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The Ontology of Vocation:

Gaudium et spes

Everything we have said about the dignity of the human person, and about the human community and the profound meaning of human activity, lays the foundation for the relationship between the Church and the world, and provides the basis for dialogue between them.

—The Pastoral Constitution on the Church and the Modern World¹

In the last chapter I began to characterize one of the key themes and sites of contestation at the Second Vatican Council: the demand for a new kind of pastoral relation between the church and the modern world. I gave particular attention to the main predicates of this demand as they were set out in Pope John XXIII's opening address: an ontological and temporal conjunction between the church and the modern world in the figure of the human as natural but fulfilled in the supernatural. This is a conjunction that, for John, invites and justifies a reconfigured pastoral relation. John expected that pastoral relation to pass through the magisterium, the teaching authority of the church as embodied in the council fathers, and pass through in such a way that the church's teaching authority could illuminate and orient humanity in its proper orientation to the divine.

I underscored the importance of the fact that the mode of pastoral care called for in John's opening address was directed to "humanity" and not, per se, to the soul, the flock, the sinner, Christendom, or another figure of the *ecclesia ad interna*.

This proposition that the church can have a pastoral relation to the contemporary world that centers on and takes as its object “the human” or “humanity” became a vector point for working out a number of questions: what is the church such that it can have a pastoral relation to “humanity” in the contemporary world? What is “humanity” such that it is in need of such a relation? And what kinds of practices can possibly be designed and facilitated in the space of this relation, given precisely that “humanity” is considered as that which forms part of, but which also exceeds, the church? The challenge John gave to the council fathers was to bring to articulation a logic of pastoral care fit to the needs of the modern world in light of and in response to these questions as well as the outlines of the pastoral equipment needed to turn that logic into a practice.

In characterizing this theme of, and demand for, a new pastoral relation I also pointed to some of the points of blockage that the council fathers began to encounter in responding to John’s call. There was serious debate concerning the anthropological optimism figured in John’s address. Can the church be so optimistic about the human condition in the modern world, and what is it about the modern world that changes the classical proposition that the human, in its very nature, tends to the supernatural? And how might such an integralist position be articulated in such a way as to serve as a basis for a relation to those beyond the church—how might it be brought to articulation “for all men”? My aim in characterizing these difficulties was to elaborate a series of problems that began to coalesce in such a way that the notion of human dignity could be put forward as a response. I have made reference to the figure of human dignity at Vatican II several times but have not actually shown how it was elaborated in relation to the pastoral question. That elaboration is the goal of this present chapter. I will do this by examining the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*—the final form of Schema XIII—in order to give a detailed account of the politico-theological anthropology developed there.

In offering this reading of the Pastoral Constitution, I hope to make three things clear. The first is to show how a specific form of hermeneutic practice and equipment was introduced as appropriate both to human needs in the modern world as well as to the capacities of the church’s teaching authority to meet those needs. The second is to show how this practice and this equipment depended on an understanding of the human as called, in its very nature, to unity with the divine. This vocational anthropology, if you will, is central to the definition of human dignity and the care of human dignity brought forward in the Pastoral Constitution. Third and finally, I will say something about the price to be paid for this conception of human dignity. Among other things, this conception of human dignity opened the door to the question of the church’s exclusive right and capacity to provide salvational care to the human and to humanity in the modern world.

THE COMMUNITY OF THE CALLED AND THE HUMAN VOCATION

The final debate on the constitution of the church and the modern world was carried out from October through November 1965. Despite several years of contestation, reformulation, and challenge, Schema XIII was voted on and finally approved by the 95 percent needed to establish it as a constitution of the ecumenical council. Within just a few weeks final revisions were completed, and the final draft of the constitution—*Gaudium et spes*—was settled and made part of the church.² All told, as of the closing of the council, four and a half years had passed since John called for the church to rethink and articulate the outlines of a reconstituted pastoral relation to the world.

Analytically, one can say that the fathers' formulations in the Pastoral Constitution are a response to three questions. The first is: *what is the contemporary world such that it can—indeed must—be the object of the church's pastoral power?* The second: *what is the church such that it can and must take the world as the object of its pastoral concern?* The third: *how can the church accomplish this by means of its capacities as a teaching authority?* At the center of the fathers' response to these questions is a link, an interface, a structural joint between the church and the modern world. That structural joint is the human cast as inherently dignified. Decades of prior theological and pastoral problematization, four years of debate at the council among hundreds of theologians, thousands of clergy, announcements, negotiations, dealings, intimidations, reasons, and vehement passions were made to coalesce into a single anthropological point: human dignity. A defining feature of this anthropological point is precisely that human dignity is that which speaks for itself.

Final work on *Gaudium et spes* was conducted on the heels of work on *Lumen gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. The opening lines of the Pastoral Constitution make reference to something of a linear development in the council's thought and work: having offered a dogmatic statement on the church *ad interna*, it proposes to turn to the consideration of the church *ad extra*. Having "settled the question of the Church," the council can now "explain to everyone how it conceives of the presence and activity of the Church in the world of today."³ The presumption of a kind of linear move from the formulation of doctrine to the pastoral application of doctrine may have conformed to the view of many of the council fathers concerning the proper relation of the theological and the pastoral, but of course it is neither how things actually progressed, nor is it a faithful reading of the relation of doctrine and the pastorate as that relation is actually developed in the Pastoral Constitution. A crucial feature of the constitution is that the organ of doctrine, the magisterium, true to John's initial vision for the council, is positioned

to serve as a kind of pastoral apparatus. The conceptual difficulty of Vatican II with regard to the question of pastoral power, after all, is not how to apply doctrine in pastoral care. The question was how to convert the teaching authority into an apparatus of care for the modern world.

In actual fact, work carried out in *Gaudium et spes* consisted in an exercise of what has been called recursive rectification.⁴ Work on the constitution passed through anthropological questions, ecclesial questions, and questions of pastoral practice. With each pass adjustments were made. The end result was a rectified set of relations in which the human was conceived as that being in pressing need of the church's care and the church as that venue uniquely equipped to respond to the needs of the day. Neither in substance nor form was *Gaudium et spes* merely the pastoral application of doctrine.

My analysis here will focus only on Part One of the Pastoral Constitution: *De Ecclesia et Vocatione Hominis*—the Church and the Human Vocation. In Part One of the constitution the council fathers develop their conception of human dignity as well as their conception of the church's pastoral relation to human dignity. Part Two of the Pastoral Constitution dealt directly with specific questions of the day—war, poverty, family, and technology, among others. In many ways Part Two, being more concrete, captured more of the world's attention. In that part, more than in the first, the authors of the Pastoral Constitution had to demonstrate and carry out the proposals made in Part One. It is the material of Part One, however, that most directly concerns the theme of this inquiry.

Three features of Part One are most relevant. The first is that the relation between the church and the modern world is conceived in terms of the relation of the church to the human as a vocational being. The human is a creature who is called, called into being. That the concept of vocation should be given central consideration by the council fathers is, perhaps, not surprising. The term “vocation,” or “calling,” after all, has a complicated and consequential theological and political status in the modern world, as Max Weber has famously shown.⁵ As conceptualized in the Pastoral Constitution, however, vocation arises out of a different theological tradition than the one Weber analyzed and has a different political status than it does in the largely Protestant emphasis of his study.

The second feature that deserves attention is that the church's relation to the modern world is figured as passing through dignity. Dignity and human vocation are linked. The human understood as a being with a dignified calling is the structural joint between the church and the modern world.

The third feature is the ontological parallel or similarity, the analogical participation established, from the outset, between the church in its being and the human vocation (human dignity as a matter of ecclesiological and anthropological par-

icipation). Recall that the term vocation—*vocatione*—is the Vulgate translation of St. Paul’s term *klēse*, calling (from *kaleō*, to call). Recall also that *ecclesia* is the Vulgate translation of *ekklēssia*, the community of the called, most often translated in English as “the church”—another word arising from the same family as *kaleō*. The human, then, is that creature which is called. And the *ecclesia* is the community of those who are called. By way of human vocation the world is ontologically linked with, and a matter of concern for, the church.

De Ecclesia et Vocatione Hominis can be thought of as thematically structured according to two questions. The first is: *Quid Ecclesia de homine sentit?* What does the church think about the human? And *Quid Ecclesia venit prout ipsa, in hoc mundo existit et cum eo vivit atque agit?* What is the church, inasmuch as she exists in the world, living and acting with it? These two questions can be rephrased to facilitate the analysis of human dignity and pastoral power. First: what is the human such that it should be rightly thought of as a pastoral object of the church’s care? Second: what is the church such that it should rightly care for the human as its pastoral object? Following the structure of Part One of the Pastoral Constitution, I will examine these two questions in turn.

QUID ECCLESIA DE HOMINE SENTIT?

What is the human such that it should be rightly thought of as a pastoral object of the church’s care? A first answer to the question is indicated by the subsections of *De Ecclesia et Vocatione Hominis*. The first subsection considers the human as a dignified being. The second subsection considers the human as a community, that is, as humanity. This distinction of “the human” and “humanity” is crucial to understanding the object of the church’s pastoral care as imagined in the Pastoral Constitution. Insofar as it is an object of pastoral care, the constitution conceives of human dignity as a relation. The object of the church’s attention is not the human, per se, nor humanity, per se. It is the relation human-humanity, with all this implies about the ontological and pastoral unity of elements that might otherwise be taken up as matters of heterogeneous quality and scale.⁶

An important aspect of taking up things human as a relation is that the distinction between “the human” and “humanity” is not simply one of the individual and the collective. The pastorate is certainly responsible for both the individual and the collective. But this more or less quantitative and scalar distinction misses the proposed integral ontological relation between the human and humanity in relation to the church. The distinction, which opens up two poles or vector points in a single relation, is a matter of distinct ontological modes. In the first place, the Pastoral Constitution is concerned with the human, taken up in terms of its nature

and destiny, its origin and ends. In the second place, it is concerned with the non-disrupted actualization of that nature and ends as a being-in-unity (“socialization”) and, thereby, as a corporate and unified thing (“the whole of humanity”). The joint that holds these two poles together is human dignity, but human dignity understood through a particular concept. That concept is vocation. The human vocation, understood theologically and thereby anthropologically, is what both defines and actualizes human dignity.

Vocation

The Pastoral Constitution asks: *Quid est autem homo?* What is the human? In answering, it distinguishes and connects two elements. The constitution conceives of the human as created—a creature made in God’s image (the classic notion of the *imago dei*)—and thereby capable, by nature, of knowing and communing with its Creator. In the *imago dei* the human creature is ontologically capable of God, as it were, because it participates in God’s being. The constitution also conceives of the human as a creature that is defined, in its creation, by a particular end—a destiny proper to (that is, characteristic of and belonging to) its origin. That end is communion with God. The link that connects these two (origin and destiny) into a single being with an integrated nature is *vocation*. The human is called *into being*; the human is called *to the end of* communion with God. The dignity of the human, as the constitution figures it, adheres in this conjunction, this participation, of origin and destiny in vocation: “the dignity of the human vocation.” The human is dignified by virtue of human vocation—*vocatione hominis*.⁷

Theologically, the term vocation is drawn from the writings of St. Paul. The place of this term in the modern world, and its ecclesial and extraecclesial importance in the ordering of human life and activity, has been the subject of some dispute. Most notable, of course, are Max Weber’s reflections on the significance of Luther’s notion of “worldly vocation,” connected to his translation of the biblical *klēsis* as the German *Beruf* and the subsequent connections he makes between the Protestant ethic of work, a this-worldly asceticism, and the *Geist* of capitalism. Less familiar are debates concerning the relation of the Pauline notion of vocation and the messianic themes that Paul connects to that notion. These connections, and their significance for diagnosing the modern world, have been taken up in the political theologies of Walter Benjamin, Jacob Taubes, and, somewhat more recently, Giorgio Agamben. A brief reminder of Weber’s reflections as well as those offered by Agamben will serve to situate the distinctive way in which the notion of vocation is taken up by the council fathers.

