AGAINST FORGETTING: MEMORY, HISTORY, VATICAN II

STEPHEN SCHLOESSER, S.J.*

The author argues that in the present discussion over the meaning of Vatican II, considered from the historical vantage point of 40 years, the council needs to be resituated as an event of the mid-20th century. Its break with the past, embodied in ruptures and reversals of long-standing Catholic mentalités, *must be seen as a response to two world wars, the Holocaust, the Atomic Age, atheist communism, postwar existentialism, and the Cold War. Current debates about whether "anything happened" at Vatican II should consider that the new age inaugurated by the council was not merely possible; it was morally necessary.*

> *Under history, memory and forgetting.*
> *Under memory and forgetting, life.*
> *But writing a life is another story.*
> *Incompletion.*
> —Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005)[1]

FORTY YEARS AFTER ITS CONCLUSION, Vatican II is passing from memory into history. This transition is partly due to the relentless cycles of human life: its eye-witness participants are passing away. It is also due to a

STEPHEN SCHLOESSER, S.J., earned his Ph.D. in History and Humanities at Stanford University. An associate professor of history at Boston College and adjunct associate professor at Weston Jesuit School of Theology, he is currently on academic leave while holding the LoSchiavo Chair in Catholic Social Thought at the University of San Francisco. His area of special competence is late modern Europe (1789 to the present) with a focus on France. His *Jazz Age Catholicism: Mystic Modernism in Postwar Paris, 1919–1933* (University of Toronto, 2005) received the American Catholic Historical Association's John Gilmary Shea Prize for the most original and distinguished contribution to knowledge of the history of the Catholic Church. In process are two monographs: *Catholicism Confronts Modernity, 1755–1968: Identity, Memory, Forgetting* (Sheed & Ward) and *Visions of Amen: Olivier Messiaen, Catholic Revivalism, Mystic Modernism* (Eerdmans).

[1] Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: Chicago University, 2004) 506.

historical rupture: the definitive passing of an era—specifically, the passing of communism and the Cold War era, what François Furet called "the passing of an illusion."[2] The council was largely framed by the traumatic events of 1956 and 1968: the repression of popular uprisings by Russian tanks in Budapest and Prague. Implicit in this Cold War tapestry were events that are now largely unknown to a youthful generation precisely because they are in the settled past:[3] Hitler's aggression and the Holocaust; the Soviet empire whose seeds lay in the blood of Stalingrad; the atomic age that was born at Hiroshima; the postwar division of the world into two mutually exclusive ideologies and superpowers; and the ever-present threat of nuclear annihilation. Opening as it did just days before the darkest night of this epoch—the October Missile Crisis of 1962—Vatican II occurred at a time when the world had to endure its deepest anxieties. None of the players living in 1965 could have foreseen that this nightmarish world would, quite suddenly and unexpectedly, come to an end 25 years later. We who live in the 21st century can now conclude with certainty, along with John Lewis Gaddis, that "the world spent the last half of the 20th century having its deepest anxieties not confirmed."[4]

John O'Malley's essay in the previous issue of this journal opens with a wonderful vignette that shows us how much the council is undergoing the process of memorialization. As living memories [*milieux de mémoire*] pass over into memory sites [*lieux de mémoire*], various constituents engage in a contest over whose memories will become the monuments upon which future Catholic self-understanding and identity will be based.[5] Looking at this present-day contest with the eyes of a historian, I cannot help but notice two things: First, how painfully obvious it is that the council not only

[2] François Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion: the Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Deborah Furet (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1999).

[3] "Every Monday and Wednesday afternoon each fall semester I lecture to several hundred Yale undergraduates on the subject of Cold War history. As I do this, I have to keep reminding myself that hardly any of them remember any of the events I'm describing. When I talk about Stalin and Truman, even Reagan and Gorbachev, it could as easily be Napoleon, Caesar, or Alexander the Great. Most members of the Class of 2005, for example, were only five years old when the Berlin Wall came down. . . . For this first post-Cold War generation, then, the Cold War is at once distant and dangerous. What could anyone ever have had to fear, they wonder, from a state that turned out to be as weak, as bumbling, and as *temporary* as the Soviet Union? But they also ask themselves and me: how did we ever make it out of the Cold War alive?" John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin, 2005) ix–x.

[4] Gaddis, *The Cold War* 266.

[5] On memory, monuments and memorialization, see Stephen Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism: Mystic Modernism in Postwar Paris, 1919–1933* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2005) 10, 330–331 nn. 31–35.

did break with the past, but more importantly, just how much—in the Cold War context—such a rupture was not only possible but *necessary*. Second, it becomes clear how much purposeful forgetting—repression or amnesia—is required to make a case for continuity. Ernest Renan's famous remark about the origins of nations can be aptly applied here: "The essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things."[6]

O'Malley's basic insight about *how* the council, while keeping faith with tradition, also broke with the past struck me as a genuine revelation. I can now make sense of so much of that council's work that I could not without his hermeneutical key. And yet, seeing *how* the council did this has made me wonder only more insistently *why* such a rupture was not only conceivable but necessary. It was necessary precisely because of the council's historical location. The council occurred during the second half of the 20th century—a time when the world faced its deepest anxieties and had no idea whether or not they would soon be realized.

CONTENT – FORM – CONTEXT

John O'Malley has drawn on four decades of his thought about rhetorical genres—from *Giles of Viterbo on Church and Reform* (1968) through *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome* (1979) to *The First Jesuits* (1993) and *Four Cultures of the West* (2004)—to offer a profound insight into the revolutionary character of Vatican II. By investigating "a hermeneutic that would take style into account," O'Malley underscores the difference in style that distinguished Vatican II from "the 20 councils that preceded it." The council spoke in a retrieved humanistic genre: "It engaged in panegyric, in the *ars laudandi*, whose technical name is epideictic."[7]

The epideictic oration is "a rhetoric of praise and congratulation" meant to "heighten appreciation for a person, an event, an institution, and to excite to emulation of an ideal." In holding up ideals, the documents of Vatican II "excite us to wonder and admiration." This entails focusing attention on the "big issues"—"the major doctrines of creation, redemption, sanctification." Keeping one's eyes on cosmic concerns leads to a kind of "magnanimity": the reader is invited "to rise above all pettiness and to strive for an expansive vision and a generous spirit." In contrast to medieval and Scholastic forms that aimed at defining concepts and proving

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[6] Ernest Renan, "What Is a Nation?" (1882) in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi Bhabha (New York: Routledge, 1990) 11.

[7] John W. O'Malley, "Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?" *Theological Studies* 67 (2006) 3–33, at 25, 8.

points, the classical oration sought "to touch hearts and move hearers to action for their fellow human beings."[8]

By laying out this new hermeneutic that reveals the true nature of the council, O'Malley shows us *how* the council broke with the past. In shifting our focus "from content to form," O'Malley shows us *how* "the word that was received from the mouth of Christ and the Apostles" was handed on—without adulteration or change—in a genre adapted to listeners for whom customary rhetoric obscured the message. He does this to counter postconciliar attempts, beginning in the 1980s and continuing into the present, to insist that the council entailed no break or rupture with the past, no "before" and no "after"—in the anticipatory words of Pope John XXIII, no "new Pentecost."[9]

Paying attention to *form* and laying out *how* the council's pronouncements broke with the past helps avoid the deadlocks that seem to have come from competing interpretations of conciliar *content*. A focus on genre moves the discussion and discussants to a calmer place—and in these days of bitter opposition, this much-needed innovation merits both praise and gratitude.

However, it has the potential problem of letting us forget a crucial fact about the council: namely, that it retrieved the "big issues" and broke radically with the past for deeply historical and fundamentally anxious reasons. Certainly, it represented for many of its participants the "'end of the Counter Reformation' or even 'the end of the Constantinian era.'"[10] But such evocations of the ancient past blind us to the most important fact about the Vatican Council: *it was a council of the mid-20th century*, the bloodiest of all centuries.[11] By taking Vatican II out of the mid-20th century, the questions that have become obsessive for some in our own day— "*Does* doctrine develop? *Can* the Church change?"—become footballs in an intramural game. But when we return the council to its context, we see that the question and answer are both more obvious: yes, the Church radically changed, and it did so for an important reason. In the post-1945 world it had an ethical imperative to do so.

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[8] Ibid. 25–26, 23   [9] Ibid. 17, 6.
[10] Ibid. 6.
[11] For other attempts to sketch the historical background of the council see Étienne Fouilloux, "The Antepreparatory Phase: The Slow Emergence from Inertia (January, 1959–October, 1962)" in *History of Vatican II*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak, vol. 1, *Announcing and Preparing Vatican Council II: Toward a New Era in Catholicism* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1995) 55–166, esp. 55–60; and Giacomo Martina, "The Historical Context in Which the Idea of a New Ecumenical Council Was Born," in *Vatican II: Assessment and Perspectives Twenty-Five Years After (1962–1987)* ed. René Latourelle, 3 vols. (New York: Paulist, 1988) 1:3–73.

