. Bernard, sermon 80 on the *Song of Songs*, no. 2, *Opera*, ed. Jean Leclercq (Rome, 1958), 27: “Marvelous creature, which is capable of God!”

³⁸Texts from Duns Scotus and others in *Le Mystère du surnaturel*, 196–97: “By this, man is not degraded, but to the contrary, this is what gives him dignity.”

them easily without certain changes in the language. But all of that notwithstanding, these truths are, in our opinion, incomparably more eloquent and efficacious, because they are more profoundly in accord with our real condition, than the more timid attempts at presentation which, basing themselves on the dualism we just discussed, would seek to adhere solely to what are called truths of the natural order.³⁹ These are the truths that provide what Paul Ricoeur called “the perspective of prospective” for man. In other words, it is by addressing the problems that concern these ultimate truths that the Christian works to make the meaning of existence evident to his brothers, beyond the meaning of the particular objects that occupy his efforts, and beyond the immanent ends he pursues. As Paul Ricoeur says, in one of his striking formulations, “behind the question of autonomy, behind that of enjoyment and power, arises the question of meaning and non-sense. The thinking of the modern world is marked by both increasing rationality and increasing absurdity. . . . Of course it is true that people today lack justice, and they certainly also lack love. But what they lack above all is meaning.” The primordial function of the Christian community is to be for them a “witness and agent of fundamental meaning.”⁴⁰ The constitution *Gaudium et spes* reminds us of this by saying, in the paragraph that offers remedies to atheism, that “it is the function of the Church, led by the Holy Spirit Who renews and purifies her ceaselessly, to make God the Father and His Incarnate Son present and in a sense visible” (GS, 21). Now, in this collective witness and collective action, the theologian has his own special role to play. Living like all the rest of his Christian brothers in the common faith, he makes clear to everyone—in words that will always remain imperfect—the mystery of salvation that is being lived in the community:

The Word became flesh and entered into the realm of becoming in order to deify this realm, he gave time, already in this life, the value of eternity. All time is Christic, all history is salvation history, all becoming is hope. . . . The universal man, toward whom contemporary humanism is advancing, is nothing but a

³⁹In our universe, man finds himself, by the very fact of his creation, in a state that Maurice Blondel described as “transnatural.”

⁴⁰In *Dieu aujourd’hui*, *Semaine des intellectuels catholiques*, 1965. See *supra*, first chapter, 448.

myth that lies beyond man. Endless progress, even if history did not reveal this so often and so cruelly to be false, would still be nothing but a monotonous shuffling along and would leave us in the relative. It cannot take on ultimate value and ontological density without transcending the limits of man toward the God-Man. In the same way that the Cosmos is perfected by life and life is perfected by thought, human thought itself finds its equilibrium and its fulfillment in its self-transcendence toward a person who is, at the same time and indissolubly, integral human nature and divine hypostasis. Consubstantial with the Father and the Spirit, Christ is consubstantial with man through his mother. In him, the call of the earth and the gift of God coincide.⁴¹

3. The Christian attitude toward the world

We have already to a certain extent transgressed the boundaries of the land within which the second of the two problems arises: that is because, in the reality of things, it is impossible to separate these two problems completely from one another. The expression “man’s calling” inscribed in the title of the first part of *Gaudium et spes*, as we suggested above, contains both “man’s Christian vocation” and “the Christian’s human vocation”: a dual vocation, with mixed aspects, which are in solidarity with one another; aspects of time and of eternity, of the “earth” and of “heaven.”⁴² And the second part of the constitution itself explains to us, by means of a few examples chosen for their importance and their contemporary relevance, both how the eternal vocation resonates in the temporal order, and how temporal action, in turn, resonates in eternity. Or rather, this second perspective scarcely appears here as anything more than a watermark, and this is what constitutes precisely the problem, the solution to which ought to succeed in justifying the interest the Church of Christ has in temporal action. In other words, which are not so different, we will say with Fr. Edward Schillebeeckx that the

⁴¹Jules Monchanin, “Le temps selon l’hindouisme et le christianisme,” in *Dieu vivant* 14 (1949), 118.