According to Weber, the Pauline concept of *klēsis* signifies the calling of God to eternal salvation. It is, in this sense, a “purely religious” concept of vocation. Weber

argues, however, that in the Pauline texts, *klēsis* indicates an attitude of “eschatological indifference” toward the question of whether some worldly occupations are more important, spiritually and salvationally, than others. To quote Weber, “Since everyone was awaiting the coming of the Lord, then let everyone remain in the estate in which the call of the Lord has found him, and continue to labor as before.”⁸ Weber shows how, in Luther, the meaning of vocation eventually shifts. Although Luther initially emphasized a kind of eschatological indifference in connection to God’s call, from the time of the Peasant Revolts, which were quite brutal on all sides, he began to connect vocation more directly with a duty to fulfill one’s worldly profession, whether religious or secular. He formulates a conception of vocation defined by God’s command to remain in, and fulfill the duties of, the worldly position one finds oneself in. This shift from indifference to diligence corresponds to Luther’s understanding of the spheres of creation and the providential nature of politics: one’s position in a worldly order corresponds to God’s calling insofar as that order is taken to be necessary to peace and integral to fulfilling the commandment of “brotherly love.” To quote Weber again, “the individual should remain once and for all in the station and calling in which God had placed him, and should restrain his worldly activity within the limits imposed by his established station in life.”⁹ The point I want to lift out is that in Weber we see a tracing of the meaning of vocation from an eschatological attitude of indifference to worldly affairs to an ethic of duty in one’s professional station corresponding to the interoperations of the spheres of creation in which the spiritual and the secular are distinguished, and therein separate, but guided by a common purpose of neighborly love.

The key to Weber’s analysis of Luther is 1 Corinthians 7:20: “Let each man abide in that calling wherein he was called (*en tē klēse hē ēklēthē*).” Following the Old Testament scholar Adalbert Merx, Weber argues that in this verse the term vocation does correspond more or less to the German concept of *Ruf*, meaning “stand,” referring to status or condition (for example, in a married state, or the condition of a servant). Weber in this way reads the verse as indicating something like an ontological split between the worldly station one finds oneself in and the salvation to which one is called. The presumption of this ontological split is important and should be kept in mind as a background against which the council’s work develops. In any case, according to Weber, vocation thus produces ontological separation in the name of an eschatological indifference. It is precisely this separation that begins to get taken for granted, and thereby covered over, in the Lutheran account of vocation.¹⁰ Worldly vocation, which remains a strict duty, begins to be separated from one’s salvation in God.

Giorgio Agamben challenges Weber’s reading. Elucidating the significance of *klēsis* differently, Agamben asks: “Is it correct to interpret the Pauline concept of

the call, like Weber does, as an expression of ‘eschatological indifference’ toward worldly conditions?”¹¹ Rather than the eschatological, *klēsis* on Agamben’s reading (following Jacob Taubes) indicates a messianic condition—it is a technical term of Paul’s messianic vocabulary. Crucial to Agamben’s analysis is that although *klēsis* puts in question the “factual” and “juridical” conditions of worldly activities and stations, it does not thereby point to another identity beyond these in connection to which one might take up a posture of indifference toward things worldly. That is to say, in putting things worldly into question *klēsis* does not therewith open up a kind of ontological separation, but rather, in Agamben’s terms, Paul’s messianic vocation “hollows out” and “nullifies” worldly vocations without replacing them with something else one might devote oneself to.¹² The call puts worldly vocations into permanent question, but not in the name of a nonworldly answer.

Agamben interprets 1 Corinthians 7:20 differently than Weber’s reading of Luther. Agamben notes that in the Vulgate, the fourth-century translation of the Bible, St. Jerome translates *en tēē klēse hē ēklēthē* as *qua vocatione vocatus est*. The key term here for Agamben is the Greek anaphoric pronoun *hē*, which Jerome renders *qua*, “as.” The crucial function of this term becomes apparent in subsequent verses. In 29–30 Paul’s text defines the messianic life by way of a series of revocations or nullifications: “those having wives may be as not having, and those weeping as not weeping, and those rejoicing as not rejoicing, and those buying as not possessing, and those using the world as not using it up.”¹³ Agamben interrogates the relation of verse 7:20 to verses 29–30. At the center of these lengthy efforts is his attention to the phrase “as not,” *hōs mē*. The meaning of Paul’s injunction to “abide in the calling as that to which one is called” is found in the *as not*. The injunction of verse 20 has a “peculiar tautegorical movement” that only makes sense in view of the *hōs mē*. One is called to revoke every worldly condition precisely as a means of remaining in that worldly condition while existing in critical tension with that condition. One remains in the calling to which one is called in a mode of perpetual critique. Vocation names a critical posture: one remains as not remaining.¹⁴

On Agamben’s reading, the messianic vocation puts into question all worldly conditions as a critical act of remaining in those conditions. Vocation is an enactment of revocation. This is simply to say that, for Agamben, *klēsis*, *vocatione*, is messianic and not eschatological, understanding eschatological as in some way otherworldly. Vocation as messianic vocation “signifies the expropriation of each and every juridical-factual property (circumcised/uncircumcised; free/slave; man/woman) under the form of the *as not*. This expropriation does not, however, found a new identity; the ‘new creature’ is none other than the use and messianic vocation of the old.”¹⁵ In this reading, vocation is neither a state of being nor an orientation

to a world beyond the world, nor can it be identified with any specific content or activity. It is, rather, an ontological disruption, a permanent revocation of the world without fleeing the world.

“*Vocatione*,” “vocation,” in *Gaudium et spes* indicates neither the ontological split of eschatological indifference, nor a coordinated sphere of existence, nor a messianic revocation. Vocation is not a call beyond the world, nor is it a call to remain in one’s station in order to help fulfill the coordinated order of the worldly and the spiritual, nor is it a matter of putting the world in question (although an understanding of “true human vocation” provides a standard by which to evaluate and reject activities in conflict with such a “true” vocation). The ontological character and temporality of vocation for the council fathers is different from either the eschatological or the messianic. It is *archonic*. To repeat what I noted in the introduction: combining the Greek *arkhōn* and *archē*, the term *archonic* carries a double meaning. In the first place it refers to origin, to a primordial origin; in the second place to it refers to judgment or governance.¹⁶ To characterize vocation as archonic is to say that its definition is found in its origin, its primordial origin. The meaning of vocation is primordial and thereby constitutive. It is not at all accidental, in the Thomistic sense of that term. Vocation is not something added on to a creature with an origin. Vocation is original. To characterize vocation as archonic is also to say that the principles that govern the proper form and ends of the calling are connected to and implied in its origins. In his reflections on the concept of the archonic, the theologian Ted Peters notes the subtle relation between origins and destiny at play in archonic conceptualization. To say that the essence of the human is archonic is not to say that it is either nonhistorical or static, although in some cases it might be both, as I will explain in my examination of the United Nations’ work on human rights. Rather, the archonic can be conceived in *genetic* as distinct from *epigenetic* terms.¹⁷ This means that the essence of things human might include or involve a developmental trajectory, but this trajectory is determined and governed by potentials that are inherent in the origin. The norm and metric of the human is present and set from the outset.

It follows that the concept *archonic* designates a way of being, an ontological mode, in which ends and origins have a synthetic and nonlinear relation to each other. They are synthetic in that destiny and origin are folded into each other; the one indicates and is constituted by the other. Their relation is nonlinear in that destiny is not a state subsequent to origins but rather is the actualization and completion of the rule anticipated and prescribed in the origin. It is in this sense that *vocatio* in *Gaudium et spes* is archonic. As archonic it is definitive of the human. The answer to the question *Quid est autem homo?* is, in the first place, the creature who has an archonic vocation.

The Human

Strictly speaking, the phrase “human vocation” in the Pastoral Constitution has an ontological referent. It refers to the notion that the human is called to be, is called into being. Vocation thus holds within it a double signification. To be called *into being*, of course, means to originate, to have origins. With regard to origins, vocation signifies a call into being. To be *called* into being means to be drawn toward an end, to be oriented to a purpose. In terms of ends, vocation signifies that the human originates according to a purpose. The Pastoral Constitution proposes that the original human purpose, the call into being, *vocatione hominis*, is unity with God. This proposition is consistent with the classical theological notion of *thēosis*, or divinization, the transformative process by which a human creature is called away from sin, from *hamartia*, literally “missing the mark,” and oriented toward its proper end, unity with the being of God. The human is called into being by God and needs to overcome the tendency to miss the mark in order to realize unity with the divine. The subtlety that needs to be kept track of is that the telos of union with God is proper to human origins and is in this sense properly human. It is a truth, a primary truth of things human—the *logos* of *anthropos*. Put in terms consistent with the writings of Thomas Aquinas, which informed the language of the Pastoral Constitution, the divine call establishes the inner principle that determines the proper ends of the human: that to which the human is, by nature, oriented. Vocation founds the nature of the human. The reciprocal site of human destiny is human origins. To use the more exact theological phrase (which does not appear in the Pastoral Constitution but which is implied throughout): the human is, by nature, called to the supernatural. It is for this reason that the human is said to be dignified. And it is for this reason that one can say, analytically, that the dignified human is archonic.

It is important to note that the term *dignity* in the pair human dignity is not, in fact, explicitly defined in the constitution. It is, however, conceptualized indirectly in that it is said to be the character of the human in its archonic vocation. This explains why the council fathers describe dignity both as a “noble destiny” and as “properly human.” It is vocational and therefore original. It is a divine attribution, but an attribution bestowed as a calling. Crucially for the council fathers, it is God that calls. Dignity is therefore a theological truth about things human in the strict sense that it is the *logos* of *theos* that establishes dignity. This means that dignity is not a conditional status or occasional estate—something to be achieved through human station. The call of the divine takes form in and as human being in its origins. Human being originates from a dignified destiny. But in this sense, to repeat the point, dignity is also properly anthropological: the *logos* of *anthropos* is the form of dignity. In this sense the human is in its embodied existence dignified—incarna-

tional in the Christian sense of the divine logos taking on flesh. Dignity (theologically and anthropologically) is archonic insofar as vocation is archonic.

The logic of all of this is captured by the following quote from the Pastoral Constitution: “The root reason for human dignity lies in man’s call to communion with God. From the very circumstance of his origin man is already invited to converse with God.”¹⁸ The archonic is being brought to articulation here. Human dignity, the council fathers tell us, has a root. It is the kind of thing that can be described by an organic analogy (elsewhere the constitution uses the term “seed”). The root of human dignity is the call to communion with God. At root, dignity consists in the human being united with the divine. Dignity is rooted—and this point is crucial to what is being figured here—so we must resist thinking that it is extrinsic to the human qua human. Dignity is the very circumstance—the event—of human origins. Dignity is properly rooted in the human while at the same time being divinely planted. Vocation is the site at which human origins and destiny are made a synthetic unity. Vocation is the site of human dignity.

One problem that arises out of this proposal of the synthetic unity of origins and ends will prove particularly troublesome for the council fathers—one could even venture that, pastorally and thereby politically and ethically, it is *the* problem. The problem is this: if human dignity is original but originates in a divine call, can dignity be recognized, declared, and defended without an appeal to the supernatural? Is dignity naturally apparent? Does one need to share a belief in a creating God in order to properly recognize dignity? The consequences for how this question is answered are high, practically and politically, as becomes clear in multiple subsequent post-Vatican II debates. The debate concerning whether Christians should make cause with non-Christian politics and the debate over the status of human embryonic research are two sites of controversy connected to this question. The problem is that if a divinely planted dignity is properly human, and if it can be recognized by those who do not share the faith, then what is the distinctive role and purpose of the church in relation to the defense of human dignity?