Now that the council's participants have largely passed away and the event is passing from memory into history, we can see what they could not: the council was a response to cataclysmic shifts in the mid-20th century. It is precisely because those shifts were so enormous—consequences of the Jewish Holocaust, of a global war that claimed between 50 and 60 million lives, of the invention of the atomic bomb and the possibility of human annihilation, of the Cold War and the Soviet totalitarian empire, of decolonization and the end of Western hegemony—that the council needed to go back to the big issues and revisit fundamental questions. In such a world as this, What or who is God? What or who is the human person? What is the point of human existence? What is salvation? If salvation is available to those outside the Church, what is the Church? What is its role in history? Cosmic questions like these required a genre that was proportionate to their scope: the epideictic oration.

It is important to investigate *how* the council employed this genre. But it also seems important to survey *why* the council—in the years 1962 to 1965, framed by 1956 to 1968—needed to use such language. O'Malley has shifted our focus from *what* to *how*, from *content* to *form*. I would like to draw our attention from *form* to *context*—from *how* to *why*. Situating the council historically can illuminate its deeply anxious concerns, its need to respond humanistically to the fragmentation of the world as well as to the brutal inhumanity its participants had eye-witnessed. Seen against this horizon, the council's rupture with the past appears not only as a historical possibility. It seems to have been an ethical necessity.

CONTEXT: FRAGMENTARY FILINGS DRAWN TO MAGNETS

It is striking to read the anxiety implicit in the council's major documents over the fact of human *fragmentation* and *disunity*. Why do I say that the anxiety is implicit? Because the council makes a claim over and over again about how the human race is becoming "unified"—a claim that is central to all that will follow. However, this claim was not so much a factual description as it was wishful thinking. If it is a commonplace that we speak with greater frequency and insistence about what we cannot control and hence fill us with anxiety,[12] we should pay attention to how frequently the council invokes the notion of a human race that is becoming increasingly "unified."

"The condition of the modern world," *Lumen gentium* declared in No-

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[12] For this method of paying attention to textual repetition and repression, see for example: Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1978) esp. 32–35; Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University, 1988) esp. 7–9; Gavin I. Langmuir, *History, Religion, and Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California, 1990) esp. 252–71.

vember 1964, was that "men of the present day are drawn ever more closely together by social, technical and cultural bonds" (no. 1). "In this age of ours," began *Nostra aetate* in October 1965, "men are drawing more closely together and the bonds of friendship between different peoples are being strengthened" (no. 1). "It is clear that with the passage of time all nations are coming into a closer unity," concluded *Dignitatis humanae* in December 1965; "men of different cultures and religions are being bound together by closer links" (no. 15). *Gaudium et spes*, also promulgated in December 1965, invoked the authority of *Lumen gentium*: "the human race today is tending more and more towards civil, economic, and social unity" (no. 43; citing *Lumen gentium* no. 28). The council's self-understanding rested on its reading of the world as an entity coming into an ever closer unity. Was this understanding true?

In a sense we can answer yes. Technological innovations in communication and transportation had been radically altering perceptions of space and time since around 1880, giving the impression of a shrinking world.[13] In 1912, the distress call sent by the wireless operator of the sinking *Titanic* was relayed along the Atlantic coast from Newfoundland to New York and then (via cable) to Europe. By early morning the whole world had heard of the disaster. "This was simultaneous drama on the high seas," notes Stephen Kern, "driven by steam power and choreographed by the magic of wireless telegraphy."[14] Such a shrinkage of time led to a shortening of the valuable delays that had once allowed for discussion, diplomacy, and the prevailing of cool heads. The French historian Pierre Granet, writing on the eve of World War II, attributed the outbreak of its predecessor to the telegraph: "The constant transmission of dispatches between governments and their agents, the rapid dissemination of controversial information among an already agitated public, hastened, if it did not actually provoke, the outbreak of hostilities."[15] This shrinkage in time would lead to an unprecedented and meaningless massacre, a correlative technological shrinkage of space having made possible a "movement of men and matériel on a scale never witnessed before in history."[16] The wartime loss of faith in progress was restored somewhat by Charles Lindbergh's flight in 1927 compressing the perceived distance of the Atlantic. The crowds that greeted him seemed "as if all the hands in the world (were) touching or

[13] Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Space and Time, 1880–1918* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1983); David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (New York: Blackwell, 1989).

[14] Kern, *Culture of Space and Time* 66.

[15] Pierre Granet, *L'Evolution des méthodes diplomatiques* (Paris: A. Rousseau, 1939); in Kern, *Culture of Space and Time* 275.

[16] Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989) 98.

trying to touch the new Christ and that the new Cross (was) the Plane."[17] Thirty years later, this shrinkage of both space and time multiplied geometrically after the Soviet Union's successful launch of the first intercontinental ballistic missile in August 1957 and the orbit of *Sputnik* two months later. Nuclear warheads could now reach the United States in half an hour.[18] Thus, by 1962, although altered perceptions of space and time led to a shrinking world, this contributed less to global "unity" than to an exponentially increased global anxiety.

In another sense, then, we can answer no: the council's claim for global "unity" was frighteningly—and obviously—false. The world had become, if anything, so deeply fragmented that the situation seemed both necessary and unalterable. This global fracturing was a result of the end of European hegemony in the West in two different yet related aspects.

The first aspect was the Cold War. European domination of the world came to a definitive end in 1945. Out of its ashes emerged two much younger superpowers, former allies who quickly became enemies. On March 5, 1946, Winston Churchill would declare in Fulton, Missouri, that "an iron curtain has descended across the Continent."[19] One year later, Charles E. Bohlen could write, "Instead of unity among the great powers—both political and economic—after the war, there is complete disunity between the Soviet Union and the satellites on one side and the rest of the world on the other. There are, in short, two worlds instead of one."[20]

Out of this fundamental disunity events quickly cascaded. From June 1948 to September 1949, America's Berlin Airlift countered the Soviet attempt to starve out the isolated Western zone. The formation of the Federal Republic of Germany in May 1949 gave a geographical foothold for the Marshall Plan to counter Soviet expansion. That same year also witnessed the USSR's detonation of its first atomic weapon marking an end to the USA's nuclear monopoly, as well as Mao Zedong's communist victory in China. In 1950–1953, China's involvement in the Korean War forced a settlement without an American victory. In March 1954, the Americans tested a thermonuclear device that yielded 750 times that of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Soviet scientists issued their top-secret report on this event's significance: "The detonation of just a hundred hydrogen bombs could 'create on the whole globe conditions impossible for life.'"[21] In November 1956, Kruschev coupled the ruthless Soviet repression of the Hungarians' uprising with a threat against Britain and France to

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[17] Eyewitness account by Harry Crosby, American veteran of Verdun, in Eksteins, *Rites of Spring* 243; for Lindbergh, see 242–52, 261–67.
[18] Gaddis, *Cold War* 68.
[19] Ibid. 95.
[20] Ibid. 83; quoting Bohlen memorandum dated August 30, 1947.
[21] Ibid. 65.

send "'rocket weapons' if they did not immediately withdraw their forces" from the Suez Canal. From 1957 through 1961, adds John Gaddis, "Kruschev openly, repeatedly, and bloodcurdlingly threatened the West with nuclear annihilation."[22] Fidel Castro's successful Cuban revolution on New Year's Day 1959, followed by the Bay of Pigs fiasco in April 1961, provided an opportunity for Soviet missiles to be located just off the coast of the U.S. mainland. The Berlin Wall, an act of desperation, was constructed four months later.

In short, the mutual escalation of nuclear anxiety not only accelerated quickly during the decade preceding the council, but it reached its most terrifying moment, curiously enough, during the very week following the council's opening (October 11, 1962). The "thirteen days" of the Cuban Missile Crisis—during which the world discovered what it meant to be only minutes from the nuclear annihilation of millions—took place from October 16 to 28. Surprisingly, Xavier Rynne's eyewitness account (published in installments in *The New Yorker*) made no mention of the crisis, focusing solely on the debate over Latin and the liturgy that took place during those days.[23] Henri Fesquet also did not mention the crisis directly, but inserted remarks on "The Council and the Atomic Bomb" in his entry for October 26, 1962. He included excerpts from a petition circulated by conciliar clergy and another circulated by Roman laity that quoted Cardinal Ottaviani: "All war must be prohibited. Those who see clearly that their government is making preparations for the carnage and ruin of the people by means of war can and should overthrow that regime by just means."[24]

With a perspective offered by 40 years' distance, Gerald Fogarty surveys both the Missile Crisis itself as well as Pope John XXIII's intervention in it, filling in gaps of memory with history.[25] On October 25, the pope gave an unscheduled noon speech broadcast in French and addressed to "all men of good will." The following day, the *New York Times* gave front-page coverage to the pope's words and published the speech in full. The same day, *Pravda* published an account of the speech ending with these words: "To agree to negotiations at any level and at any location to be well-inclined to these negotiations and to commence them—this would be a sign

[22] Ibid. 70.

[23] Xavier Rynne, *Vatican Council II* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, (1999; orig. publ. 1968) 56–66.