⁴²[We note, with P. Colin, “Le Concile et le sens de l’homme,” loc.cit., 143, that “the two notions of creation and vocation to divine communion are always connected. The council never speaks of man as a creature of God without recalling that his Creator has given him the vocation to unite himself to his Creator in Christ.”]

problem, which was expressed classically in the still too abstract terms of nature and grace, now becomes for us “a problem set out in terms of the relations that unite earthly expectation (or earthly activity) and eschatological kingdom.”⁴³

Having reached the end, the council fathers say that they have set out many things in the constitution on the basis of the Word of God and on the spirit of the Gospel, in order to bring to all people, whether Christians or not, a useful aid in the immense task that people have to carry out here on earth, namely, the “building up of this world” in peace. The foregoing has begun to demonstrate that the light of revelation cast upon the temporal world is precious to it, or, at least, it has shown in what direction we would have to look in order to see that light. Now, it is the reciprocal aspect that remains a problem. Why should eternal life have an interest in the “building up of this world”?

Let us pass quickly over two preliminary conditions; though their importance is not to be minimized—it is fundamental—they do not lead us yet to the heart of the problem.

Without having to seek any further, nor to inquire any more into the particularities of this present world, the Christian has always known that he has to be faithful to the law of the Gospel. Thus, among all his duties, he gives priority to the practice of justice and charity. Here we have a project with various undefined applications, which present themselves to each generation in a new light, involving the Christian in constantly renewed efforts in the struggle against evil or in the pursuit of a better world, and which renders the Christian omnipresent in the affairs of this world. He will never be finished devising new modes of action which, by adapting to new situations, will allow him to carry out this twofold duty in truth. In order thus to remain single-mindedly faithful to the Gospel, he will have to listen to the warning that the constitution addresses to him and he will infer the consequence from it in accordance with his own capacities as well as with the particularities of his situation: “Profound and rapid changes make it more necessary that no one ignoring the trend of events or drugged by laziness, content himself with a merely individualistic morality. It grows increasingly true that the obligations of justice and love are fulfilled only if each person,

⁴³“Foi chrétienne et attente terrestre,” in *L’Église dans le monde d’aujourd’hui* (Mame, 1967), 150.

contributing to the common good, according to his own abilities and the needs of others, also promotes and assists the public and private institutions dedicated to bettering the conditions of human life”—and these obligations “bind us to make ourselves the neighbor of every person without exception” (GS, 27, 30).

In the second place, the Christian is also aware that the world has been created by God and that, because its Creator is good, it itself is something good. We recall the first page of Genesis, that wondrous metaphysical poem, which presents such a clear and unadorned idea in such a sober tone, such a solemn style, which was perhaps initially a liturgical hymn; it pronounces judgment on every mythical cosmology and avoids in advance every gnostic dualism: God brings all things into being without exception, through the power of his Word and, having made them, he sees that they are good.⁴⁴ Let us also recall, among other things, the optimistic hymn of the Book of Revelation: though Satan had been unleashed into the world, those who struggle against him and resist to the point of martyrdom do not speak a single word against this world, but to the contrary cry out: “Great and wonderful are your works, Lord almighty!” In this way they unhesitatingly echo the proclamation of the twenty-four elders gathered around the Throne: “Worthy are you, o Lord and God, to receive glory, honor, and power, for it is you who created the universe, it is by your will that it first was not and then came to be.”⁴⁵

In order to clarify any possible ambiguity on this point, we ought to recall that in the language that we use as well as already in Scripture, the very same word, “world,” is taken in a variety of quite different meanings. What is intended in the present case is obviously not the world St. John speaks about when he says: “Do not love the world, nor what is in the world; if someone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 Jn 2:15–16), that is to say, of the world of the threefold concupiscence; this is also not the world that St. Paul likewise speaks about when he writes to the Romans: “Be not conformed to this world” (Rom 12:2), and as *Gaudium et spes*

⁴⁴[See H.-I. Marrou, *Théologie de l'histoire* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1968), 33: “‘Be fruitful and multiply’—the fundamental blessing that sin itself was unable to destroy, as St. Augustine, the so-called pessimist, loved to emphasize (*Civ. Dei*, 22, 24, 1).”]