The archonic dignity of the human vocation thus introduces a subtle but difficult aspect of the pastoral challenge taken up in *Gaudium et spes*. The challenge, as John put it, is to constitute the pastoral relation between the church and the modern world in terms that are meaningful and comprehensible to the world—the veridictional challenge of how to speak the truth in a mode acceptable to the *ecclesia ad extra*. Can the vocational logic of the archonic be formulated in strictly anthropological terms, that is to say, terms that sever the theological from the anthropological? From the council fathers’ point of view the answer is certainly “no.” At the heart of the constitution’s understanding of vocation is a Christological formulation, as I will discuss below. This formulation constitutes one proposal for how

to think the relation between the properly anthropological and properly theological as integral. Nonetheless, the question will be pressed as to whether one needs to be Christian to recognize human dignity, in the sense put forward in the constitution, and therefore the question of whether the council fathers have actually met the demands entailed in bringing to articulation a figure of human dignity that facilitates a meaningful pastoral relation between the church and the modern world. The answer to this lies in how one goes about conceiving the relation of human nature and the supernatural.

Joseph Ratzinger, who would become Pope Benedict XVI, insisted during the debates that Christology (that is, the doctrine of Jesus as the Christ, the “anointed one,” the messiah) is the conceptual space within which the problem of the relation of nature and the supernatural has traditionally been taken up by the church—particularly when that problem is considered with attention to its anthropological dimensions.¹⁹ Ratzinger argued that the distinction St. Paul makes in the book of Romans between the first and second “Adam,” wherein Christ is “the new human,” is a privileged scriptural formula for how the Christological informs, and thereby determines, the anthropological. In this way, the Christological also provides the basis for understanding the church’s relation to things human; that is, the church’s relation to Jesus as the Christ informs the church’s relation to humans per se. Following Ratzinger’s lead, the authors of the Pastoral Constitution ultimately did articulate the relation of the church and the modern world using a Christological formula. The Christic illuminates and (theologically speaking) justifies the archonic.²⁰ The constitution reads: “The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of Him Who was to come, namely Christ the Lord. Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear. It is not surprising, then, that in Him all the aforementioned truths find their root and attain their crown.” Christ, one could say in reading this passage, is the exemplar of the archonic nature of the human. Christ is also the means by which the divinity of the archonic calling is made humanly clear and thereby provides orientation and actualization. Simply put: the Christological illumines and actualizes the anthropological and thereby indicates what the properly ecclesiastical relationship consists in. The archonic is explained by the Christic indicating the ecclesiastic.

Of course the veridictional question remains. In the church’s pastoral relation to the world, can the archonic ever be conceptually loosed from its theological moorings and in that way be offered to the world as anthropological common ground for a pastoral relation? To what extent does the Christological only show or demonstrate or even fully clarify that which is otherwise properly anthropological and

that which might be recognized or confirmed on extra- or nontheological grounds? The Pastoral Constitution does not provide an unambiguous answer, although it certainly purports to offer properly anthropological claims about things human. But for those outside the church this only begs the question of the necessary relation between anthropological and theological claims. This point cannot be stressed too much in terms of the legacy of pastoral and political difficulties this ambivalence opens up for the church, as the work of John Milbank and other contemporary theologians has subsequently made clear.²¹ A basic supposition of the Pastoral Constitution is that it is defining the human as the human is in itself and, therefore, in the world. Dignity is inherent and intrinsic. This is really what is at stake. The question is: can the human be known and therefore properly cared for in its inherent and intrinsic essence without reference to the divine? If not, if dignity is “fully secular,” how can the church, by way of the magisterium, establish a pastoral relation to the *ecclesia ad extra* anchored in dignity? Once justified and explained theologically, can human dignity then simply be declared—or, to use the United Nations’ famous formulation, “recognized”—in nontheological terms? The problem of the pastoral relation of the church and the modern world is predicated on the notion that the human such as it is in need of the church’s pastoral care. The question here is: how do the council fathers shift from the Christological to extratheological claims about things anthropological such that this need for pastoral care is legible on the part of the world?

Several answers are given in the course of the constitution, all of which perform a similar kind of conceptual work. That work attempts to demonstrate that the *experience* of being a human in the contemporary world, upon examination, confirms an adequacy, a fittedness, a necessary relation, between the nature of things human in themselves and the pastoral capacities of the church. Moreover, it attempts to demonstrate a fittedness that overcomes or bypasses the veridictional challenge precisely by refusing the idea that there is a meaningful split between the genuinely anthropological and the genuinely theological.

The principal move in accomplishing this conceptual work involves a turn to what the authors of the constitution frame as the universally existential. This move is not unfamiliar in diagnoses of the modern world and is, in fact, consistent with many of the modes of modern reason the constitution took itself to be putting into question. The authors of the Pastoral Constitution assert that the modern human individual, quite apart from the church, senses that it is not only a bodily entity existing for the sake of “the city of man,” for “material existence” alone.²² This means, among other things, that whatever advances might be made in the “practical sciences” and in efforts to control or manage material existence, humans remain aware of the fact that intellectual life is not confined to “observable data alone.” The

human, rather, is a creature that can and does “with genuine certitude attain to reality itself as knowable.”²³ By its nature—*intellectualis natura*—the human can pass through visible realities, from what is seen to what is unseen. The human is a creature whose destiny is in its nature, one who “is perfected by wisdom, for wisdom gently attracts the mind of man to a quest and a love for what is true and good.”²⁴ The human individual in the modern world senses the need for this quest and senses that the conditions of the modern world do not provide an orientation to what is ultimately true and good beyond the observable.

There is, of course, something classical about this assertion—although this classical assertion carries an altogether contemporary significance. Speaking in a scholastic vernacular, the council fathers state that the human is a creature of intellectual nature that can therefore only find its proper ends in those things that include the fulfillment of its intellectual nature. A certain strategic fashioning or adjusting of things anthropological is going on here. Because the conceptualization is scholastic and therefore not particularly distinctive, it can slip by without much notice. But the authors’ formulation is really quite crucial to how the church justifies (that is, brings into alignment) its relation to the modern world. If the pastoral question is *what is anthropos such that the magisterium of the church can, as a doctrinal organ, be understood as both fitted and necessary as a pastoral venue for the human qua human?*—then the answer begins: *the human is properly and anthropologically a creature of intellectual nature, of an intellectual dignity.* In the modern world this intellectual dignity is not altogether fulfilled by material events, needs, or desires. As such, the pastoral question is this: what must be done, what is it that is called for, anthropologically? The church must provide discernment needed to orient human activities toward their proper end in the midst of other false ends. The magisterium must discriminate which activities are appropriate, necessary, and even urgent given the intellectual nature of the human. How can and should such pastoral work be accomplished? In the midst of the modern world the terms of the archonic must be clarified. The modern must be converted—turned—to the archonic so that its excesses and deficiencies are made plain and so that appropriate reordering can begin.

The council fathers ask: if the human is called as an intellectual creature, what can this mean if not that God wills and makes the human to be a rational soul, an *anima rationalis*? To be human is to be animated according to an intellectual vocation. This means that the human is also marked with the responsibility and challenges of being that creature whose nature is such that it is eminently capable of acting against its own nature. As an intellectual animal the human is made to be capable of exercising self-control. It is in this way, by taking a hand in its own formation, that the human pursues its call. The vocation is original; actualization involves the exercise of freedom in relation to rational being. Freedom here must be

understood as a term of capacity: the capacity of the creature to pursue the Creator. This capacity requires orientation: knowledge of how that pursuit needs to be carried out. Knowledge of the Creator facilitates and actualizes the capacity to pursue the Creator. The intellectual soul is called to exercise the capacity of self-orientation in the pursuit of God. This pursuit thus requires the cultivation of capacity and proper knowledge, knowledge of the soul, knowledge of the world in which the soul comes into being, and knowledge of God. “Human dignity” the council fathers conclude, “demands” (the archonic demands) that the *humanae personae* act according to knowledge and freedom and not according to ignorance or compulsion. The interface between things human and things ecclesiastical begins to take shape. Dignity is made right when, “emancipating himself [*sic*] from all captivity to passion, [man] pursues his goal in a spontaneous choice of what is good, and procures for himself through effective and skillful action, apt helps to that end.”²⁵

At the interface between the church and the modern world, the human, as a vocational being, is in need of apt help. The vocational being must procure help in pursuit of the “truly human” goal of communion with the divine. Why apt help? After all, the human is fashioned for such communion. A Thomistic answer might be given: help is needed precisely because the human, oriented to the supernatural, is that peculiar animal encumbered by the fact that it is not capable of perfecting its own nature. The council fathers, however, propose that apt help is needed because human freedom and knowledge have been compromised by “sin,” *hamartia* “missing the mark.” Because the human has been “damaged by sin, only by the aid of God’s grace can he bring such a relationship with God into full flower.”²⁶ “Damaged by sin”: this conception of incapacity provoked disagreement among the council fathers as well as other church theologians. It suggests that without sin, the human called to communion with God would in fact be capable of accomplishing such communion. It can be inferred—and such inference has been made to much effect—that the *inability* to actualize supernatural ends naturally is not properly anthropological; it is hamartiological. That is, inability is not a problem of the nature of things human; it is a problem of sin. This suggests that in the absence of sin the human would be that creature, who as such, would be capable of God.

In any case, the human by nature is that creature who by God’s grace is capable of bringing a relation with God, that is, a relation of dignity, into full flower. The first pole or vector point of the human-humanity relation is conceived by the council fathers in terms both striking and subtle: “*vocatio hominis ultima revera una sit, scilicet divina*”—“the ultimate vocation of the human is in fact one, and divine.”²⁷ The ultimate vocation is one: it is definitive; it defines what it is to be human. The human is that one with this ultimate vocation. And this ultimate vocation is divine: union with God, while nonetheless remaining a properly human vocation. Divine

call; human origin. "Such is the mystery of man," the Pastoral Constitution puts it, "and it is a great one, as seen by believers in the light of Christian revelation."²⁸ Origin and destiny: Christic light, archonic being.

Humanity

The human is the creature who has an archonic vocation. Before moving to the second half of the pastoral problem, that is, the question of the church as fitted to the human and not only the human as fitted to the church, I need to examine the second pole or element of human dignity: humanity, the human as community.

The Pastoral Constitution asserts that the Christian, oriented to God in Christ, represents the actualization ("the first fruits") of that which is definitive for all humans ("the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one"). The "one" characteristic of human vocation carries a double meaning. The first meaning I have already noted: that singular condition which specifies and distinguishes what counts as human. Or, in the words of the constitution, it is the feature that indicates the "fully human." The second meaning concerns the second pole of the object of the church's pastoral attentions: human vocation is only fully actual as human unity. The human in its full actuality is a "social" reality. The ultimate vocation of the human is to be one not only with God but with other humans as well. To be fully human is to be one with other humans in God.