[24] Henri Fesquet, *The Drama of Vatican II: The Ecumenical Council June 1962–December 1965*, trans. Bernard Murchland (New York: Random House, 1967) 40.

[25] Gerald P. Fogarty, "The Council Gets Underway," in *History of Vatican II,* vol. 2, *The Formation of the Council's Identity: First Period and Intersession, October 1962–September 1963*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1997) 69–106, at 94–104.

of wisdom and cautiousness that would be blessed by heaven and earth."[26] The pope's intervention inaugurated a period of mutual overtures between himself and Kruschev.

Six months after the Missile Crisis, John XXIII published his encyclical *Pacem in terris* (April 11, 1963). Echoing his speech during the October crisis, the encyclical departed from tradition and addressed itself "to all Men of Good Will."[27] When the pope died just a little over two months later (on June 3), "Soviet Navy ships in Genoa harbor flew their flags at half-mast. 'Good Pope John' had made his impact on the Communist world."[28] Five months later, the world witnessed the assassinations of both President Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam (November 2) and President John F. Kennedy (November 22)—a pairing reminding us of the painful linkages between the Cold War and decolonization. The following year, two now-classic films about the threat of global nuclear annihilation hit the silver screen: Stanley Kubrick's dark comedy, *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*; and Sidney Lumet's dead serious *Fail Safe*. One year later, Peter Watkins's *The War Game* (1965), a drama-documentary account of a nuclear attack, was judged by the British Broadcasting Corporation as "too horrifying for the medium of broadcasting." The decision not to show the film on national television set in motion a public uproar.[29]

If the Cold War between two superpowers was one aspect of the end of European hegemony in the West, a second aspect was the process of decolonization that ran roughly from 1945 to 1970. The process was a bitter one. Europeans had taken traditional units of identity and belonging— most notably clans and tribes—and artificially grouped them (some of them ancient enemies) into states. While there was no returning to the traditional world of the pre-nation-state, there was also no easy way to negotiate emergent identities in states internally composed of tribal and ethnic antagonists. Additionally, since decolonization happened to take place within the context of the Cold War, emergent states found themselves financially and politically pressured to align themselves with the "Free" world or the "Communist" world—or, in the case of more independent temperaments, to play the wild card of "non-alignment."[30]

The British granted India and Pakistan independence in 1947, inaugurating bloody Muslim-Hindu conflicts. Korean independence in 1945 and

[26] Fogarty, "The Council Gets Underway" 98.

[27] John XXIII, *Pacem in terris* (April 11, 1963), in *The Papal Encyclicals*, 5 vols., ed. Claudia Carlen (Raleigh, N.C.: Pierian, 1990) 5:107–129, at 107.

[28] Fogarty, "The Council Gets Underway" 104.

[29] James Chapman, "The BBC and the Censorship of *The War Game* (1965)," *Journal of Contemporary History* 41.1 (January 2006) 75–94.

[30] Gaddis, *Cold War* 119–155.

the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 were quickly followed by the Korean conflict of 1950 to 1953, an attempt to limit Asian Communist expansion that drew in forces from the newly-formed United Nations. As early as 1945, with the departure of defeated Japanese troops from occupied Indochina, Ho Chi Minh declared an independent state of Vietnam. A red scare caused the United States to reverse its wartime opposition to continued French colonialism and support imperialism rather than Vietnamese self-determination. The bloody fighting ended for the French in 1954 with the catastrophic defeat at Dien Bien Phu, but it was only beginning for the Americans after the partition of Vietnam into North and South. The state of Israel declared its independence in 1948 and was immediately invaded by Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria. Israel won the ensuing war and consolidated its territory in the armistice of 1949. The Six Day War of 1967 would increase Israeli territory and affect geopolitics in the region to the present day.

Dates of declared national independence also show just how embedded Vatican II was in this unprecedented new world: 1945—Indonesia, Korea, Lebanon, Syria; 1946—Jordan, Philippines; 1947—Bengal, India, Pakistan; 1948—Burma, Israel; 1949—Indonesia; 1951—Libya; 1953—Cambodia, Korean War armistice; 1954—Laos, North and South Vietnam; 1956—Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia; 1957—Ghana, Malaya; 1958—Guinea; 1960—Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo (Zaire), Cyprus, Dahomey (Benin), Gabon, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Somalia; 1961—Sierra Leone; 1962—Algeria, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda; 1964—Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia; 1965—Gambia, Rhodesia; 1966—Lesotho; 1967—Yemen; 1968—Botswana, Equatorial Guinea, Swaziland. In the United States, as Malcolm X made explicit in his *Autobiography* (1965), African-American leaders imaginatively linked their own struggles for civil rights to the broader global movements.[31] Far from being a triumphant endpoint, Brown vs. Board (1954) turned out to be only the beginning of a long period of conflict that would include the Civil Rights Act (1964), race riots in Watts (1965–66), Detroit and Newark (1967), and the assassinations of Malcolm X (1965) and Martin Luther King, Jr. (1968).

In sum: far from growing together in "unity," the end of the colonial period meant that the world was fragmenting into many smaller entities. As Gaddis notes, the international system during the late 1950s, 1960s, and

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[31] "Today we are seeing this revolution of the non-white peoples. . . . What it is, simply, is that black and brown and red and yellow peoples have, after hundreds of years of exploitation and imposed 'inferiority' and general misuse, become, finally, do-or-die sick and tired of the white man's heel on their necks" (Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X as Told to Alex Haley* [New York: Ballantine, 1999; orig. publ. 1965] 299).

early 1970s "*appeared* to be one of bipolarity in which, like iron filings attracted by magnets, all power gravitated to Moscow and Washington." In fact, however, things were far more complicated than they looked, as the superpowers found it "increasingly difficult to manage the smaller powers. . . . The weak were discovering opportunities to confront the strong."[32]

As a corollary, Westerners now had to take the "Other" of the rest of the world seriously. Liberal imperialist ideology had been "Orientalist": Western representations of the "East" were not so much about what indigenous peoples were in themselves as the obverse of the West's self-imagination— "its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience."[33] In the Victorian age, new biological notions of "race" intersected with gendered cultural stereotypes to produce a linkage of male dominance with White supremacy: if the Westerner was civilized, adult, "manly," rational, sober, chaste, and hard-working, the Oriental was represented as being primitive (or "savage"), childlike, superstitious, feminine (or "effeminate"), debauched, promiscuous, and lazy.[34] Christian missionaries had been invaluable collaborators in the colonialist project albeit in far more complex ways than have previously been constructed.[35] In the postcolonial era, the imaginations of both former colonizers and colonized would have to be adjusted, constantly measuring their mutual projections against factual givens.

In 1962, when the council posed the question "What is the church?", this was the context: a Cold War division of the world into two mutually exclusive superpower ideologies; the bitter and bloody fragmentation of colonial possessions into multiple smaller nation-states, in conflict both within themselves as well as with other states; and a need to move beyond an Orientalist perspective. This would involve taking seriously other identities on their own terms, including religious (Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism), nationalist (often artificially imposed), and ethnic (Indian, African, African-American). Contrary to the claims of the council, the idea of human unity was not a reflection of fact. It was instead a representation of deep hope for a world that seemed impossible in 1962–1965. This hope for unity in turn led to a magnanimous answer in reply to a very big question: "What is the church?"

[32] Gaddis, *Cold War* 120.

[33] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978) 2.

[34] Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995) 23–31; Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism* 25–26; 37–38.

[35] Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, vol. 1, *Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*; vol. 2, *The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991, 1997).

CONTENT: FROM THE DOMESTIC TO THE GLOBAL OR, WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

"What is the church?" We know how the initial proposed schema, *De Ecclesia*, answered that question: the mystical body of Christ identified with the Roman Catholic Church; membership based on acknowledging the authority of the Roman pontiff; maximum extension of the infallible magisterium; ecumenical minimalism; and so on. The drafters of the schema seemed to have had endless concerns about "the question of authority," and the document itself "imagined a Church deeply disturbed by the crisis of authority: 'strongly shaken by deeply felt anguish (*vehementi afflictione percellitur*).'"[36] We also know that this schema was immediately rejected, the game having been lost even before *De Ecclesia* began to be discussed by the Fathers.[37] The historical context tells us *why*: the answer was simply "not big enough." An anxious restatement of "authority" was inadequate to a situation in which Roman Catholicism, a largely Western European entity, had become just one in a multitude of competing new identities. The form tells us *how*: conciliar references to the church were largely epideictic orations devoted to praise of this instrumental sign— sacrament—of the possibility of human unity.

Thus *Sacrosanctum concilium* (December 4, 1963) states, in the first sentence to be promulgated by the council, that it wants "to adapt more closely to the needs of our age those institutions which are subject to change; to foster whatever can promote *union* among all who believe in Christ" (no. 1). The liturgy is meant to "show forth the Church, a *sign* lifted up among the nations, to those who are outside, a *sign* under which the scattered children of God may be gathered together until there is *one* fold and *one* shepherd" (no. 2). The importance of the liturgy is its reconciling function: Christ's "humanity *united* with the Person of the Word was the instrument of our salvation. Therefore, 'in Christ the perfect achievement of our *reconciliation* came forth and the fullness of divine worship was given to us'" (no. 5).