⁴⁵Rev 15:3 and 4:11. Cf. Erik Peterson, *Les Témoins de la vérité*, trans. R. Lahaye (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1948), 50.

explains, “Here by the world is meant that spirit of vanity and malice which transforms into an instrument of sin those human energies intended for the service of God and man” (GS, 37). This is the world that Jesus condemned, “the world of the will to power, of eroticism and lucre,”⁴⁶ “the world of selfish pleasure, this smug, cowardly, and sensual world, which is closed up in itself and which retreats and adores itself.”⁴⁷ Today no less than in ages past, we have only too much of a tendency to make peace with such a world, and we do not always know how to resist the pressure that it exerts on us “in order to obtain an interpretation of the faith and morality that would be proportionate to it.”⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the Christian who wants to be faithful to the Gospel “holds it in contempt and tramples on it.”⁴⁹ *Gaudium et spes* sought to make clear from the beginning the completely different sense it intended by the word, which is authorized as much by Scripture as by common usage:

Therefore, the council focuses its attention on the world of men, the whole human family along with the sum of those realities in the midst of which it lives; that world which is the theater of man’s history, and the heir of his energies, his tragedies, and his triumphs; that world which the Christian sees as created and sustained by its Maker’s love, fallen indeed into the bondage of sin, yet emancipated now by Christ, Who was crucified and rose again to break the strangle hold of personified evil, so that the world might be fashioned anew according to God’s design and reach its fulfillment. (GS, 2)⁵⁰

⁴⁶P.-R. Régamey.

⁴⁷Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *La Vie cosmique*, in *Écrits*, 45. Cf. our *Méditation sur l’Église*, 171–73; 185–86.

⁴⁸Henry Bars, in *Esprit* (October 1967): 490.

⁴⁹Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *La Maîtrise du monde et le Règne de Dieu*, in *Écrits*, 82. Cf. André Manaranche, *Prêtres à la manière des Apôtres* (Paris: Centurion, 1967), 87–88.

⁵⁰One may likewise consult the clarifications offered by Paul VI in his speech from 22 May 1967 on the three principal meanings of the word “world” in *Documentation catholique*, 2 July 1967, col. 1169–1170. [And St. Augustine, *Sermon 121*, on the first day of the most holy Easter Mystery: *Sermons sur la Pâque*, trans. and ed. Suzanne Poque (Paris: Cerf, 1966), 222–25, with the parallel passages. Cf. Alexander Schmemmann, “Prière, liturgie et renouveau,” in *La Théologie du renouveau* (1968), vol. 2, 106–09.]

The world, God's creation, is thus worthy of our admiration and love. It is worth the effort of investigating it and taking an interest in it.⁵¹ But there is more to say. Man is not only a contemplative being, he is also an active being; he will therefore take the best he can from the resources of this world, because of a need to survive, no doubt, but also in order to draw from and taste the world's various flavors and so in this way to perfect himself as a human being. Isn't the word of his Creator still echoing today, filled with a meaning too vast for our distant and even most recent ancestors to conceive: "Fill the earth and subject it" (Gen 1:28 and 31; cf. GS, 12)? A dynamic conception of creation, which is the correlative of an evolutionary view of the world and connected to a more attentive listening to the Bible's words, compels us to see that "to the old definitions of man as *homo sapiens*, *homo politicus*, *homo ludens*, etc., we ought to add today the term *homo operator*"⁵² (which is something different from *homo faber*). It is just this that the council points out to us in the definition that we have just read, and what it says again in a later paragraph in speaking of the "vast effort" that humanity has made over the course of centuries: "For man, created to God's image, received a mandate to subject to himself the earth and all it contains, and to govern the world with justice and holiness," and so forth (GS, 34). "There is therefore nothing more in accord with man's biblical vocation than the work by which he transforms the material world." In this sense, there is nothing more biblical than technology. The development of technology is in profound harmony with God's plan, even when it is the work of people who do not believe in him.⁵³

The Christian is no doubt well aware that he is made for a different fatherland. Nor does he ignore the fact that there is something corrupt in his own nature, which obliges him to be constantly wary of himself as he makes use of the world, and that he

⁵¹On this subject, one ought to reread the pages from Fr. Pierre Charles, "Créateur des choses visibles," in *L'Église, sacrement du monde* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1960), 57–73.

⁵²Joseph Sittler, "Le problème majeur de la théologie protestante aujourd'hui," in *Théologie aujourd'hui et demain*, 215. Cf. Karl Rahner, *Science, évolution et pensée chrétienne*, trans. H. Rochais (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1967), 165.