I explained that according to the Pastoral Constitution's diagnosis, humans desire more than material comforts. They desire a "full and free life worthy of man." This desire indicates, in the first place, a natural, that is to say, inherent longing for God in the fulfillment of the intellectual nature. In the second place, it indicates "a kind of universal community": a natural desire for the fulfillment of a social reality. If dignity is the unity of the individual human in the integral relation of origin and call; it is also the unity of all humans insofar as they all participate in this same origin and call.²⁹

"For by his innermost nature man is a social being, and unless he relates himself to others he can neither live nor develop his potential."³⁰ In this statement the Pastoral Constitution offers a double allusion, bringing to mind both the biblical passage from Genesis 1:27 ("So God created man in his own image . . . male and female he created them") and book 1, chapter 2 of Aristotle's *Politica* ("man is by nature a political animal"). The council fathers propose that the human is created with a social nature (*natura socialis*) and not in isolation. In a similar fashion, the human is saved as a social creature and not in isolation. The terms of origins and the terms of ends again coincide. The point of coincidence in this case is community. This communal coincidence is formulated in terms of the problem of salvation (*salutis*). Understood as a historical reality (*historiae salutis*), salvation is formulated

as the “social” concurrence and coherence of origins and ends—a socioarchonic coherence: “from the beginning of salvation history [God] has chosen men not just as individuals but as members of a certain community.”³¹

Human salvation is matter of “*dynamismo socialis*,” social dynamics (sometimes translated as “socialization”). In the context of the Pastoral Constitution, social dynamics or socialization refers to a process by which humanity’s “innermost nature” increasingly comes to historical actuality—“an evolution toward unity.”³² The modern world, according to the constitution, is characterized by an increase in occasions for socialization. “An evolution toward unity” is facilitated by intensified civic, economic, and technological interdependence. Modern dynamics of social interdependence thus share an affinity with ontological dynamics of being-in-community. They are linked in such a way that occasions of increased interdependence offer distinctive forms of, and opportunities for, the salvational actualization of humanity. The modern world, in this way, is both theologically and anthropologically auspicious.

On one level this diagnosis is striking, even perplexing. Much of Catholic social teaching in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries portrays the social dynamics of the modern world as fragmentary and divisive and not, in fact, as an opportunity for the greater unification of humanity. In this light, it is worth underscoring that the council fathers’ point here is only that these social dynamics can be cast as an occasion for an accomplishing of unity. Social dynamics occasioned by way of increased “technological interdependence” can be made to serve as an “aid” to the human in “responding to his destiny” and as an “aid” in responding to “his full spiritual dignity.”³³ Human dignity is, once again, connected to destiny. Dignity and destiny have an inner relation. That inner relation, however, does not turn on “interdependence,” per se, but on the proper occasions for socialization, an “aid” to the proper *dynamismo socialis*. Human dignity, it thus goes without saying, is not accomplished by means of technological interdependence—indeed, dignity is not accomplished at all. Dignity is, rather, responded to. It is intrinsic, albeit in such a way as in need of actualization. Nonetheless, the portrayal of the condition of the modern world in *Gaudium et spes* is consistent with John’s opening address; that is, it is far more positive in terms of the question of the social in the modern world than in previous social teachings of the church.

The council fathers distinguish human dignity from the dynamics of interdependence characteristic of the modern world while also connecting the possibility of actualizing dignity to those dynamics. A conceptual connection is made between the modern and the archonic. This connection is vital to the logic of the relation between the church and the world put forward by the Pastoral Constitution. If the church is an apt help to the human with regard to the fulfillment of the intellectual

nature, it is also an apt help with regard to the proper fulfillment of the dynamics of socialization. The challenge, of course, is to figure out what this means in practice: how can the church go about the work of helping to achieve the proper actualization of human dignity in the unity of humanity through the interdependencies created by the modern world? Such a response, whatever else it consists in, involves facilitating the actualization of dignity (keeping in mind that facilitation here consists in being guided by that which is established vocationally in and as creation, and is, in this sense, primordial). The creature is called forth. The question is how to respond to that call in a manner consistent with the human as a social being. The twist—and this moves us toward the justification for a revised sense of pastoral power—is that human dignity as a call to a destiny, a destiny characterized by social dynamics, is a call that can be properly as well as improperly responded to. The church's pastoral care must consist in helping to determine the difference.

The Pastoral Constitution tells us that the proper response to the “full spiritual dignity,” for which the modern world might be made an occasion and an aid, is to cultivate “interpersonal relationships”: relations between persons.³⁴ Again, on one level, this is not a surprising proposition. Since Immanuel Kant the problem of how to relate as persons has been put forward as a challenge and task for modern political and ethical thought. But there is something unusual going on here under the cover of familiar language. The human person being imagined here is quite different from the Kantian figure of the rational and self-governing being. It is a creature called to communion with God. *Socialis hominis*, the social human, is a creature called to communion with God and saved as “one family.” The human is vocational twice over—a double anthropology of the call: by nature called to communion with God, by nature called to communion with and as those called to communion with God. *Klēsis* and *ekklēsia*. Although the modern world offers opportunities for interpersonal relationships, it only offers opportunities. Technological interdependence facilitates a kind of convergence or proximity. It needs to be made interpersonal.

The question, the pastoral question, is how to convert interdependence into unity, how to make the modern world an occasion for a successful response to dignity. The first step is that the archonic vocation of *socialis hominis* must be discerned in the midst of the modern world—the signs of the times must be “properly read,” as the Pastoral Constitution puts it. Read correctly, the modern world can then be made an occasion of proper response to archonic unity. The council fathers propose that a kind of ontological conversion is called for. A turn from one ontological mode to another: the modern converted to unity in the archonic. Such conversion requires discernment. But where can such equipment of discernment and conversion come from? The answer, of course, is the church in its own experience of unity, in the predicate of its being as catholic, as universal. “Thanks to her relationship

with Christ,” the church can exist and act as “a sacramental sign and an instrument of intimate union with God, and of the unity of the whole human race.”³⁵

Once again the archonic and the Christic are brought into a kind of revelatory alignment. The church knows what human unity should consist in because of its experience of unity in Jesus understood as the Christ. What it knows, what the Christic reveals, is again properly anthropological. And the veridictional question resurfaces: if the church knows what it knows about the social nature of the human theologically (“called and saved by God not as individuals but as community”), can this truth be recognized and confirmed extratheologically, that is, apart from the church’s Christocentric vision of things? The challenge, after all, is not just to conceive of a pastoral relation between the church and those in addition to the church. Simple condemnation could accomplish as much. The challenge, rather, is to conceive of a pastoral relation in terms sensible to the modern. Can archonic dignity, discerned and experienced by the church Christologically, be justified or confirmed apart from an explicit reference to the Christological?

The question ultimately turns on the council fathers’ reading of the biblical command to love, the biblical confirmation of God’s love for humanity, and the biblical notion of the *imago dei*—the idea that humans are created in the image of God. God, the council fathers state, has concern for everyone. If one is created, one is created by God and one is called by God. Furthermore, God in calling humans into being wills that all those called should constitute (should act and exist as) a family. Family here means “spirit of brotherhood.” Spirit of brotherhood, in turn, means mutual communion. God’s will for mutual communion is an ontological predicate of the creation of things human. This ontological predicate is articulated in terms of the *imago dei*: humans are created in the image of God. The God in whose image humans are created wills that all humans should share concern for one another. The vocational, ontological, and ethical converge: “God, Who ‘from one man has created the whole human race and made them live all over the face of the earth’ (Acts 17:26), all men are called to one and the same goal, namely God Himself.”³⁶ The biblical commandments to love God and to love one’s neighbor are bound together in an archonic knot.

The commandment to love is thus, in its turn, connected to human vocation. But as a human call, it is a commandment held to be most fully realized by the church in Jesus as the Christ. The council fathers quote the Gospel of John, when Jesus, speaking to God of his relation to God, prays that his disciples “all may be one . . . as we are one.” The Pastoral Constitution suggests that in this prayer Jesus “opened up vistas [otherwise] closed to human reason.”³⁷ What vistas are these? What truth about itself does humanity not know through its own reason? The truth that it does not otherwise know is that there is an ontological likeness between the

union of the divine persons—the Christian belief in the unity of God as the Son and the Father in the Spirit—and the unity of humans with one another. The first conclusion to be drawn from this is that humanity is a synthetic unity of persons. Like the Christian trinitarian view of God, humanity is, ontologically speaking, a community. The second conclusion is that this ontological state of affairs cannot be fully realized (“man cannot fully find himself”) except through *caritas*, through love, understood as the giving of oneself to another.

The council fathers’ Christological claim, as one sees in the relation of origin and destiny, is put forward again as a properly anthropological claim. This means that theology, whatever special province of insight and discourse it might otherwise claim for itself, really serves to clarify that which is open to experience and reason—if only opaquely and ambiguously so. After all, as the council fathers repeat at several points in the Pastoral Constitution, the church merely brings to light an “innermost truth.” Here, for a second time, the modern world is cast as auspicious. The increasing interdependence of the world today (“becoming more unified every day”) gives rise to an increasing recognition of the truth and importance of *caritas*, charity, the biblical vision of love and care for God and neighbor.³⁸ What is more, charity in this sense is put forward as anthropologically definitive. The provocative language of the Pastoral Constitution reads like this: the fathers surmise that *generis humani* today is characterized by a “sense of responsibility” for existing as *universos homines*; the human species as a universal people. The interdependence of the modern world occasions a reconsideration of the social nature of humanity on a universal scale. Echoing John’s opening address to the council, *Gaudium et spes* proposes that “Now a man can scarcely arrive at the needed sense of responsibility, unless his living conditions allow him to become conscious of his dignity.”³⁹ What does such consciousness of dignity consist in? The need to “rise to one’s destiny.” And what is this destiny that one rises to in the consciousness of dignity? “Spending” oneself for God and for others: *caritas* is a vector through which human dignity becomes conscious and human destiny is actualized.

The Pastoral Constitution suggests that humans in the modern world, quite apart from the church’s teachings, are in an oblique fashion already on the way to actualizing their proper destiny. Given this reading of the modern, it might be fair to ask: then why is the church needed? Is it the church’s role only to confirm that *anthropos* is a creature made for communion and community? The constitution gives two responses, one following from the other: the first is taken to be evident in itself; the second is taken to be evident as an implication of the first. The first concerns social dynamics and sin. In considering the constitution’s formulation of the human as origin and destiny, I noted the problem of capacity/incapacity. I suggested that the incapacity to actualize the supernatural ends to which the human is naturally called

is not, strictly speaking, an anthropological problem. It is, rather, formulated as a hamartiological problem—a problem of sin. A similar kind of formulation bears on the relation of modern technological interdependence and the actualization of interpersonal community. The constitution offers a positive assertion: the “laws of social life” are “written into man’s moral and spiritual nature.”⁴⁰ The constitution also offers a negative assertion: the capacity to read and interpret rightly and act on those moral and spiritual laws has been compromised—“crippled,” to use the constitution’s term. The capacity to live by the law of social nature (that is, charity) has been crippled by the same modern conditions that occasion socialization. Modern technological developments have brought with them “extreme poverty” as well as “many of life’s comforts.” The modern, however auspicious, is also hamartiologically marked.⁴¹

The second response to the question “can humanity rise to unity by nature?” concerns the question of the extent to which the church’s teaching authority is really needed. If humanity is naturally called to community, is the magisterium needed only as a kind of emergency measure—as a response to a world crippled by sin? To what extent is the capacity for communion proper to humanity but only disrupted by the vicissitudes of human sin? To what extent can the terms of such disruption be discerned apart from the church and view of salvation history? Is the problem modernity? If it were not for sin—occasioned in this case by the modern world but not unique to the modern world—would humanity naturally be capable of a supernatural unity of persons in God and with one another? This string of problems emerges forcefully following the council, when the pastoral propositions of the constitution begin to be put to work. With regard to the Pastoral Constitution the question concerns what might be called the design of pastoral equipment. With regard to design, the council fathers seem to take it as a matter of course that the church’s “apt help” is still humanly required. The laws of social life may be opaque to the modern world, but they can be read and interpreted rightly by the church. Humanity needs to discriminate and order rightly its technological interdependence so that it can be converted to interpersonal unity. It needs equipment for the conversion of the modern to the archonic, and this equipment consists in discerning and interpreting the ways in which the sin as well as the opportunities of the modern world can be made into a reality of human unity. Humanity as a unity of humans, like the human as a unity of origin and destiny, is in need of the church’s interpretation and orientation.