This reconciliation would be a matter of unity but not linguistic-cultural uniformity. The first glimpses of Vatican openness to cultural adaptation had already appeared in December 1939 when the Sacred Congregation for Propagation of the Faith reversed Pope Clement XI's 150-year-old "perpetual" condemnation of the Jesuit Chinese Rites and did away with Benedict XIV's century-old oath. Such far-away concerns do seem, from this

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[36] Giuseppe Ruggieri, "Beyond an Ecclesiology of Polemics: The Debate on the Church," in *History of Vatican II* 2:281–357, at 285, 286, 293, 294.

[37] Joseph A. Komonchak, "The Initial Debate about the Church," in *Vatican II commence—: Approches francophones*, ed. E. Fouilloux (Leuven: Bibliotheek van de Faculteit der Godgeleerdheid, 1993) 329–52.

distance, to have been a strange preoccupation for Romans to have just three months after Hitler's September 1939 invasion of Poland and the outbreak of World War II. However, shortly after the end of World War I Pope Benedict XV had already begun the process of undoing his name-sake's decision. This trend received even greater impetus with Japanese Imperial militarization and expansion throughout the 1930s: the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931; the establishment of the puppet state of Manchukuo in 1932; the 1934 renunciation of the Washington Naval Conference; the 1936 abrogation of a commitment to disarmament; the 1937 invasion of China. "The destiny of the Church and the missions," writes George Minamiki, "was inextricably bound up with the momentous events that were taking place in the world."[38] Pius XII's 1939 revocation of earlier papal bans on Catholic veneration of ancestors and of Confucius can be seen as a response to Chinese governmental statements supporting freedom of religion.

Although the particular case of missionary activity in China would be radically altered after Mao Zedong's establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the broader principle of cultural accommodation had already been established. Postwar decolonization catalyzed this radically new understanding of the Church's relationship to the world. Instead of imposing a unitary ultramontanist culture, "inculturation" would be seen as the future imperative. While Latin was retained by the council as the language of ecclesiastical identity, the vernacular was encouraged so that the one unchanging Word could be heard, preached, and appropriated in many tongues. A New Pentecost had dawned. In *Sacrosanctum concilium*'s section laying out "Norms for Adapting the Liturgy to the Temperament and Traditions of Peoples," the Church is described as not wishing "to impose a rigid uniformity in matters which do not involve the faith or the good of the whole community. Rather does she respect and foster the qualities and talents of the various races and nations" (no. 37). Unity replaced uniformity as the guiding principle.

Lumen gentium, appearing one year later (November 21, 1964), began its opening chapter, "The Mystery of the Church," by setting forth the nature and mission of the Church—not in the anxious language of asserting *authority* (as the initially proposed schema had done), but rather in an epideictic rhetoric appealing to the ideal end of divine and human *unity*. The Church in the modern world, declared *Lumen gentium*, is "in the nature of sacrament—a sign and instrument, that is, of *communion* with God and of *unity* among all men. . . . The condition of the modern world lends greater urgency to this duty of the Church; for, while men of the present are drawn

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[38] George Minamiki, S.J., *The Chinese Rites Controversy from Its Beginning to Modern Times* (Chicago: Loyola University, 1985) 189.

ever more closely together by social, technical and cultural bonds, it still remains for them to achieve *unity* in Christ" (no. 1). The "universal Church is seen to be 'a people brought into *unity* from the *unity* of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit'" (no. 4). Through the sacraments the faithful "are *united* in a hidden and real way to Christ. . . . As all the members of the human body, though they are many, form one body, so also are the faithful in Christ" (no. 7). The college of bishops plays its role: "in so far as it is composed of many members, [it] is the expression of the multifariousness and universality of the People of God; and of the *unity* of the flock of Christ, in so far as it is assembled under one head" (no. 22). The Roman pontiff plays his role too, being "the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the *unity* both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful" (no. 23). These pastors in turn have the task of recognizing the laity's "contribution and charisms that everyone in his own way will, with one mind, cooperate in the common task" (no. 30). The laity "make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that she can become the salt of the earth" (no. 33). In sum, although "the sole Church of Christ . . . *subsists* in the Catholic Church, . . . many elements of sanctification and of truth are found *outside* its visible confines." These elements should be seen not as something alien but rather as "gifts belonging to the Church of Christ" and hence "forces impelling towards Catholic *unity*" (no. 8).

Gaudium et spes (December 7, 1965) further explored the way in which Christ is a "light to the nations." The Church "casts the reflected light of that divine life over all the earth" especially in the way "it *consolidates* society" (no. 40). "The *union* of the family of man is greatly consolidated and perfected by the *unity* which Christ established among the sons of God." "The encouragement of *unity* is in harmony with the deepest nature of the Church's mission. . . . It shows to the world that social and exterior *union* comes from a *union* of hearts and minds, from the faith and love by which its own indissoluble *unity* has been founded in the Holy Spirit." Since "the Church is *universal* in that it is not committed to any one culture or to any political, economic or social system," it "can be a very close bond between the various communities of men and nations," and so it calls upon all "to *consolidate* legitimate human organizations in themselves" (no. 42).

The Church can be this sign precisely because its members will remain united in faith even though they will disagree even in grave matters. The laity should realize that "their pastors will not always be so expert as to have a ready answer to every problem (even every grave problem) that arises; this is not the role of the clergy." It "happens rather frequently, and legitimately so, that some of the faithful, with no less sincerity," will see problems quite differently from one another. Thus, the laity should "try to guide each other by sincere *dialogue* in a spirit of *mutual charity*" with

"anxious interest above all in the *common good*" and witness to Christ "at the very heart of the *community* of mankind" (no. 43). This final document of the council quotes *Lumen gentium*: "Since the human race is tending more and more towards civil, economic and social *unity*, "priests are to "*unite* their efforts and combine their resources" under "the leadership of the bishops and the Supreme Pontiff and thus *eliminate division and dissension* in every shape and form, *so that* all mankind may be led into the *unity* of the family of God" (no. 43, quoting *Lumen gentium* no. 28).

Comparing these documents to the Church's vision of itself during its 200-year-old opposition to modernity and cultural adaptation demonstrates what a radical break they were with the past. In the earlier period, the Church was seen in an absolute binary opposition set over and against the "world." In the council the Church presented itself as a sacrament—both sign and instrument, transcendent and immanent, showing and effecting—an integrating *unity* that was promised and possible. In 1973, Archbishop (later Cardinal) Giovanni Benelli noted that there was "no doubt that in the Middle Ages and subsequently up to twenty years ago, there was in the Church a centralization of powers" that had "contributed to delaying for centuries the conversion of Asia." Recalling "the severity with which for so many years one had to observe the rules fixed by Rome" on ritual conformity, Benelli could only marvel: "And this, not some centuries ago but hardly twenty years ago."[39] The council had effected a postcolonialist sea change so deep that, a mere two decades later, it had become impossible to imagine what had existed before.

CONTEXT: "THE JEWISH QUESTION"

Nostra aetete, the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, promulgated toward the end of the council (October 28, 1965), was primarily intended as a statement about the Jews. Read from the context of 1939 to 1945, it was intended to be a response to anti-Semitism throughout the ages and to the Holocaust in particular. As it was written within the 1960s context of Israeli-Palestinian strife, however, it needed to include a statement about Islam as well. In the end, it also briefly took account of Hinduism and Buddhism. As a result, by taking the "big

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[39] Giovanni Benelli, "Les Rapports entre le Siège de Pierre et les Églises Locals" in *La Documentation Catholique*, 60/1644 (16 December 1973) 1072; in Minamiki, *Chinese Rites Controversy* 221. As Minimaki notes, George Dunne pointed out that Benelli's address was "the first time any high ranking official in Rome has openly admitted that the Roman decision against the rites was wrong. Dunne adds that Benelli in effect makes two statements: "1) the decision contributed to retarding conversion in Asia for centuries—which is to say it was wrong; and 2) it should not have been made in Rome but should have been left to the Church in China, which is in effect to say to the Jesuits in China, to make the decisions" (ibid. 322 n. 41).

questions" of religion as its starting point, this brief document curiously became a revolutionary one. It posed the question "What is religion?" in the broadest manner possible and affirmed truth and holiness in all places. This magnanimity made the Church's earlier stances—opposition to Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestantism, not to mention non-Christian rejections—seem very small by contrast.