⁵³Jean Daniélou, *Au commencement, Genèse I–II* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1963), 47.

must always be on guard against getting caught up in it.⁵⁴ But none of this eliminates the fundamental goodness and beauty of creation,⁵⁵ nor changes its original destiny, which is to serve man. The Christian's fundamental attitude with respect to this world must be positive, and so must his attitude toward all of man's efforts to use it for his benefit. Without forgetting the disorder and the division introduced into the very heart of man, without forgetting that this man is incapable on his own of escaping from the slavery of sin,⁵⁶ nor that he must always be vigilant not to allow himself to be possessed by the world that it is his mission to possess,⁵⁷ it is this positive attitude that the Church, refusing to listen to a "despondent theology," resolutely adopts and seeks to inculcate in us by means of this constitution. Even if one believes the optimism implied in such an attitude to be excessive—there has been no lack of reproaches in this regard—it is worth noting that the council, once it finished a summary examination of the present situation in the introduction, did not seek to address the *condition* of man here on earth, but rather, as we mentioned above, his *vocation*. "The depths of human suffering, which we have all experienced" ought not to eclipse for us "the sublimity of man's vocation" (GS, 13).

In carrying out her teaching mission, the Church could have contented herself with the first of these two considerations that we explained above (the duty of justice and of charity): doing so, she would have fully accomplished her essential task. If, on the contrary, she had addressed only the second (the goodness of creation and man's efforts at becoming the master of creation), forgetting to remind man of the destiny that God prepared for him in his love, she would have forgotten her proper mission. But in reality, even in this second part of *Gaudium et spes*, the Church goes further. She enters more extensively into the questions of anthropology and cosmology, about which Nicolas Berdiaeff complained exactly forty years ago

⁵⁴On sin and its consequences, see GS, 25, 37, 39, 58, 78, and so forth.

⁵⁵"*Pulchritudo universae creaturae, inculpabilis*," says St. Augustine, *De vera religione*, c. 23, n. 44 (Pegon edition), 84.

⁵⁶GS, 13. [See P. Colin, "Le Concile et le sens de l'homme," (cited p. 482, n.3), 143: "The most profound place of man's suffering is his 'heart' where sin is at work, and to the extent that this heart is not purified by the grace of Christ, all of man's works and even his highest values bear the marks of this sin."]

⁵⁷St. Augustine, loc.cit.

that they “had not yet been sufficiently explained by the Christianity of the ecumenical councils.”⁵⁸ She takes two steps further, and it is this that will lead us to raise yet another twofold problem. She affirms, or rather she constantly presupposes, a certain relationship between the goodness of the things of the natural order (and we include in this the things of culture and civilization), that is, the goodness of human and earthly realities,—and the ultimate, supernatural end, to which each human being is called in the Mystery of Christ.

4. *The progress of the world and the new creation*

It has been recognized that what we have here is a corollary to the traditional problem concerning the relationship between the order of creation and the order of redemption (which includes the order of “deification”⁵⁹), viewed from a more contemporary perspective and in a spirit of human sympathy and of generosity which was well defined by Paul VI in one of his discourses.⁶⁰ But beyond this, assuming a generally collective and dynamic perspective, the constitution takes for granted as an acquired truth, or at least appears to do so, the idea of a certain future progress of humanity, a progress that itself needs to be related to the supernatural destiny in a manner that remains to be determined.

Of the two connected problems that theological reflection finds itself thus confronted with, the first already received its solution in principle in the most traditional theology. *Gratia supponit naturam, gratia perficit naturam*: it suffices to unfold, as the circumstances dictate, the myriad concrete corollaries of this Thomist axiom that

⁵⁸*Un nouveau Moyen Âge* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1927), 149.

⁵⁹This relationship is set into relief by the teaching of St. Paul. Cf. André Feuillet, *Le Christ, Sagesse de Dieu, d'après les épîtres pauliniennes* (Paris: Gabalda, 1966).