The constitution asks: *Quid Ecclesia venit prout ipsa, in hoc mundo existit et cum eo vivit atque agit?* What is the church inasmuch as she exists in the world, living and acting with it? The church can be thought of as that venue which displays for the world the character of authentic human unity, a unity “unbreakably rooted in

the Holy Spirit.” To quote again from the constitution concerning the relation of origins and destiny: “from the beginning of salvation history [God] has chosen men not just as individuals but as members of a certain community.”⁴² If the human is saved as a social creature, then the object of the church’s pastoral care is the human called to be a member of a human community. Such pastoral orientation does not supersede what was indicated earlier. The object of the church’s pastoral care is also the human as that creature called to union with God. Neither the human alone nor humanity alone. Rather, elements of differing scale: the individual and the collective are taken up together as the human who by nature is humanity.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH AS SHE EXISTS IN THE WORLD?

What is human being? A being called to communion with God and unity with one another. Origin and destiny: the human is that creature with a call. The “supreme dignity” of the human vocation establishes the human as an archonic being. The first half of the problem of the church and the modern world is: what is the human such that it is in need of the church? I now want to turn to the second half of the problem: what is the church that it is pastorally fitted to the contemporary world? A first answer has already been implied: the church is the *ekklesia*—a venue of those who have been called. But how is it that the Pastoral Constitution imagines the church as a venue of those who have been called, and given that humanity is also defined by a call to unity, how is the church distinctively suited to the pastoral care of human dignity?

The Purpose of Pastoral Power

The Pastoral Constitution puts things human in question first in terms of the human person, then as the human community. It is in view of the doubling that the constitution takes up the question of the church. Anthropology and ecclesiology, as suggested by the council fathers’ Christology, are taken to form a connected pair: a mutually determinative pair forming a single pastoral ensemble. In view of this mutual determination, the constitution now takes up the problem from the other side: “What is the Church inasmuch as she exists in the world, living and acting with it?”

On a certain level and at a cursory glance the question may not be particularly striking or, for that matter, engaging for those not part of the Christian ecclesia or proximate to it. Moreover, the initial response—Trinitarian and otherworldly—reinforces the sense that nothing theologically new is in play in the constitution’s formulations: “Coming forth from the eternal Father’s love, founded in time by Christ the Redeemer and made one in the Holy Spirit, the Church has a saving and an eschatological purpose which can be fully attained only in the future world.”⁴³

But the question is quite striking if we pause to consider the suppositions at work in it. The church acknowledges about itself that it exists in the world. But what is the church *as a venue that exists in the world?* The question was a point of methodological and ontological blockage for the committees drafting the pastoral constitution, as I noted in the last chapter. The church, on the one hand, is founded in view of a salvation that can only be experienced “in the world to come.” But that future salvation now needs to be considered in light of the fact that the church is actually constituted in the world. This means, first of all, that the council fathers needed to make sense of how it is that the church participates in the very characteristics that define things human. Moreover, making sense of this participation would appear to solve a number of conceptual problems given the pastoral question at hand—and it no doubt does. But it also introduces the difficulty of thinking about what the church is if it not only offers a future but also belongs to the world.

From the opening lines of the Pastoral Constitution the church is framed as having a participatory being in and with the world. “Why are the joys of the world also the joys of the followers of Christ?” it asks. It answers: because the followers of Christ are human; that which is human concerns them.⁴⁴ The church, one is given to understand, is bound up with the world—its histories, its ends, and its problems. The church is a venue that is in the world. The proposition is more controversial than it might sound. There were, after all, many other answers that could have been given. The church could be the magisterium as a priestly class. The church could be that reality to which the world is called, out of itself. Instead the church is said to consist of the followers of Christ who are “humans.” The church is composed of those creatures discussed in the first section of the Pastoral Constitution. It is composed of those who are “members of the earthly city who have a call to form the family of God.” The church is not composed of those who are defined in distinction to the world. The difference between Christians and others is that Christians are cast as those who have formally responded to the twofold call to union with God and communion with others and, in this sense, are anthropologically ahead of the game (if one can be “ahead” in archonic matters). This means that whatever the church is, it is not foreign to the world. The church has been “constituted and structured as a society in this world” by Christ and is equipped “by appropriate means for visible and social union.”⁴⁵ If the church is ontologically suited to pastoral care of the world, this is the case in the first place because it is in the world. This must at least suggest that the church, like the world and with the world, is characterized by an archonic mode of being. Its ends must be found in its origins and its origins in its ends.

A second supposition of the idea that the church in some sense has its being in the world is the idea that the world’s activities, while perhaps distinct from the church’s

activities, are nevertheless also in some way the church's activities. The church acts with and in the world. Pastorally, what can this mean? What is the church as a pastoral venue that acts in the world with the world? Traditional answers might include: the church acts in the world to rectify the souls of the deviant and to shepherd the conduct of the faithful. But how would such an answer constitute acting *with the world*? From the opening address of the council, John called for a quite different form of pastoral relation. Condemnation as a mode of relating to the world was more or less taken off the table, and pastoral care for the modern world was basically distinguished as a separate problem from care of the faithful. It was a basic premise of the council—disputed and even refused on some fronts—that the church could no longer sustain a relation to the modern world in which the world was taken as apostate such that it was the church's primary responsibility to demand its return and then vigilantly to guard the flock. More important still is the pastoral challenge raised by *Gaudium et spes* itself: the object of the church's pastoral activity in the world is human dignity understood as a primordial call. The question "what is the church inasmuch as it acts with the world?" can only be answered thus: the church, in the world, cares for human dignity. This means, among other things, that the activity of the world should also consist of care for human dignity. To suggest that the human, by nature, is called to the supernatural and that dignity is found in that call is also to suggest that humans should, qua humans, care for dignity. The question of what the church is and does becomes the question of why and how dignity needs to be cared for by the church and why the pastorate is uniquely capable of such care.

The council fathers propose that the church knows something about the world that the world does not know about itself. The church knows something about the world that the world does not fully know, and where it partially knows, it does not yet fully grasp the significance of what it knows. The church knows that "The earthly city and the heavenly city penetrate each other."⁴⁶ In human history this fact remains obscure. Sin, the constitution suggests, makes this fact opaque. The phrasing here is classical; the meaning, however, takes its significance in relation to a contemporary problem. The notion that the heavenly city and earthly city interpenetrate is a reworking of the Augustinian insight that human affairs are created according to a divine order. The church has received this notion "in herself." The church has received into herself the actualization of participation in divine life as the actualization of an anthropological potential. It is in this actualization that it has the capacity to help facilitate the actualization of an anthropological potential in the world.

When the council fathers state that the church has a "saving purpose" and that this saving purpose is proper to what the church is, it is clear what they are really saying: the church is called to communicate archonic life. Recall that in its clas-

sical theological meaning communicate refers to the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist—a ritual held to be an ontological participation with Jesus in the taking of the wine and the bread in the Christian Mass. The meaning of communication is slightly different here while also retaining a sacramental overtone. The church's saving purpose in relation to the world is to share the life that is properly anthropological, though perhaps only potentially and not yet actually so. And how will such communication be achieved? In the words of the Pastoral Constitution, it will be achieved by casting the "light of that life over the entire earth," thereby "healing and elevating . . . the dignity of the person" and also strengthening "the seams of human society." An archonic light will illuminate the need for and the means of living in accordance to an archonic mode of being. "Through her individual matters and her whole community, the Church believes she can contribute greatly toward making the family of man and its history more human."⁴⁷ An unfamiliar, though not totally novel, notion in the history of ecclesiology: the church as what makes the human more human—and not, strictly speaking, through religious conversion. This is the purpose of a pastoral relation to the modern world.

The Modern World

The specification of the purpose of a pastoral relation, however, does not answer the questions regarding the mode and form of pastoral practice. How is it that the church, acting with the world, actually goes about helping to make human dignity actual? The Pastoral Constitution's answer involves three components. The first is proclamation. The church proclaims "the noble destiny of man." The church proclaims the dignity of human ends. The second is to champion. The church champions "the Godlike seed which has been sown in him." The church champions the Godlike origins of the human. The third, by way of the first two, is that the church offers honest assistance. The church offers honest assistance in "fostering that brotherhood of all men which corresponds to this destiny of theirs."⁴⁸ The church proclaims and champions the human in its destiny and origin and in the integral relation between destiny and seed. It thereby is able to discern what, in any given situation, is needed to secure the dignity of humanity.

The Pastoral Constitution's diagnosis of the modern world—its reading of the signs of the times—is that human dignity is at risk. One of the curious features of the Pastoral Constitution is that the human per se is never really defined as a creature in need of pastoral care. The human creature per se is created in a call from God. If the actualization or proper response to that call is lacking, this is not because the human creature is lacking. The problem, rather, is that the archonic, as the enfolding of origin and destiny, is blocked or violated. Such blockage or violation is not the result of something native to the human. It is the result of sin.

Sin is treated in a rather precise fashion by the Pastoral Constitution. Whereas the human as archonic is primordial and destined and therefore not defined by the modern world, it nonetheless finds itself inhabiting a world that is modern. This world, which is not primordial or destined, troubles the archonic by creating conditions wherein humans “miss the mark.” The modern world can be thought of as a zone in which the archonic takes form but that is not, ontologically speaking, coincident with the archonic. The modern world is thus always occasional for the archonic in the sense that it is an occasion for the actualization of the archonic and it is an occasion for the blockage or deformation of the archonic. The problem for the human in the world is how to live in such a way as to fit the demands of the day to the demands of the archonic.

As I have already explained, according to the Pastoral Constitution’s diagnosis the modern world is auspicious, anthropologically speaking. To be auspicious is to be marked by the promise of success, to be favorable, propitious. The justification offered by John for holding an ecumenical council was precisely that the modern world is marked by the promise of success. It is marked by the promise of success on two fronts. It is marked by the promise of success in the human individual’s realization of communion with the supernatural. There is a promise of success on this first front for several reasons. In the face of rapid and profound technological, economic, and civic changes characteristic of the modern world, people are inquiring into the meaning of human life. Despite the tremendous violence characteristic of twentieth-century political and economic developments, people are more conscious and committed to the dignity of all humans. On a second front, the modern today is marked by the promise of success in attaining to the unity of the human family, which is definitive of human social nature. I have already discussed this above, so I do not need to say much here, other than to repeat that in the assessment of the Pastoral Constitution technological interdependence appears to be turning attention and efforts to the task of forging a worldwide community. If peace can be defined as the unity of peoples in the actualization of humanity (which it is in the Pastoral Constitution), then the modern is auspicious in that interdependence offers an occasion for peace. The modern world is characterized by the occasion to become human and to become humanity. On two fronts the modern world is anthropologically auspicious.

The authors of the Pastoral Constitution could not, of course, overlook the excesses and deficiencies of the modern world. If auspicious, the modern world is also inauspicious. It is also marked by the possibility that the future is not promising, that the occasion will not be found advantageous but will rather prove to be unfavorable and ominous. Were the modern world only auspicious, then the church’s pastoral task could be limited to proclamation, celebration, and patience. It may be

the case that “stricken with wonder at its own discoveries and power,” humans today are raising questions about “the place and role of man in the universe, about the meaning of its individual and collective strivings, and about the ultimate destiny of reality and of humanity.”⁴⁹ It may also be the case that the fact of such questioning offers the promise of success in answering these questions. But it is equally the case that whatever else defines it, the modern world is a space of life in which humans are left asking questions about their place and role, the meaning of their strivings, and about their ultimate destiny. Today, the constitution insists, echoing other diagnoses of modernity, humans are unsure of themselves.