With the publication of *Nostra aetete*, the Church and the papacy had finally come to terms with modernity. Politically, Jewish emancipation had been one of the most significant markers of modernity, originating in Enlightenment thought and carried on in bourgeois Liberalism.[40] Eighteenth-century popes vacillated on the Jewish question. In 1769, Pope Clement XIV relaxed some of the restrictions on Jews and reassigned control over Rome's Jewish ghetto from the Holy Office of the Inquisition to the city's cardinal vicar. In 1775, Clement's successor, Pope Pius VI, reversed his predecessor's measures immediately after his election and instituted draconian ones: he rescinded all of the Jews' previous privileges, set up ghettoes in all the towns of the Papal States, forbade Jews to "speak familiarly" to Christians, and reintroduced a 16th-century papal provision requiring Jews to wear a special badge that identified them.[41] In France, Abbé Grégoire, a lower-clergy revolutionary thinker, argued for Jewish assimilation.[42] (Even then, however, it must be acknowledged that Grégoire referred to Jews as "parasitic plants who eat away the substance of the tree to which they are attached."[43]) Napoleon Bonaparte exported and implemented French revolutionary ideals across Europe, including his abolition of the papal ghetto and emancipation of the Jews in the 1809 occupation of Rome and exile of Pope Pius VII. After concluding a pact with the pope, Napoleon's legal reforms throughout occupied Europe met resistance: the "prospect of full Jewish emancipation raised by the Concordat was deeply—often violently—unpopular almost everywhere." Occupying French officials had outlawed the reading of liturgical texts blaming Jews

[40] For example, see: Voltaire's *Treatise on Toleration* (1763); Zalkind Hourwitz's *Vindication of the Jews* (1789); *Petition of the Jews of Paris, Alsace, and Lorraine to the National Assembly* (January 28, 1790); La Fare, Bishop of Nancy, *Opinion on the Admissibility of Jews to Full Civil and Political Rights* (Spring 1790); *Admission of Jews to Rights of Citizenship* (September 27, 1791); all collected in *The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History*, ed. and trans. Lynn Hunt (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's, 1996).

[41] David I. Kertzer, *The Popes against the Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti–Semitism* (New York: Knopf, 2001) 28–30.

[42] Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, *The Abbé Grégoire and the French Revolution: The Making of Modern Universalism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 2005).

[43] Abbé Grégoire, in Lynn Hunt, "Introduction: The Revolutionary Origins of Human Rights," in Hunt, *The French Revolution* 1–32, at 9.

for the death of Christ, and they "dreaded Easter all over the Empire." Throughout Holy Week in 1808, French troops were called in to quell the violent reactions of Catholic faithful in Pisa.[44]

After Napoleon's defeat, the Roman Republic was abolished and the Papal States were restored. Pope Pius VII, overly-influenced by "the near-universal urgings of the cardinals around him," sent the Jews back into the ghettoes.[45] Papal opposition to Jewish emancipation—firmly reiterated by Pope Pius IX after French troops restored his throne following the 1848 revolution—became a salient symbol of ultramontanist Catholicism's refusal to accommodate modernity. The mid-century affair of Edgardo Mortara in 1858 became a *cause célèbre* for the free press throughout Europe and the United States; in reaction, various Catholic publications fostered an extreme anti-Semitism, the most important being the Jesuits' *Civiltà Cattolica*.[46] The symbolism of a Jewish boy's clandestine baptism, consequent abduction, and later adoption by his new "father," Pius IX—who three years later would declare himself unable to be reconciled with "progress, liberalism, and modern civilization"—was shot through with potential for dramatic depictions. The "Jewish Question" in the Papal States was only resolved in 1870 when Italian nationalists conquered Rome and put an end to papal territorial sovereignty. The Jews were freed from their ghettoes, and the pope became a self-imposed "prisoner of the Vatican."[47]

The "Jewish Question" as a metaphor for modernity famously erupted in France during the Dreyfus Affair (1894–1899).[48] Integralist French Catholics, who boasted that "the church and the pope are one," had never shown much enthusiasm for Pope Leo XIII, and they ignored his appeal (in *Au milieu des sollicitudes* [February 16, 1892]) to "rally to the Republic."[49] Instead, the Assumptionists waged a vicious anti-Semitic campaign by means of their daily newspaper, *La Croix* (The Cross), and their magazine

[44] Michael Broers, *Europe Under Napoleon 1799–1815* (New York: Arnold, 1996) 129–30, 113.

[45] Kertzer, *Popes against the Jews* 37.

[46] David I. Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997) 118–42.

[47] Kertzer, *Popes against the Jews* 129–30; Kertzer, *Prisoner of the Vatican: The Popes' Secret Plot to Capture Rome from the New Italian State* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004).

[48] Pierre Birnbaum, *The Anti-Semitic Moment: A Tour of France in 1898*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003).

[49] Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism* 50–56. "'We are integral Roman Catholics, they boasted. 'That is, we set above all and everyone not only the Church's traditional teaching in the order of absolute truths but also the pope's directions in the order of practical contingencies. For the Church and the pope are one'" (ibid. 55, quoting *La Vigie* [December 5, 1912]; in Roger Aubert et al., *The Church in a Secularised Society* [New York: Paulist, 1978] 200).

from Lourdes, *Le Pèlerin* (The Pilgrim).[50] (In 1998, *La Croix* finally apologized for its anti-Semitic editorials on the 100th anniversary of Émile Zola's open letter "J'accuse!" to the Republic's President.)[51] After Dreyfus's pardon (1899), radical (i.e., anti-clerical) governments were voted into power as a backlash against the anti-Dreyfusard forces of the Church and the Army.[52] A series of legislative acts (1901–1905) were passed leading to the expulsion of nearly all members of religious orders in France. After the Act of Separation of Church and State (1905), Rome overruled the French hierarchy and the recently-installed Pope Pius X excommunicated all the legislators who had voted for separation laws. This political bumbling, reinforcing Catholic opposition to democratic government and implying support of the anti-Dreyfusard (and, hence, anti-Semitic) camp, led to a drastic decline in Catholic practice.[53]

In sum, Jewish rights and Catholic opposition to them had been a boundary marker of modernity since at least the mid-18th century. Theologically speaking, the Church opposed political emancipation for fear that this would lead to religious "indifferentism"—a forerunner of present-day fears about "relativism." Anthropologically, one could offer another interpretation: Jews were frightening precisely because they represented ambiguous—and thus dangerous—margins between the Christian self and its "Other."[54] Protestants, for all their differences, were still identifiably part of the Christian self. Conversely, Muslims represented the Orientalist "Other" of both Christianity and the geographical "West." Jews, however, resided in liminal margins—they were the ancestors of Christianity, they resided within the West, and they even resided within city walls. For centuries, then, they were kept in ghettos, persecuted, and frequently killed as a way of consolidating Christian identity.

[50] Ruth Harris, *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age* (New York: Viking, 1999) 275–79; Pierre Sorlin, *"La Croix" et les Juifs (1880–1899): Contribution à l'histoire de l'antisémitisme contemporain* (Paris: B. Grasset, 1967).

[51] Reported in *Time* 151.4 (January 26, 1998) 20.

[52] "We know well that the Jew was the inventor of our anti-Christian laws, that he put them on stage like a puppetmaster, concealed behind a curtain, pulling the string which makes the devil appear before an unsuspecting audience. . . . The subtle alliance of the makers of the anti-Christian laws with the powerful Dreyfus syndicate leaves no room for doubt. They are all of a piece. Destroy the army, destroy the religious orders, and let the Jew reign! That is the goal" (*La Croix* [January 28, 1898]; in James Carroll, *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews* [New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001] 459–60).

[53] Gordon Wright, *France in Modern Times*, 5th ed. (New York: Norton, 1995) 250; Aubert et al., *Church in a Secularised Society* 79–80.

[54] "To have been in the margins is to have been in contact with danger, to have been a source of power" (Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* [New York: Routledge, 1996; orig. publ. 1966] 98).

For these political, theological, and anthropological reasons, the attempt to formulate a positive statement of Jewish identity with respect to Catholicism—even after seeing the horror of the Holocaust—turned out to be a complicated task. *Nostra aetete*'s tortured genesis suggests just how radical a rupture it posed.[55] In the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s, efforts were underway to effect some kind of Catholic-Jewish reconciliation.[56] Gertrud Luckner, having risked her life to save Jews and having survived the Ravensbrück concentration camp, worked tirelessly with her Freiburg circle to obtain official renunciations of anti-Semitism. An initial success with the German bishops was followed by disappointment. Cardinal Josef Frings (of Cologne) opposed Luckner's work and, in 1950 (the same year as Pius XII's *Humani generis*), a Vatican *monitum* warned against the indifferentism that could result from Christian-Jewish dialogue. The Holy Office also sent the Jesuits Augustin Bea, Robert Leiber, and Charles Boyer to investigate the Freiburg circle. A 1952 letter from Frings to the German bishops reiterated the earlier warning. Not until after the death of Pius XII did the German bishops—beginning in 1959—speak out about the Holocaust. However, in a wonderful irony of history, the Freiburg circle had already, by the mid-1950s, "won the support of the very people who had been sent by Pope Pius to investigate their work"—namely, Boyer, Leiber, and most importantly, Bea.[57]

Other collaborating Catholics included Jacques Maritain, president of the International Council of Christians and Jews, whose efforts on behalf of Jewish civil rights extended back as far as his student days at the Sorbonne. A young Socialist raised in a freethinking Protestant household, Maritain had been passing out pamphlets in support of Russian Jews when he met his future wife, Raïssa Oumançoff. After yet another deadly pogrom against Jews in Russia, Oumançoff had been brought to France by her parents so that she, as a female, might be able to receive an education. The Maritains knew what it was to be vilified: relationships with their right-wing cohorts (like the Thomist scholar Fr. Reginald Gariggou-Lagrange and the novelist Georges Bernanos), entered into after their conversions to Catholicism, grew increasingly sour throughout the menacing decade of the 1930s. In 1938, the Fascist journal *Je suis partout* attacked Maritain: "Jacques Maritain married a Jew. He has jewified (*enjuivé*) his life and his doctrine. His theology, his dialectic are falsfied like the passport of a Jewish spy." Fortunately the Maritains found exile in New York City.