⁶⁰Speech to the diplomatic corps, 8 January 1966: “This does not mean that the Church will henceforward be indifferent to errors, that she will ignore the ambiguity of the values of the modern world. She knows all of the equivocal content they can hold, all the threats and dangers; but she willingly focuses her attention on the positive aspects of these values, on whatever is precious in them for the construction of a better and more just society. She would like to help in the gathering together of all good wills in order to resolve the immense problems that our century must confront.”

holds true both in the noetic order and in the order of action.⁶¹ The more human a man is and rich in humanity as a result of his native qualities or his culture, the more grace can expect in principle to find in him fertile soil for the accomplishment of its work. One has to count, no doubt, on the caprices of subjective life. We are quite aware, for example, that a too fortunate balance of natural gifts can encourage a completely human ideal of wisdom, a sort of “self-sufficiency” that presents an obstacle to the invasion of the Spirit of God. One might say “that God perhaps enters more easily into a soul ravaged by the senses than into a soul barricaded behind its virtues.”⁶² We also recall the famous observation Péguy made regarding a certain type of person who is too moral and who “doesn’t get mixed up in grace.” There is sometimes a conflict in man between the *nous* and the *pneuma*—and the saints have not always been in every respect people of superior intellect. But, objectively speaking, and all other things being equal, one will admit that a more lucid intelligence and a stronger will would allow man to make a freer and more profound commitment in response to God’s call. Of course, it would be a “mistake” to “look for love and the divine kingdom on a par with human affections and progress.”⁶³ But at the same time, “is it not obvious that, no matter how transcendent they may be, love and zeal for God could not befall any but a *human* heart, that is to say, one that is prepared (distantly or proximately) by all the juices of the earth?” And, for example, “who can say what our most supernatural mystical life owes to Plato, to Leibniz, to Pascal, to Newton, and to how many others (much more unexpected), whom each one of us could perhaps name in his heart?”⁶⁴

The order of charity elevates and transfigures everything human: it is incommensurable with the human order; but it is from this order that it draws, so to speak, its material. It is St. Gregory of

⁶¹ST I, 1.8 ad 2: “*Cum emin gratia non tollat naturam sed perficiat oportet quod naturalis ratio subveniat fidei, sicut et naturalis inclinatio voluntatis obsequitur caritati.*”

⁶²Julien Green, *Vers l’Invisible* (Paris: Plon, 1967), 15.

⁶³Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Le Milieu divin*, 128, note 1.

⁶⁴Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, “Premier mémoire pour Maurice Blondel,” 12 December 1919. Maurice Blondel and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Correspondance commentée*, “Bibliothèque des Archives de Philosophie” collection (Paris: Beauchesne, 1965), 30.

Nyssa who made this observation; he made clear the positive, albeit still preparatory, role of natural “passion” in view of the spirit’s ascent. “Without this passion,” he would say, “what else would there be capable of driving us to seek after the things of heaven?” It is only too true that “the human passions are not directly ordered to the heavenly Jerusalem,” and a harsh asceticism may be required to order them and purify them; “and, yet, we can make progress toward heaven only by necessarily leaning our sails to their breath.”⁶⁵

It is important to add, on this score, that material progress itself, the advance of technology, will not be without indirect significance for the supernatural order, if it is true that it has an influence on the progress of human consciousness. It seems that we cannot avoid this new application or new extension of the Thomist axiom, its “historicized version,” which is a function “of a historical conception of the world and no longer a static Aristotelian conception.”⁶⁶ At the very least, we see the general lines of a study that will need to be done.⁶⁷ And this introduces us to the truly new problem that the constitution *Gaudium et spes* raises here for the theologian. For this progress of consciousness, a correlate of the progress of technology, does not concern the life of the individual, but the life of the whole human race.

Now, the constitution takes for granted that there is such a progress of humanity, and that, even more, this progress has significance for the Kingdom of God. This is in fact just what the constitution says repeatedly, though it leaves to us the work of clarifying what it means and explaining it. It makes the necessary distinction, to be sure, between “earthly progress” and the “growth of the Kingdom of Christ,” but it affirms at the same time that the former has “a lot of importance” for this latter, because it is able “to

⁶⁵Ibid., note from 19 October 1916.

⁶⁶George A. Lindbeck, “Le cadre du désaccord catholique-protestant,” in *Théologie d’aujourd’hui et de demain*, 199. Id., “L’Église et le monde, le schéma 13,” in *Le dialogue est ouvert*, 1 (Paris: Delachaux and Niestlé, 1965), 232–34.