Similarly, on a social front, the world of today may offer occasions for unity. But it is also the case that the world of today is marked by tensions and strife that provide the warrant for greater unity. As the concrete destiny of humanity becomes “all of a piece,” opportunities abound for exploitation and domination. Intensifications of interdependence are also occasions for the intensification of relations of power. All of this means that on two fronts the modern world can also be read as inauspicious, anthropologically speaking: humans and humanity are in need of apt help.⁵⁰

Put simply, the modern world is “at once powerful and weak.”⁵¹ It is powerful in that unprecedented dominion is being extended over space and time. This dominion is being conducted through and facilitated by technological interventions. Its zones of application include “biology, psychology, the social, the political, and the future.”⁵² Such interventions ameliorate health and well-being and function to accelerate interdependence. It is weak in that despite having produced the means for expanding welfare, the modern world is ignorant “of the terms of true welfare.” Scientific and technological “strivings to investigate ourselves” leave us “unsure of ourselves.” Having probed the depths of “mind and society,” modern humans are paralyzed and uncertain with regard to the question of who they are and who they need to become. As a result, rapid technological changes, scientific and social, have begun to “recoil” on the humans who bring these changes about. “Recoil” here means that humans, while capable of technological expansion, have become incapable of a corresponding spiritual development. Such a state of affairs produces a “crisis of growth.” What counts as appropriate and worthwhile in terms of “decisions,” “desires,” “thinking,” and “acting” is largely blocked. In short, “man [*sic*] is putting questions to himself.” And the human is putting itself in question.⁵³

Of course the problem is not only occasional. “Sin” is not only a matter of circumstance. All of these difficulties occasioned by the modern world are catalyzed by a kind of constitutive trouble. In the course of their diagnosis, the council fathers invoke a familiar Thomistic-Aristotelian problem: the human is “summoned to a higher life”; however, the human also experiences a range of desires, some of which correspond to this higher life and some of which do not. Now, with the amenities of

the modern world ready to hand, the human experience of multiple desires has been amplified. The modern human “feels itself to be boundless in desires.” Conflicted desire is catalyzed by the multiplication of opportunities to fulfill desire. Such a state of affairs, like other ethically fraught arrangements, requires careful discernment, the cultivation of virtue, as well as vigilant denial. Insofar as humans are sinful and ignorant, the multiplication of opportunities for choice and the growth in capacity as well as incapacity can leave them further from where they should be: less happy, more blind, more divided, more discordant, lacking in serenity and emancipation, convinced that rule over the world and others will satisfy, and so on. What does such a state of affairs amount to? “Many think that human existence is devoid of total meaning beyond the ingenuity of the individual alone.”

What is interesting here is the conclusion, which the council fathers draw from this state of affairs, a conclusion that effectively splits the difference between those bishops who embraced John’s optimism about things modern and those bishops who insisted on excess and deficiency as the modern world’s defining characteristics. The modern human is cast as divided: it experiences an increased capacity for technical intervention while also experiencing a decreased capacity to understand the significance and to manage the ramifications of those interventions. At the line of this division a lack of meaning is identified. This lack of meaning is taken as an indication that, although humans today are putting things human to question, they are not finding satisfactory answers. This lack redounds to an ignorance of human origins and destiny. It redounds to an inability to respond appropriately to full human dignity. The human in the modern world does not know what to think or what to do. It does not understand how to satisfy its own nature, personally or in terms of community. The point made is that the modern world, as such, does not indicate how to discern the relation and therefore does not facilitate the capacity to respond to the relation of natural origins and supernatural ends.

Such capacity requires understanding the archonic human vocation as the innermost truth and innermost good of things human. In principle such truth is available to everyone: it is, after all, truth concerning the nature of human being. Humans in the modern world, however, suffer from vocational ignorance and thereby suffer anthropological compromise. The modern world, as an anthropological occasion, does not illuminate the integrity of origin and destiny. And where the modern world functions as an occasion for generating distrust, enmity, conflict, and hardship, it therein serves to obscure the integrity of origin and destiny. Today the archonic is obscured. Not absent, but obscured, and insofar as it is obscured, compromised.

If the authors of the Pastoral Constitution thought that the archonic was compromised in the modern world, they were also convinced that humans today know

that something is not right. Hence the world seems to be marked by openness to a pastoral relation, and hence despite the difficulties and deficiencies of the modern world, it remains auspicious. Following John, the authors of the Pastoral Constitution proposed that two convictions shape the modern world, and both convictions continue to intensify. The first is “the conviction . . . that humanity can and should increasingly consolidate its control over creation.”⁵⁴ This conviction, however, is coupled with a growing belief that “it devolves on humanity to establish a political, social, and economic order which will growingly serve man and help individuals as well as groups to affirm and develop the dignity proper to them.” Aspiring to technical control and affirmative of a proper dignity. The problem is how to interface these convictions such that humanity can live by and develop the potential of its “innermost nature.” Recall that the term “potential” derives from the Latin *potentia*, power. The problem of interfacing the aim of technical control and the affirmation of a proper dignity consists in fostering the power needed for the human to be actualized. The human is archonically potent. The problem of the human in the modern world is how to make that potential actual, how to conform to (be formed to and with) the archonic. The challenge is not a matter of knowing how to cultivate or establish dignity as if humans did not yet have dignity or did not have enough dignity. Dignity is proper, planted like a divine seed in human origins. The challenge is how to respond to an original dignity in such a way that the destiny enfolded in that origin unfolds. How should humans live and act in the modern world such that it becomes an occasion for the actualization of human dignity?

If for the council fathers the auspicious character of the modern world ultimately wins out over the inauspicious—and it does—this is because they proceeded in the hope that the church offers pastoral equipment capable of making the modern world into occasions of archonic fulfillment. This pastoral equipment consists of a triple operation. It is demonstrative; that is, it functions to indicate and point out. What it functions to indicate and point out is the relation of the modern to the archonic. Demonstration consists of indicating how it is that the archonic is the inner truth of things human in the modern world and how that inner truth is faring. The pastoral equipment is also pedagogic. The church demonstrates the relation of the contemporary and the archonic in such a way that humans can become capable of discerning proper ends and capable of contributing to their own formation as humans. Humans come to know themselves in such a way that they can become increasingly capable of responding properly to their “full spiritual dignity.” In this way—and this is the third operation—the pastoral equipment converts. It converts in the sense of turning to, or changing into, something different. The church’s pastoral equipment facilitates conceptual conversion of the modern world into occasions for actualizing the archonic dignity of human vocation. It also thereby equips

humans to turn away from those things (for example, desires, needs, interpretations, actions, etc.) that demean the archonic. This is what it means to say that the church, inasmuch as it is in the world, acts with the world. Humans today, as the Pastoral Constitution puts it, require a careful education. Careful education consists in facilitating the human being human. Demonstrative, pedagogic, convertive: taken together we can say that the church's pastoral equipment conforms (in the strict sense of being-formed-with) the modern to the archonic. This is precisely the task to which the Pastoral Constitution insists the magisterium is uniquely and pastorally suited.

The Christic, the Archonic, the Ecclesiastic

The council fathers map things human on two axes. The first axis is nature/destiny ("from the beginning . . . God has chosen"). The second axis is interdependence/unity ("not just as individuals but as . . . community"). Echoing John's opening address, *Gaudium et spes* conceives of the modern world as auspicious on both axes—anthropologically promising. It is promising because the modern world constitutes an opportunity for the integration of both axes individually and with each other. It also constitutes an opportunity because in the modern world the church is able to provide pastoral equipment for conforming human life to the archonic. Insofar as the modern is *anthropologically* auspicious, it is *ecclesiologically* auspicious. Along the first axis: in the world of today "questions of human meaning" are being posed quite independently from the church. The church is capable of responding to these questions, thereby orienting things human in a proper response to proper destiny. Along the second axis: in the modern world, technological, political, and economic developments have produced a more "interdependent world." In the midst of such interdependence, the church is capable of orienting things human toward the unity proper to *socialis humani*. The *ekklēsia*, the Pastoral Constitution concludes, is a "supremely human" venue. It is a venue that facilitates human *klēsis*.⁵⁵

A question remains: if the church is in the world, acting with the world, how is it capable of accomplishing, or contributing to the accomplishment of, things human, in a way that the world on its own does not? I anticipated the answer above: the relation of the church to its doctrinal and pastoral legacy in Jesus understood to be the Christ. The Pastoral Constitution proposes that the truth of human dignity is revealed and fully actualized in Jesus as the Christ. The proposition is not surprising. But it is not for that reason any less important to the logic and legacy of Vatican II's re-visioning of pastoral power. The Pastoral Constitution does not propose that human dignity is Christological per se (although classical arguments do insist that things human are dignified precisely by way of the "doctrine of the incarnation"). The Christological, rather, makes plain, and thereby available to thought

and action, that which is fundamentally anthropological. The Christological reveals and makes available the archonic: divine call/human origins. What this means, in terms of pastoral equipment, is that the magisterium offers a kind of Christological illumination. In the church and by way of a Christic light, the modern world can be made to exhibit the extent of its archonic character. The Pastoral Constitution puts it this way: scrutinizing the signs of the times in light of the Gospel, the church can “respond to the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other.”⁵⁶

The figure of Jesus as the Christ in the Pastoral Constitution is characterized as the one who offers the human to the human and humanity to humanity. Thus figured, Jesus serves as the anthropological light that orients and facilitates the human “to measure up to his supreme destiny.” This double formulation is taken to validate and explain the basis of the church’s relation to the modern world: the human in its predicaments and destiny is interfaced with Christ as that one who relieves the predicament and actualizes the destiny. Salvation is understood here in anthropological terms: for the human to be saved is to actualize “his supreme destiny.” Soteriology, the *logos* of *sotēria*, the truth about the good, consists in bringing together the Christological and the anthropological. The fusion point is the archonic. The Pastoral Constitution reads: “The Church firmly believes that Christ, who died and was raised up for all, can through His Spirit offer man the light and the strength to measure up to his supreme destiny.”⁵⁷ The lower case “his” has a blended relation the upper case “His.” It is the supreme destiny of the human spoken of here. But it is a supreme destiny that is known because it was also His supreme destiny. If the church, as a pastoral venue, can be said to have a saving purpose, it is to equip the human to be an archonic animal: to measure up to the supreme destiny and thereby the full spiritual dignity of things human.

If the axis origin/destiny is actualized in Christ as the model of human dignity, so too is the axis interdependence/unity. Unity, the council fathers repeat, belongs to the innermost nature of the church. One again finds the archonic and the Christic brought into a kind of revelatory alignment: “thanks to her relationship with Christ, a sacramental sign and an instrument of intimate union with God, and of the unity of the whole human race.” The church, we are told, should be thought of as a kind of “soul for human society.”⁵⁸ Citing the dogmatic constitution on the church, *Gaudium et spes* proposes that the church’s role in relation to the world is, “above all,” to “erase division” so that “the whole human race may be led to the unity of God’s family.” The warrant for this mode of pastoral power, of course, is that humanity today is “increasingly” moving in this direction in the modern world. If, as I proposed in the introduction, following Foucault, pastoral power in the ancient church was, among other things, a technology of individuation, it is here

recalibrated as a technology of unification. The unity of the human as origin-call and humanity as the corporate actuality of the human. So, although there is the familiar language of the *genre humain* here, the conceptualization has changed. The human is that which is destined for dignity, called in its origins. It is the dignified human and, as such, it is the structural joint between the church and the world.