[55] Giovanni Miccoli, "Two Sensitive Issues: Religious Freedom and the Jews," in *History of Vatican II*, ed. Alberigo and Komonchak, vol. 4, *Church as Communion* 95–193, esp. 135–93.

[56] Michael Phayer, *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930–1965* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University, 2000) 184–202.

[57] Ibid. 199.

Their friend Max Jacob—"Jewish by race, Breton by birth, Roman by religion, sodomite by custom" eulogized the now-collaborationist *Je suis partout*—was not so fortunate, dying in the Drancy transit as he awaited the convoy for Auschwitz. Raïssa Maritain recorded the death: "Max gave his life with the humility of a saint." Jacques concurred: "Max Jacob died a saint."[58]

Already in 1946 Maritain had written Msgr. Giovanni Battista Montini (later Pope Paul VI) saying that "what Jews and also Christians need above all (at this juncture) is a voice—the paternal voice, the voice par excellence, that of the vicar of Jesus Christ—to tell the truth to the world and shed light on this tragedy"—that is, "six million Jews have been *liquidated*."[59] As France's ambassador to the Holy See, Maritain "pressed Rome emphatically to take the lead in condemning the Holocaust atrocities and European antisemitism." Frustrated "when he saw that his efforts were to no avail," Maritain resigned his post.[60]

Pius XII died in 1958 and was succeeded by Angelo Roncalli who, as apostolic delegate to Turkey during the Holocaust, "saved a number of Croatian, Bulgarian and Hungarian Jews by assisting their emigration to Palestine."[61] In December 1959, one year after assuming the papacy as John XXIII, Roncalli made Augustin Bea a cardinal and installed him as president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. (Bea was ordained a bishop two years later.) Although *Nostra aetete*'s final form was not as strong as Bea wanted—in the end it had neither an explicit apology for centuries of practice nor an explicit rejection of the word "deicide"—the promulgation of this document was largely Bea's doing, and it reversed centuries of Catholic (including papal) anti-Semitism.[62] Ironically, in the final analysis, this innovative magisterial teaching was due primarily to the tireless efforts of lay persons—especially Luckner and Maritain—who would not let hierarchical intransigence overcome their personal experience of the horrors of 1939–1945.

CONTENT: FROM JEWISH QUESTION TO COSMIC QUESTION OR, WHAT IS RELIGION?

The epideictic genre of *Nostra aetete* is evident from its first paragraph. It begins once again with a statement that represses the unacceptable truth: "Men are drawing more closely together and the bonds of friendship be-

[58] Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism* 56–61; 206–8, at 207, 208.

[59] Jacques Maritain, in Michael R. Marrus, "The Ambassador & The Pope; Pius XII, Jacques Maritain & the Jews," *Commonweal* 131.18 (October 22, 2004) 14–19, at 16.

[60] Phayer, *Catholic Church and the Holocaust* 206.

[61] Ibid. 86.   [62] Ibid. 208–15.

tween different peoples are being strengthened." (This opening line, a now-familiar generic description of "this age of ours," seems somewhat strained, given the delicate political machinations involved in Pope Paul VI's journey to the Holy Land in January 1964—enthusiastically received by Muslims, including a warm reception by King Hussein of Jordan, and shown official courtesy by the state of Israel, a national entity not recognized by the Papal State.)[63] Then follows the fundamental orientation of the council's self-understanding: "Ever aware of her duty to foster *unity* and charity among individuals, and even among nations, she reflects at the outset on what men have in common and what tends to promote fellowship among them" (no. 1).

What do human beings have in common? They "look to their different religions for an answer to the unsolved riddles of human existence." This paragraph—which might as well be called "What is religion?"—is one of the most poignant in all the conciliar documents. In asking all the "big questions" of human existence, it challenges any reader to recover the widest possible horizons of perspective. "What is man? What is the meaning and purpose of life? What is upright behavior, and what is sinful? Where does suffering originate, and what end does it serve? How can genuine happiness be found? . . . And finally, what is the ultimate mystery, beyond human explanation, which embraces our entire existence, from which we take our origin and towards which we tend?" (no. 1). As I will suggest below, this profound list of perennial questions owes itself to the atheistic and existentialist context of the postwar era.

From here the council affirms Hinduism, Buddhism, and other religions that "attempt in their own ways to calm the hearts of men" (no. 2). Rejecting "nothing of what is true and holy in these religions," the Church urges Christians, "while witnessing to their own faith and way of life," to "acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, also their social life and culture" (no. 2). Here immediately follows this affirmation: "The Church has also a high regard for the Muslims" who "worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth" (no. 3). Taken along with the affirmation of Hinduism and Buddhism, this is a long way from the words of Pius XI addressed to the Sacred Heart of Jesus published almost exactly 40 years earlier: "Be Thou King of all those who even now sit in the shadow of idolatry or Islam, and refuse not Thou to

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[63] Claude Soetens, "The Ecumenical Commitment of the Catholic Church," in *History of Vatican II,* ed. Alberigo and Komonchak, vol. 3, *Mature Council: Second Period and Intersession, September 1963–September 1964* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2000) 257–345, esp. 339–45. See also Rynne, *Vatican Council II* 303–5; and Fesquet, *Drama of Vatican II* 357–65.

bring them into the light of Thy kingdom."[64] Without directly naming the Crusades—an enduring event of traumatic proportions for Arab self-identity—the declaration notes that over the centuries "many quarrels and dissensions have arisen between Christians and Muslims." It "now pleads with all to forget the past, and urges that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding" (no. 3). These words had been crafted with an eye to Arab-Israeli tensions—tensions that would explode two years later in the Six Day War of 1967.

Now the document turns to its primary intention, an aim of Cardinal Bea since his encounter with Gertrud Luckner and the Freiburg Circle: an attempt to deal with centuries of Christian anti-Semitism. First comes the verdict on whether Jews bear the burden of Christ's death: "Neither all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during his passion" (no. 4). Again, the contrast in tone with Pius XI's prayer of exactly 40 years earlier is striking: "Look, finally, with eyes of pity upon the children of that race, which was for so long a time Thy chosen people; and let Thy Blood, which was once invoked upon them in vengeance, now descend upon them also in a cleansing flood of redemption and eternal life."[65]

Next comes a directive instructing all to stop speaking of the Jews "as rejected or accursed as if this followed from holy Scripture." Whether "in catechizing or in preaching the Word of God," all are warned not to "teach anything which is not in accord with the truth of the Gospel message or the spirit of Christ." These instructions would eventually find their way into the Church's revised liturgy. The ancient Good Friday prayer for the "perfidious Jews" that had once been abolished throughout Europe by French revolutionary law enforced by Napoleon's troops would be replaced by a new prayer "for the Jewish people, the first to hear the word of God, that they may continue to grow in the love of his name and in faithfulness to his covenant."[66]

Finally comes the paragraph on the anti-Semitism of the past, delicately and diplomatically phrased so as to avoid giving offense to Arabs. Embedding its reproach within the wider frame of reproving "every form of persecution against whomsoever it may be directed," the text underscores that

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[64] Pope Pius XI, "An Act of Dedication of the Human Race," promulgated in conjunction with the encyclical *Quas primas* (December 11, 1925) on the Feast of Christ the King; in *The Raccolta*, ed. Joseph P. Christopher and Charles E. Spence (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1943) 180–82, at 181.

[65] Ibid. 181.

[66] General Intercessions for Good Friday, in *The Sacramentary,* the Roman Missal revised by decree of the Second Vatican Council and published by authority of Pope Paul VI, English translation prepared by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy, rev. ed. (New York: Catholic, 1985) 146.

it is "moved not by any political consideration, but solely by the religious motivation of Christian charity" and a memory of the Church's "common heritage with the Jews." The final line is not an apology from below but rather a condemnation from above. It deplores "all hatreds, persecutions, displays of antisemitism leveled at any time or from any source against the Jews" (no. 4).

The history of *Nostra aetete* leads the reader into fascinating territory. It tells us something about how doctrine actually "develops"—that is, by means of little people who battled ecclesiastical authorities, whose cause won over those sent to investigate them (e.g., Augustin Bea), and whose legacy is no less important now that the world has largely forgotten them (e.g., Luckner and Maritain). And it tells us how the circles of bitterly entrenched positions were able to be squared by stepping back and asking much larger questions like the one that opened this declaration: "what is the ultimate mystery, beyond human explanation, which embraces our entire existence, from which we take our origin and towards which we tend?" (no. 1). In returning the reader to ultimate sources, epideictic rhetoric allows for a rethinking of the world and, if necessary, radical revisions. It is a literary genre with a sharp ethical edge.