⁶⁷Cf. the intervention of Cardinal Meyer (Chicago) at the council, 20 October 1964: “It is necessary to teach that perfecting the material order contributes to the betterment of man and to the development of his superior faculties. . . .” These words were cited by G. A. Lindbeck, loc.cit., 234. Teilhard wrote, on 17 November 1947, “Technology (that is to say, the arrangement and the super-arrangement of Matter) plays an essential spiritual role: it is a necessary, but insufficient, condition of the spiritual maturation of Man.”

contribute to a better organization of human society,” constituting in this way “a certain sketch of the age to come.”⁶⁸ And does it not also say: “*Hominis persona salvanda est humanaque societas instauranda*” (GS, 3)? Do not these expressions—“growth of the reign,” “sketch of the age to come”—seem in their context to suggest a very close connection between man’s final end and the things of the temporal order and of the earthly society? Nevertheless, this ought not lead us to conclude that this world itself is “the eschatological city of God.”⁶⁹ It is recalled, on the other hand, and no less explicitly, that the form of this world shall pass away,⁷⁰ that God is preparing for us “a new dwelling place,” that if the kingdom has already begun on earth, it has done so “in a mysterious way.” It is assuredly not, therefore, the social organization itself, even if *per impossibile* it were assumed to be perfect, that we are being asked to see as the initial form of the city to come.⁷¹ It is also said, in a formulation that can be explained and applied in a variety of ways, that “charity and its works remain” and that the cosmos, before being definitively “transformed,” has to experience its “fulfillment”—but also that we

⁶⁸Already in the council’s message to the world, in the fall of 1962, “Such is of course the plan of God that, by charity, in a certain way shines on the earth the kingdom of God like a distant sketch of his eternal kingdom.” Cf. *Apostolicam actuositatem*, no. 5 and 8.

⁶⁹This expression comes from Johannes B. Metz, “L’Église et le monde,” in *Théologie d’aujourd’hui et de demain*, 151. We would avoid it insofar as it could encourage a certain temporal messianism. The author cites in this regard *Lumen gentium* 48: “*Renovatio mundi irrevocabiliter est constituta atque in hoc saeculo reali quodam modo anticipaliter*”; the meaning seems to us clearly specified by the rest of the phrase: “*etenim Ecclesia jam in terris vera sanctitate licet imperfecta insigniter*, etc.” [See LG 9: The Church is “at the heart of humanity like a lasting and sure seed of unity, hope, and salvation”; no. 5: she has received the mission “to proclaim and to spread among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God and to be, on earth, the initial budding forth of that kingdom.”]

⁷⁰It is important to note, however, the somewhat restrictive qualification: “The form of this world, which has been deformed by sin, will certainly pass away”; the text is taken from Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 5.36.1.

⁷¹See our *Paradoxes*, part 1, chapter 7: “The social and the eternal”; and the second part, chapter three: “The Gospel and the world.” Cf. the studies published in the special issue of *Mensaje*, Santiago, Chile, October 1966: “La Iglesia en el mundo de hoy,” especially the article by C. Naveillan, “Humanismo cristocéntrico”; E. Vigano, “Sentido y valor del que hacer humano y de lo temporal”; Manuel Ossa, “Cristianismo y sentido de la historia”; G. Ochagavía, “La esperanza del futuro.”

know neither the time of this fulfillment nor the mode of its transformation. The whole configuration of these antithetical and complementary affirmations is in the end placed under the sign of the Word of God made flesh, who, “as a perfect man, entered into the history of the world, taking it up and recapitulating it in himself.”

We sense here, on the part of the editors, a concern to ensure that there be a doctrinal balance, which is always difficult to establish perfectly.⁷² The text no doubt also reflects, in its final version, the stages of a collaboration that was studded with pitfalls, as well as the pluralism of those who had a hand in it. “The history of ‘schema 13,’” Fr. Hébert Roux wrote, “the various plans that were constructed in the writing of it, abandoned, and then taken up again over the course of more than two years, the criticisms or the praises that were offered in its regard, the lassitude and finally the fever in which they decided ‘to have done with it’ in the course of the fourth session, all of that suffices to show the intellectual hesitation of the editors themselves.”⁷³ An earlier version of “schema 13” (initially called “schema 17”) had, we may recall, in fact raised the numerous objections that some of the council fathers had. A few of the objections took on a rather harsh tone on occasion in many of the Orthodox and Protestant observers. We hear more than one echo of this in a collaborative work written by a group of Lutheran theologians. “There is no lack of voices,” writes Mr. Wolfgang Dietzfelbinger, “criticizing an eschatology that was too immanent to the world, indeed deficient, as well as the identification—which was no doubt a threat here—of the kingdom of God and the diabolical reality of sin; the ‘signs of the times’ in this case would be interpreted in too secular a manner, and the theology of the incarnation in a way that was too unilateral.”⁷⁴ Many of these reproaches, especially the first one mentioned here, can be explained in part by the fact that one failed to grasp precisely the limits that the schema imposed on itself: it was not a question in this schema of addressing the ultimate ends. Nevertheless, the definitive version, packed with more doctrine, did not appease every critic. The Pastor Henry

⁷²Cf. GS, 38 and 39.