In the view of the Pastoral Constitution the properly anthropological nature of dignity is constituted by “supernatural grace,” to be sure. But this grace is given in a call-into-being that is fully actualized a communion of humanity. Such a theologico-anthropological reality is modeled and made actual in a Christological frame. Nevertheless—and this is the key—in the view of the authors of the Pastoral Constitution it is not thereby any less anthropological either in its essence or, for that matter, in its veridictional accessibility to those outside the church: the world can agree to this common object of pastoral care without signing on to the church’s Christology. The key is that the object of the church’s care is human dignity understood both in terms of human nature and human unity. This relation is taken to be modeled, called for, and fulfilled in Christ. However, it can be known and agreed to by those outside the church. That is to say, modes of reasoning suited to things Christological are consonant with modes of reasoning suited to things archonic. It should not surprise us that Pope Paul VI spoke to the United Nations in such declarative modes about a shared calling.

From the Christic to the archonic to the ecclesiastic: an equipmental relation between the church and the world is figured in and with human dignity and thereby fashioned as a basis for pastoral practice. The church is cast as a venue within which a particular kind of equipment can be produced and made operational: equipment for the discernment and the conversion of the modern into the archonic. This equipment is put forward as that which facilitates discernment and actualization of human dignity. Human dignity is the object and objective. As archonic, human dignity is neither cultivated nor established. Rather it is recognized and conformed to. The reconfigured pastoral power, called for by John at the interface of the church and the world, is established by way of care for human dignity. Human dignity, said the other way round, is cast as simultaneously making possible and thereby opening up a new form of pastoral power. Pastoral power in this case, as I have noted, does not consist of the conduct of souls, the pursuit of the lost sheep of the flock, or in the condemnation of the damned. It certainly retains its orientation to the classical pastoral mandate to care for “all and to each one”: *omnes et singulatim*, figured here as humanity and the human. The difference here is that the mode of equipmental engagement is ontological and temporal conversion: the modern to the archonic.

So, what is the church in the world of today? It is a venue that, through pastoral power, facilitates things human in the call to be human. It is a venue of the call, that

is, the venue of those that discern how it is that in the modern world the human can conform to the archonic. It does this by demonstrating, teaching, and converting the modern to the archonic. In more familiar language, it recognizes, pronounces, and defends human dignity. This form of pastoral work is a kind of assistance or facilitation carried out through a hermeneutic practice. The magisterium assists the human in actualizing its naturally supernatural destiny by interpreting the meaning and demands of human dignity under the conditions presented by the modern world. The human, particularly the modern human, “is on the road to a more thorough development of his own personality.”⁵⁹ By revealing the “ultimate goal of man,” the church “opens up the meaning of his own existence, that is, the innermost truth about himself.” In the end, this is what the church does in the modern world: it “fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear.”⁶⁰ Insofar as the human is that being whose dignity lies in the relation of origin and call, and insofar as the modern human experiences disorientation and disruption of a movement toward this call, the church’s teaching can be offered as an anthropological assistance. So, what is the payoff of the magisterium’s relation to the modern world? It is not the familiar practices of pastoral power: the daily conduct of souls and the flock. It is, rather, the assurance of human dignity: reoriented and enabled, humans can “attain their crown.”⁶¹

NATURE AND THE SUPERNATURAL: THE VERIDICTIONAL AND JURISDICTIONAL PRICE OF THE ARCHONIC

The price to be paid for such a proposition, the price to be paid for taking the dignified and archonic human as the object of pastoral concern, is that the church, conceiving of the human as that being capable of things supernatural, puts its own vocation in question. It puts itself in question in the first place with regard to its pastoral capacities. It is not only, or not merely, the shepherd of souls. It is a pastor of humanity. It facilitates what is proper to the human. This pastoral posture reopens the question of the extent to which, apart from the church’s mediating interventions, humans are capable of achieving their highest good. The church puts itself in question in the second place with regard to its own ontological status. By priming the notion of the church within history, the Pastoral Constitution begins to color the *ecclesia* in archonic colors. It too can be conceived in terms of origin/destiny, interdependence/unity. The possible limit that this emphasis on the church-in-the-world suggests is that to the extent that the church does not exceed or stand outside of history, to that same extent it cannot call humanity out of its own limitations and into the church. But the point is precisely that humanity does not need to be called out of itself and into the church. This is the imagined strength of the pastoral equip-

ment on offer: it proposes to the human an apt help in being human; it proposes to humanity to be an aid, ready to hand, in being and becoming humanity.

For critics of the Pastoral Constitution, the other side of this emphasis on the role of the church in helping to actualize human dignity was the implication that the church might no longer be seen primarily as the exclusive mediator of grace between nature and the supernatural. Unlike the idea of a radical break between God and the world in “the fall,” the idea of a humanly integral relation between nature and the supernatural meant that the church’s Christological function was less about a monopoly on the means of salvation and more about its role in discerning the appropriate means of living in the world according to an archonic dignity.⁶² The archonic fashioning of things human produced an arrangement in which anthropological factors called for the church to be pastorally present to the world. Rather than founding the necessity of the church on an insurmountable break between nature and grace, John’s vision for a relation to the modern world grounded the church’s pastoral call on the spiritual clarity of the church’s teaching and the opacity of the world: the church discloses the demands of human dignity. But this shift had the effect of opening up a field of contestation, which, in the years following Vatican II, became increasingly crowded with combatants: might a theologico-anthropological truth of things human, the archonic in the midst of the modern, have the indirect effect of marginalizing the church in the world? In what ways might Christians make common political and ethical cause with non-Christians precisely because the archonic, once theologically clarified, can speak for itself as a primordial human truth? Such a possibility seems consistent with John’s opening address to the council as well as with Paul’s speech to the United Nations. How else could Paul speak so freely and easily about the pastoral coincidence of the Vatican and the United Nations other than by way of the presumption of a shared object of care: the human in its archonic dignity? The church may cast Christological light, but it casts it on an anthropological object that could conceivably be taken seriously and recognized without that light.

Two decades after Vatican II, in a book titled *Brief Catechesis*, the French Jesuit Henri de Lubac examined the legacy of the council with regard to the question of human nature and the pastoral obligations of the church. In a short appendix to that short book de Lubac proposes that the success of Vatican II must ultimately be judged on its treatment of the supernatural.⁶³ The appendix is interesting for a number of reasons, but most striking is its tone, which is not quite triumphant, but almost. It conveys a mood of earned satisfaction. In the appendix de Lubac asks: how did Vatican II formulate the relation of human nature and the supernatural? (The question was a deeply personal one for de Lubac, as I will describe below.) De Lubac responds to his own question by first telling the reader that those who say

“the supernatural” was not mentioned in the constitutions of the council are “not quite right.” The word, he admits, was only used once. This relative absence of the *term*, he suggests, is a reflection of the council fathers’ understanding of their modern audience. The *concept* of the supernatural—or, more precisely, the conception of the relation of the supernatural and human nature as a unified reality—is, however, “found everywhere in the Council texts,” even if found “in other terms and under many aspects.”⁶⁴ The anthropology at work in the council texts, de Lubac forcefully insists, is never brought to expression using the familiar language of a Reformation or post-Reformation “two orders”—whether understood as the separation of God and the world, the religious and the secular, the ecclesial and the political, or nature and the supernatural. Rather, the anthropology expressed in the texts is one expressed in terms of a divine vocation and of the world’s participation in the being of the divine. The human, in other words, is not conceived in terms of “the hypothesis of ‘a purely natural order,’ complete in itself,” one standing outside of and in counterdistinction to a supernatural order. The human is conceived and talked about as a being created in the goal of unity with God in Christ. “The two notions of creation and of vocation to divine communion are always associated.”⁶⁵

The significance of de Lubac’s review of Vatican II’s anthropology for my analysis of human dignity and pastoral power is that it helps mark the fact that at the council the church undertook a basic rethinking of its anthropology and its pastoral vocation. The consequential character of this rethinking is captured in de Lubac’s own biography.⁶⁶ Prior to the council, de Lubac’s work had become central to the long struggle, across late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century philosophy, theology, and anthropology, to put in question the presumption of an ontological split between nature and the supernatural and to formulate a theological anthropology predicated on different ontological terrain. This conceptual and pragmatic struggle involved, in one way or another, an august cast of major French philosophers and theologians from Maurice Blondel to Henri Bergson to Etienne Gilson, to French anthropologists and historians such as Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and Michel de Certeau. The question of the human and the supernatural, for many of these thinkers, marks precisely that point at which a kind of anthropological, ethical, and theological excess had begun to overflow the limitations of modern thought.

On August 12, 1950, Pontiff Pius XII published an encyclical titled *Humani Generis*.⁶⁷ The encyclical was a key event in the history of the Vatican’s struggles with “modernism.” It constituted a point of consolidation in the church’s antimodernist efforts and served as a point of contrast in relation to which some of the key elements at play in *Gaudium et spes* can be traced. The encyclical was also, as John Milbank has put it, a key event in “the personal drama of the life of Henri de Lubac.”⁶⁸ De Lubac and his work formed a significant part of a theological pathway

in France, which, with some adjustments in emphasis and orientation, ran from the early part of the twentieth century to its closing decades.⁶⁹ The pathway originated in a rejection of so-called Neo-Scholasticism, particularly in its Counter-Reformation and speculative bent, and ran to a call for a constructive return to medieval and patristic theological sources—a movement of *ressourcement*, re-sourcing, as it was often referred to. This return was a constructive one in that the medieval and patristic sources were used to elaborate a distinctive theological grammar. The theological grammar was distinctive in that it consisted of elements of classical and medieval thought restylized in response to contemporary blockages and problems. In this sense, although the modes of reflection and productivity were largely historical (many of the *ressourcement* scholars worked professionally as academic historians), the outcome of these historical engagements—their effects in the life of the church—were far reaching both theologically and ecclesiastically.⁷⁰

Two of de Lubac's works catalyzed and exemplified the work of *ressourcement*, or *nouvelle théologie*, as it was sometimes dubbed by its detractors. The two works put in place a kind of double “paradoxical” axis.⁷¹ The first book, *Catholicisme*, published in 1938, articulated the first axis.⁷² In it de Lubac argues that the nature of the human, and therein the nature of the church, is fundamentally and definitively social. He argues that the church is not a venue for the salvation of individual souls. It is, rather, the universal community of humanity “in embryo.” The word “catholic” expresses this social nature. “Catholic” indicates that there is a universality to things human. This universality is predicated on the *imago dei*, the image of God, believed to be present to and in all humans. Divine grace is thus, in de Lubac's view, all-encompassing, extending “beyond the explicit profession of Christianity.” However, the word also refers to a universality whose full meaning is “only spelled out in the life of the incarnate *Logos*.”⁷³ This paradoxical axis is captured in the subtitle of the book: *Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*.

The second book, entitled *Surnaturel*, followed in 1947.⁷⁴ *Surnaturel* was a direct confrontation with Neo-Scholastic conceptions of nature and grace and thereby a challenge to conceptions of the relation of modes of theological reasoning and ecclesiastical governance that had come to dominate the church since the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century. The book puts in question Neo-Scholastic theology in two respects. First, the volume purports to offer a historical recovery of the “authentic” elements of tradition and not to offer a constructive metaphysics or theology. This mode of production turns the antimodernist critique back on itself: turning the attacks of a post-Tridentine theology back on the post-Tridentine church by arguing that the church had, for several centuries, been living in a disjunctive relation to tradition. Second, and more to the point here, de Lubac offers a reading of the relation of nature and the supernatural that confronts what he takes

to be the core supposition of modern thought, a supposition that had become characteristic not only of Catholic theology but of secular philosophy. De Lubac refused the supposition of “ontology” as “a purely philosophical classification of being, cognitively prior to a consideration of the divine.”⁷⁵ He thereby contested the notion of an ontological field of purely immanent being (“pure nature,” as he referred to it) proper to things human or things natural and separate from this divine or things supernatural. He refused what he took to be the ontological premises of a “purely” secular world. He refused the proposition that the purely natural, understood as the purely secular, was the other of, or independent from, the supernatural.