CONTEXT: LIBERTY, TOLERANCE, AND TOTALITARIANISM

The Declaration on Religious Liberty does not begin but rather ends with the panegyric to *unity* seen in other documents: "It is clear that with the passage of time all nations are coming into a closer *unity*, men of different cultures and religions are being bound together by closer links, and there is a growing awareness of individual responsibility. Consequently, to establish and strengthen *peaceful relations* and *harmony* in the human race, religious freedom must be given effective constitutional protection everywhere and that highest of man's rights and duties—to lead a religious life with freedom in society—must be respected" (no. 15). Why the document did not begin with this motif is suggested by where it does begin: a searching "the sacred tradition and teaching of the Church, from which it draws forth new things that are always in harmony with the old" (no. 1). The teaching of this document was such a radical reversal of centuries of the Church's magisterium and practice that it began with addressing the fundamental anxiety provoked by such a rupture with the past. It needed first to try to establish that religious freedom was consonant with the past. This required some very complex gymnastics.

At least since Theodosius (d. 395) and the invention of "Christendom," the Church had stood against religious freedom, and it expressed this opposition in both practice and doctrine. Saint Augustine's famous employment of Christ's parable about the wedding banquet against the Donatists

stood as the medieval source: "let the heretics and schismatics come from the highroads and hedges. *Compel them to come in. . . .* 'Let us come in of our own free will,' they say. That wasn't the order the Lord gave: *Compel them*, he said, *to come in.* Let necessity be experienced outwardly, and hence free willingness be born inwardly."[67] The use of torture to enforce social conformity (via religious confession) was commonplace in the Middle Ages and beyond.[68] Jews, Waldensians, Albigensians, and other "heretics" stood beside "witches," "lepers," and "sodomites" as medieval groups—whether official ones (like the medieval Inquistion) or popular mobs (sometimes restrained by ecclesiastical authorities)—produced a "persecuting society."[69] Torture and execution continued to be accepted as routine throughout the the 16th and 17th centuries as the newly confessional states, both Catholic and Protestant, enforced the modern aim of one ruler, one religion, one people.[70]

"Tolerance" was one of the battle cries of Enlightenment writers in France, especially demanding religious liberty for Protestants and political emancipation for Jews. Pope Pius VII's eventual concordat with Napoleon (July 15, 1801) did acquiesce in recognizing only "that the Catholic Apostolic and Roman religion is the religion of the great majority of French citizens."[71] But "enemies of the Enlightenment" throughout the 19th century fought the idea of toleration as leading to religious indifferentism.[72] Papal teaching repeatedly condemned the constitutional liberties spreading across Europe: liberties of the press, speech, religion, and (manhood) suffrage.

"This shameful font of indifferentism," wrote Gregory XVI, "gives rise to that absurd and erroneous proposition which claims that *liberty of conscience* must be maintained for everyone. It spreads ruin in sacred and civil affairs, though some repeat over and over again with the greatest impudence that some advantage accrues to religion from it. . . . Experience shows, even from earliest times, that cities renowned for wealth, dominion, and glory perished as a result of this single evil, namely immoderate free-

[67] Augustine of Hippo, Sermon 112.8; in Augustine, *Sermons*, trans. Edmund Hill, O.P., 11 vols. (Brooklyn: New City, 1990–1997) 4:152 (emphasis original).

[68] Edward Peter, *Torture*, exp. ed, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1996).

[69] R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987).

[70] Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1999).

[71] "Concordat between the Holy See and the Republic of France, 15 July 1801," in *Readings in Church History*, ed. Colman J. Barry, rev. ed., 3 vols. in 1 (Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1985) 943–45, at 943.

[72] Darrin M. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (New York: Oxford University, 2001).

dom of opinion, license of free speech, and desire for novelty." From here Gregory went on to condemn "that harmful and never sufficiently denounced freedom to publish any writings whatever and disseminate them to the people, which some dare to demand and promote with so great a clamor."[73]

Pius IX reaffirmed the words of his predecessor: "From which totally false idea of social government they do not fear to foster that erroneous opinion, most fatal in its effects on the Catholic Church and the salvation of souls, called by Our Predecessor, Gregory XVI, *an insanity*, viz., that 'liberty of conscience and worship is each man's personal right, which ought to be legally proclaimed and asserted in every rightly constituted society; and that a right resides in the citizens to an absolute liberty, which should be restrained by no authority whether ecclesiastical or civil, whereby they may be able openly and publicly to manifest and declare any of their ideas whatever, either by word of mouth, by the press, or in any other way.'"[74] In addition, Pius explicitly condemned these propositions in the *Syllabus of Errors*:

15. Every man is free to embrace and profess that religion which, led by the light of true reason, he may have thought true.

77. In this our age it is no longer expedient that the Catholic religion should be treated as the only religion of the state, all other worships whatsoever being excluded.

79. For truly it is false that the civil liberty of all worships and the full power granted to all of openly and publicly declaring any opinions or thoughts whatever, conduces to more easily corrupting the morals and minds of peoples and propagating the plague of indifferentism.[75]

Leo XIII reaffirmed his predecessors: "Justice therefore forbids, and reason itself forbids, the State to be godless; or to adopt a line of action which would end in godlessness—namely, to treat the various religions (as they call them) alike, and to bestow upon them promiscuously equal rights and privileges."[76] However, faced with the political problems of Catholics in France's Third Republic and during Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*, Leo suggested that a certain measure of "tolerance" was permissible in certain circumstances: "while not conceding any right to anything save what is true and honest, she (the Catholic Church) does not forbid public authority to

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[73] Gregory XVI, "Mirari vos" (August 15, 1832) nos. 14–15; in Carlen, *Papal Encyclicals* 1:235–41, at 238 (emphasis original).

[74] Pius IX, *Quanta cura* (December 8, 1864) no. 3; in Carlen, *Papal Encyclicals* 1:381–86, at 382, quoting Gregory XVI, *Mirari vos* (emphasis original).

[75] Pius IX, Syllabus of Errors (December 8, 1864); in Barry, *Readings in Church History* 992, 996.

[76] Leo XIII, *Libertas* (June 20, 1888) no. 21; in Carlen, *Papal Encyclicals* 2:169–81, at 175.

tolerate what is at variance with truth and justice, for the sake of avoiding some greater evil, or of obtaining or preserving some greater good."[77] As noted above, Leo urged French Catholics—unsuccessfully—to "rally to the Republic" four years later, but his successor Pius X would excommunicate every French legislator who had voted for the French separation laws. This action accorded with his namesake's condemned proposition in the *Syllabus* (1864): "55. The Church should be separated from the state, and the state from the Church."[78]

Not until Pope Pius XII's Christmas Allocution of 1945 did papal teaching unequivocally embrace the value of democratic government.[79] In hindsight, concordats made with the Fascist governments of Italy (February 11, 1929) and Germany (July 20, 1933) had protected Church interests to some extent—but at great cost. Looking ahead, the post-1945 world would be one with limited choices: democracy and totalitarianism. The pope chose democracy. "Within the confines of each particular nation as much as in the whole family of peoples," wrote the pontiff, "state totalitarianism is incompatible with a true and healthy democracy."[80]

The "Declaration on Religious Liberty," promulgated just 20 years later, was so contentious precisely because it represented a repudiation of centuries of Church practice and doctrine.[81] Cardinal Siri voiced his concern that, if the doctrine of toleration were changed, "we will be undermining theological and our own authority."[82] John Courtney Murray— whose Jesuit superiors had ordered him to stop writing on church-state issues in 1955[83]—explicitly realized that his opponents feared "the affirmation of progress in doctrine that an affirmation of religious freedom

[77] Ibid. no. 33; in Carlen, *Papal Encyclicals* 2:178.

[78] Wright, *France in Modern Times* 250; Pius IX, Syllabus of Errors no. 55; in Barry, *Readings in Church History* 995.

[79] Pius XII, Christmas Allocution of December 24, 1945, in Barry, *Readings in Church History* 1220–25. This document's positive remarks on democracy were preceded by those in Pius XII's View on the Spiritual Power of the Church and Contemporary Theories of State Power (October 2, 1945), but this document was marked by more qualifications than the December text: "If, therefore, the people depart from the Christian faith or do not hold it resolutely as the principle of civil life, even democracy is easily altered and deformed, and in the course of time is liable to fall into a one-party 'totalitarianism' or 'authoritarianism'" (Barry, *Readings in Church History* 1225–30, at 1227–28).

[80] Pius XII, Christmas Allocution of 24 December 1945, in Barry, *Readings in Church History* 1220–25, at 1224.

[81] John T. Noonan, Jr., *A Church That Can and Cannot Change: The Development of Catholic Moral Teaching* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2005) 145–58.

[82] Cardinal Siri, in Rynne, *Vatican Council II* 460.