⁷³*Détresse et promesse de Vatican II* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1967), 191.

⁷⁴*Le dialogue est ouvert*, I, 89.

Bruston judged that “the tension between the Church and the world was passed over in silence”; he regrets “that nothing was said of the Church’s prophetic and critical mission,” and “the eschatological flavor” of the text strikes him as still “sweetened.”⁷⁵ Pierre Burgelin expresses an analogous regret with respect to the chapter on culture: “Without wanting to contrast a pessimistic picture to that which the council offers us, one might judge that the council’s picture could have made more of an effort to remind us of the risks of the various orders to which we are exposed and which are a direct consequence of the drive of the culture.”⁷⁶

These criticisms, and others of the same sort, still occasionally rest on certain misunderstandings, notably as a result of the different sense the word “world” is given in the two different parts. Nor would it show a lack of respect, and indeed enthusiasm, for the work of the council to admit that there are imperfections in a text that is so broad, treating for the first time a matter that is so complicated and weighty. But we nevertheless can observe with George A. Lindbeck that “the Protestant theologians retained bitter memories of the evolutionist optimism of nineteenth-century liberalism, and, as a consequence, show themselves to be quite suspicious with respect to any effort made to connect the concrete, social, political, and intellectual evolutions of history with the Kingdom of God, even when these efforts underscore the transcendent, and even apocalyptic dimension of the Kingdom much more than the social Gospel ever did.”⁷⁷ It is in any event a fact that the Orthodox, too, expressed a regret that the constitution did not give more sustained attention to the eschatological perspective.⁷⁸

But, to say it again, we nevertheless owe the council our gratitude for having forayed into a relatively new field, in which all sorts of complicated data present themselves, for having sought to do

⁷⁵In *Vatican II, Points de vue de théologiens protestants*, 196 and 197.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 236.

⁷⁷In *Théologie d’aujourd’hui et de demain*, “Le cadre du désaccord catholique-protestant,” 200. The author then examines the Bultmannian objection, the modern transposition of the *sola fide*. Here, he responds that “the Reformers of the sixteenth century did not have the same contempt for objectivity that so many of their modern disciples have.”

⁷⁸Cf. Maurice Villain, in *Irenikon*, 1966, no. 61, which offers an account of an ecumenical session at Chevetogne.

justice to all of them, for having taken stock of and arranged them, but without attempting to organize them into a system. Not only would the endeavor have been premature, but, to the extent that it would have been possible, it would have contained too many hypotheses and too many human judgments for the Church's magisterium to have been able to commit its authority. The council says enough, in this "pastoral constitution," to orient our activity in a certain direction. As we progress in freedom along the lines it has indicated to us, we can be assured that we are avoiding both "the suffocating worldliness of values that, in order to remain human, deny any relation to God, and a bad secularization of Christians who, in order to be more certain to reach all people, believe that they have to sacrifice the faith, whereas the faith in fact contains the only hope for a truly spiritual integration of man and his world."⁷⁹ For it also tells us that the "new creation" that forms the object of our hope presupposes a transfiguration that passes through the Cross, and it reminds us how the Church is the matrix in which this cosmic rebirth begins to take place.⁸⁰—*Translated by D. C. Schindler.* □

Cardinal **HENRI DE LUBAC**, S.J. (1896–1991), a co-founder of *Communio*, was an influential theologian of the twentieth century.

⁷⁹Gustave Martelet, S.J., "L'Église et le temporel," in *L'Église de Vatican II* (Paris: Cerf, 1966), vol. 2, 539 (with respect to various points made in the constitution *Lumen gentium*).

⁸⁰Cf. Antoine Wenger, *Vatican II, chronique de la deuxième session* (Paris: Centurion, 1964), 42, with respect to an intervention from Cardinal Lercaro.