De Lubac argued that theology must reject the notion of an ontological division of nature (particularly human nature) and the supernatural (and must above all reject the idea of a “supernature” as a metaphysical reality outside of the natural proper only to God). Here is where his second paradoxical axis comes in: human nature is always intrinsically “raised above itself” to the divine, to the supernatural. The first side of the paradoxical structure is that nature, in its most ordinary and basic character, points beyond itself to the supernatural. In this way the natural is elevated beyond itself toward the supernatural but is not in this way either surpassed or destroyed. The second side of the paradox is that the human’s elevation to the supernatural, which is definitive of human nature, can, in his words, “only be received from God as a gift.”⁷⁶ Nature is, by its nature, graceful.

Above all, de Lubac’s two paradoxical axes constituted a challenge to reigning Neo-Scholastic understandings of the nature of grace and therein the relation of the church as a mediator of divine grace to human nature. He puts in question what he saw to be the church’s tactic of trying to preserve the pure gratuity of communion between the divine and the human as well as the pure gratuity of communion among and between humans in the divine by way of an appeal to the existence of two ontological orders—a pure nature and a pure supernature. The existence of the two orders could then be invoked as a justification for the unique role of the church as a mediator. By contrast, de Lubac argued that the human can only be properly understood in the tension of the claim that the human is constituted in its very being by this double communion with God and as humanity. If the church is instrumental in the divine’s offer of grace, this means that the church contributes to the actualization of the supernatural calling of nature. Put in condensed form, de Lubac’s argument was this: that the call to humanity’s highest good is characteristic of all beings with an intellectual soul. The gratuity of the divine must be thought without appeal to an ontological segregation of nature and the supernatural; nature must be conceived as constituted by grace, that is, by its elevation to, in, and by the supernatural.

Since the Council of Trent, de Lubac argues, the church had come to see its rela-

tion to the world in terms consistent with the Protestant Reformation—which the Council of Trent had supposedly repudiated. This relation had been formulated in terms of the doctrine of original sin, and the doctrine of original sin, in turn, had been formulated in terms of the strict break between the supernatural and nature.⁷⁷ Given this longstanding presumption, it is not altogether surprising that de Lubac’s anthropology, with its ecclesiological entailments, came under attack. The most significant form of this attack was the encyclical *Humani Generis*. The encyclical makes clear the Vatican’s rejection of de Lubac’s propositions concerning the supernatural. It reads: “Others destroy the gratuity of the supernatural order, since God, they say, cannot create intellectual beings without ordering and calling them to the beatific life.”⁷⁸ In 1950, in conjunction with the publication of the encyclical, de Lubac was removed from his post as a professor of theology in Lyon and relieved of his other official church duties. He was asked to leave the province of Lyon, and his books were removed from all Jesuit libraries. Both he and his work would be reinstated in 1958. His commitment to the agenda of constructing a post-Tridentine theology, however, was never really revitalized, despite what many saw as his vindication at Vatican II.

Fifteen years after the publication of *Humani Generis*, *Gaudium et spes* inverted the Vatican’s earlier conclusions. The Pastoral Constitution argues that the human is created as an intellectual being naturally ordered and called to the beatific life. The natural is not ontologically separated from the supernatural; human nature is enfolded into the supernatural as an integrated archonic vocation. De Lubac strenuously argued that this enfolding did not lessen the gratuity of the whole affair—the human may be oriented to the divine by nature, but that nature could never achieve its proper ends without divine elevation. As Milbank has put it, the position that de Lubac developed, a position consonant with the prior work of Maurice Blondel, can be thought of as a position of integralism.⁷⁹ This designation is meant to indicate that the human in its nature is destined to be “supernaturalized.” Such a position, in Milbank’s view, is distinct from the work of other Catholic theologians, such as the German Karl Rahner, and from the work of post-Vatican II liberation theologians, wherein the supernatural is, as it were, “naturalized”—a position Milbank refers to as “integrist.” In the former position human nature is never hypostasized and so never secularized, as Milbank suggests it is in the latter.⁸⁰

The theological and pastoral stakes of the difference between these two positions, however seemingly a matter of the theological esoteric, turn out to be quite high. They have issued in quite different political theologies and thereby different theologies of political and pastoral action. Integralism refuses the notion that humans and human actions can rightly be understood as existing in an autonomous secular sphere of creation. There is according to this position no “pure nature” that can be

understood on its own terms apart from the divine. The secular as an ontologically distinct space to which the church must relate is flatly refused by the integralist position as a fiction (however powerful and effective) of modern liberalism and as an artifact of Reformation struggles over church authority. The *integrist* position, by contrast, effectively naturalizes the supernatural—places the characteristics of the supernatural within the natural. It can, thereby, grant the human an autonomous sphere of existence as always already “grace imbued” and can therefore think about and engage with that autonomous sphere in a pretheological or even extratheological manner. As a consequence, the political theology of the *integrist* variety can make common cause with the secular and even found itself on nontheological social theories, themselves predicated on the notion of the autonomy of the secular.⁸¹ To put a point on it—and I will return to this in the Diagnostic Excursus below—the difference between naturalizing the supernatural and supernaturalizing the natural turns on different visions for political salvation and pastoral power. If, in the human, the supernatural is naturalized, a form of salvation and pastoral power can be elaborated in which the ostensible end is the protection of the archonic. If, on the other hand, in the human, nature is supernaturalized, then the church remains ontologically and metaphysically central to all things human as the mediating factor in communion with God and in the socialization of humanity.⁸²

The formulations introduced in *Gaudium et spes* opened as many questions as they resolved at the level of integralist and *integrist* theological anthropologies and political theologies. This, I think, was the price to be paid for figuring a theological anthropology in an archonic mode. In any event, the archonic fashioning of human dignity as a solution to the problem of the church in the modern world, quite despite itself, opened the possibility of a kind of anthropological secularization twice over. For the integralists among the council fathers human dignity, though constituted as a supernatural call, could nonetheless be known as properly and originally anthropological—a figuration that took as its predicate that human dignity could be intuited in history and by way of “natural reason.” What they hoped to add to this was the notion that such secular recognition would always remain incomplete without the interpretation and direction offered by the magisterium’s teaching. For the so-called *integrists*, on the other side, if the supernatural were imagined to be folded into the natural, dignity likewise could be recognized as immanent and proper. That immanent dignity could, in principle, be recognized and protected quite apart from the magisterium, even if the magisterium retained a privileged capacity to interpret things rightly. In either case, however, pastoral practice appears as a kind of hermeneutic engagement: offering an interpretation of the meaning of historical life as an aid to clarifying the intrinsic and primordial demands of human dignity.

The difference between the two positions seems to turn on degrees of exclusivity and authority with regard to the church's authority. That difference, of course, is not nothing; it subsequently informed a restructuring of the Vatican's curia and its mechanisms for testing the orthodoxy of the faithful and for "reading the signs" of the modern world. This restructuring was not only institutional but also created a new web of theological fault lines. It contributed—to pick one poignant interpersonal example—to a parting of ways between Henri de Lubac and his onetime student and friend Michel de Certeau. De Lubac would remain dedicated to the proposition that the church retains a privileged position in the mediation of the divine life; de Certeau, who by the time of Vatican II was already a noted scholar of Christian and non-Christian mysticism, embraced the council's anthropology as further theological warrant for taking seriously the spiritual practices and experiences of non-Christians on their own terms. For de Certeau this never amounted to an abandonment of his faith. It did, however, contribute to the dissolution of a friendship—a dissolution not at all unusual across the church in the wake of the council.

For what it's worth, the council fathers seemed to have resisted any secular readings of their anthropology and were, in fact, eager not to be interpreted in something like an integrist fashion: "we are not saying that the meaning of temporal affairs does not depend on reference to the Creator."⁸³ If the question is put in terms of the equipment they offered, their resistance can be justified. They cautioned: "When God is forgotten . . . the creature itself grows unintelligible." The task of the church is to proclaim and champion the "dignity of the human vocation." Yet the object of pastoral care is human. So the equipmental question works both ways. A secular or, at least, an extraecclesial response to things human is certainly opened up by the anthropology offered in *Gaudium et spes*. To the extent that human nature really is defined by the supernatural, it would seem one does not need to accept the church's propositions of faith, per se, to agree with the form of pastoral care on offer. By figuring the human in archonic terms, the council fathers both respond to the problem of the church's pastoral relation to the modern world and fashion an object of pastoral care that might be addressed otherwise. It is in this sense not at all surprising that, in the midst of the debates over Schema XIII, Paul spoke of the cooperation of the Vatican and the United Nations in terms of a common pastoral interest.

Gaudium et spes proposes to answer the core pastoral problem of Vatican II. In doing so, at least three significant outcomes can be pointed to. The first is that a concept of human dignity is fashioned as the pastoral and structural juncture point of the church and the modern world. The second is that, in this conception of human dignity, multiple lines of theological contestation concerning the church's

pastoral power and teaching authority coalesce as a single ensemble. The third is that all of this is given archonic and vocational form. Let me return to two questions I posed earlier. The first: what is the human such that it is in need of the church's pastoral care? The human is a creature dignified in its origins by a supernatural vocation. It is thereby primordially dignified. It must live in proper response to this dignity, a response both opened up and threatened by the contemporary world. And the second: what is the church such that it is capable of caring for things human? It is that venue oriented to the care of those who are called. It does this by conforming the modern into the archonic.

In closing, it seems appropriate to quote once more from the Pastoral Constitution. Today this quote may strike some as unremarkable. Despite the familiarity of the rhetoric, the practical and pastoral orientation expressed in this quote is, historically and ecclesiastically speaking, quite unusual. The Pastoral Constitution reads: "The Church guards the heritage of God's word and draws from it moral and religious principles without always having at hand the solution to particular problems."⁸⁴ The church guards an inheritance of divine truth. What does this issue in? The condemnation of the deviant? The pursuit of lost souls? The conduct of the faithful? It is not quite any of these—though these modes of pastoral engagement remain part of the church's self-care and were addressed at length in other schema. This guardianship, rather, issues in principles for, and not solutions to, particular problems. The magisterium is not fitted to the daily conduct of conduct in the modern world, *per se*. Rather, the magisterium is put forward as capable of adjusting the truth of doctrine in such a way as to discriminate among the demands of human dignity. The "path that humanity" takes in the modern world need "not be a dark one." The magisterium will illuminate the archonic for the modern world. The mode, the *tekhne*, offered by the church will be hermeneutic. The form, the *paraskeue*, will be the conformation of the modern to and with the archonic.

Broadly speaking, then, to the question of human dignity we can say that through Vatican II human dignity is fashioned as the structural joint of pastoral power, holding together the church and the modern world. This structural joint is archonic, which means that it is immanent and primordial for all and for each one. This also means that it commands: all and each one must be cared for. But this mandate—*omnes et singulatim*—is no longer connected to a mechanism for the governance of conduct. After all, this is a mandate that applies to the church in its relation to the *ecclesia ad extra*, the world beyond the church in relation to which the church is in no position to wield the tools of governance. What's more, the archonic is not the kind of object of care that calls for active governance, *per se*. Given that the archonic consists in an integral and genetic relation between origins and destiny, it is not surprising that care for human dignity will be articulated in

terms of “developing,” or “perfecting,” or “fulfilling” human dignity. But the pattern and norm of this development is primordial and inherent. It is in this sense then that the art of pastoral care must consist, first of all, in discernment—discerning the true nature of things human amid the conditions of the contemporary world—and, second of all, in protection—understanding which forms of life to guard against so as to facilitate the unfolding and actualization of the human vocation. The extent to which these dynamics are in play in political as well as ecclesial venues will be the subject of the next case.