[83] John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: Norton, 2003) 207–8.

necessarily entails."[84] In 1963, the historian Msgr. John Tracy Ellis—whose superiors had forbidden him to attend a European conference in 1955—recorded hearing Murray at a dinner talk voice the possibility "that Newman's idea of the evolution of dogma might well become one of the key ideas in Vatican Council II."[85] Perhaps of greatest importance was pressure exerted by bishops from behind the Iron Curtain. One "moment"—that is, the context of monarchies in which the Church had formulated its teaching and practice of "established religion"—was dead. A second "moment"—that is, freedom of the Church against atheistic communism—presented unprecedented challenges, especially in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Yugoslavia.[86] In order to construct a response adequate to such an historical upheaval, the declaration would need to return to big questions.

CONTENT: BETWEEN LIBERALISM AND COMMUNISM OR, WHAT IS THE HUMAN PERSON?

The opening line of the declaration reads: *Dignitatis humanae*, that is, "*Of the dignity of the human person* is contemporary man becoming increasingly conscious" (no. 1). Significantly, the council did not follow a line of reasoning from the Enlightenment tradition of Liberal individualism and human "rights." Rather, it chose language borrowed from the philosophy of "personalism"—an approach based on inter-personal duties and mutual obligations (as well as rights) that had been espoused during the interwar period by figures like Emmanuel Mounier and Max Scheler—to ground its understanding of the "person" being free from *coercion*. "The Vatican Council declares that the *human person* has a right to religious freedom. Freedom of this kind means that all men should be immune from *coercion* on the part of individuals, social groups and every human power." Consonant with Catholic tradition's appeal to both revealed and natural law, the council based this "right to religious freedom" on "the very *dignity of the human person* as known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself" (no. 2).

In this new world of totalitarian governments, freedoms traditionally negotiated for the Church by concordats were now derived from individual liberty. "The freedom or immunity from coercion in religious matters

[84] Quoted in Rynne, *Vatican Council II* 460.

[85] Letter of Msgr. John Tracy Ellis to Fr. Edward Cardinal (September 13, 1963); in McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom* 237; for Ellis in 1955, see 207.

[86] On "Three Moments for *Dignitatis Humanae*," see Hermínio Rico, S.J., *John Paul II and the Legacy of Dignitatis Humanae* (Washington: Georgetown University, 2002) 1–26. On Eastern European bishops at the council, see for example: Evangelista Vilanova, "The Intersession (1963–1964)" in *History of Vatican II* 3: 413–14; and Rynne, *Vatican Council II* 300, 463–64.

which is the right of individuals must also be accorded to men when they act in community. Religious communities are a requirement of the nature of man and of religion itself." This in turn entailed freedoms of assembly, speech, education, and the press: "Religious communities have the further right not to be prevented from publicly teaching and bearing witness to their beliefs by the spoken or written word. . . . Finally, rooted in the social nature of man and in the very nature of religion is the right of men, prompted by their own religious sense, freely to hold meetings or establish educational, cultural, charitable and social organizations" (no. 4).

This reversal of teaching applied to the family as well. One century earlier, in the case of Edgardo Mortara (1858), the Church had argued that the ancient patriarchal right of a father over his children (*puissance paternelle*)—vehemently defended by anti-Enlightenment thinkers[87]—was superceded by the right "acquired by the Church over the baptized infant," a right that was "of a superior and more noble order" than that of the parents. "In fact," asserted the Church's legal brief, "the Canonists and Theologians are in full agreement with this truth: that in no case should a baptized child be returned to infidel parents."[88] Those had been times shaped by monarchy. In these new times contextualized by communism, however, the Church argued the opposite: "Every family, in that it is a society with its own basic rights, has the right freely to organize its own religious life in the home under the control of the parents. These have the right to decide in accordance with their own religious beliefs the form of religious upbringing which is to be given to their children" (no. 5).

Of all the "big questions" elicited by this radical document, the inviolability of human conscience stands out most boldly as a Cold War response to communist coercion. "It is through his conscience that man sees and recognizes the demands of the divine law. He is bound to follow this conscience faithfully in all his activity so that he may come to God, who is his last end. There he must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience" (no. 2). This claim was traced back through Scripture and tradition: "One of the key truths in Catholic teaching, a truth that is contained in the word of God and constantly preached by the Fathers, is that man's response to God by faith ought to be free, and that therefore nobody is to be forced to embrace the faith against his will" (no. 10). These words were supported by a footnote thick with references to Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory the Great, Clement III, and Innocent III. Christ himself was recalled as a master and Lord who "acted patiently in attracting and inviting his disciples. He supported and confirmed his preaching by miracles to arouse the faith of his hearers and give them assurance, but not to coerce them" (no. 11).

[87] McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment* 133–38.
[88] Kertzer, *Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara* 147.

The document did acknowledge that members of the Church had not always acted in accordance with these ideals, but it drew a strong distinction between the actions of Christians and the teaching of the Church: "Although in the life of the people of God in its pilgrimage through the vicissitudes of human history there has at times appeared a form of behavior which was hardly in keeping with the spirit of the Gospel and was even opposed to it, it has always remained the teaching of the Church that no one is to be coerced into believing" (no. 12. No qualifying footnote was appended here). Today, especially in light of our painful awareness of coerced Christian "conversions" among indigenous peoples—including those in North America both during and after the colonial period[89]—this distinction can ring somewhat hollow. In 1965, however, ongoing decolonization had not yet led to the postcolonialist mentality that has become commonplace over the past 40 years.

Dignitatis humanae, one of the final fruits of the council, provides a miniature case study of Vatican II's break from the past in terms of content, form, and context. In terms of content, the document was as much or perhaps even more about the possibilities of doctrinal "development" as it was about religious liberty. In terms of form, it accomplished its task by drawing the reader away from an earlier rhetorical style—for example, vituperous condemnations of liberty as insanity—and redirecting attention to the most exalted possibilities of the human person's conscience and dignity.

However, the most significant aspect of the document was its context—it was championed by representatives from the two major blocks of the Cold War, and for each of them liberty of conscience and religion was a matter of ethical necessity. From the American side, *Dignitatis humanae* symbolized a long hoped-for vindication: Church acceptance of the democratic pluralism that had been feared so long and condemned as the heresy of "Americanism" under the larger umbrella of "Modernism."[90] At Vatican II, the end of European domination in the world and the acceptance of Catholics within the United States (especially after the assassination of President Kennedy) allowed the American Church to come of age, achieving adulthood as a post-immigrant church in a postcolonial world. More-

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[89] See for example: Steven W. Hackel, *Children of Coyote, Missionaries of Saint Francis: Indian-Spanish Relations in Colonial California, 1769–1850* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2005); David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875–1928* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1995).

[90] Marvin R. O'Connell, *Critics on Trial: An Introduction to the Catholic Modernist Crisis* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1994), 201–204; O'Connell, *John Ireland and the American Catholic Church* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1988).

over, as the superpower of the free world, America's uniquely pluralistic religious history had to be taken seriously. Conversely, bishops speaking from within the Soviet bloc (like Karol Wojtyla) needed—and demanded—an unequivocal statement of an individual conscience's absolute inviolability from external coercion of any kind. In this sense, the "Constantinian church" truly had come to an end. Finding itself suddenly oppressed by a quasi-imperial regime with global reach and aspirations, the Catholic Church needed to accommodate itself accordingly. Cardinal Joseph-Léon Cardijn summed up the ethical imperative succinctly: "The Church cannot expect religious liberty when she is in a minority unless she practices it when she is in the majority."[91]

CONTEXT: THE CHALLENGE OF LATE-MODERN HUMANISMS

Some of the most poignant passages in conciliar documents emanate from the Church's reversal of its longstanding dismissal of modernity in an attempt to take seriously the anxious concerns of contemporary humanity. Pius IX's Syllabus of Errors (December 8, 1864) had condemned the proposition that "the Roman Pontiff can, and ought to, reconcile himself, and come to terms with progress, liberalism and modern civilization" (no. 80). Now, 101 years later (December 7, 1965), the Vatican Council boldly declared in *Gaudium et spes* that the "joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men of our time" was identical with "the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well" (no. 1). In the second half of the 19th century, as Owen Chadwick has noted, "Many western Europeans had the sensation, not just that the Pope was wrong, but he was morally wrong."[92] A century later, the Church seemed to regain its moral footing. It wanted, like Christ, "to save and not to judge, to serve and not to be served" (no. 3).

What can account for such a remarkable reversal? Out of many factors, I want here to single out only one: the theological reflections of those who had genuinely suffered "the grief and anguish" of the 20th century. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Henri de Lubac, and Karl Rahner serve nicely as examples of a much larger cohort (including, among others, Yves Congar and Edward Schillebeeckx). Teilhard de Chardin's embrace of temporality was adopted by the council. Echoing Henri de Lubac, the Church acknowledged legitimate questions and criticisms posed by communism and atheism. Like Karl Rahner, the council adopted the language of philosophical existentialism, the most potent language of postwar humanism. These modern *mentalités* pressed the council to "return to the sources"—in this case,

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[91] Rynne, *Vatican Council II* 464.
[92] Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the 19th Century* (New York: Cambridge University, 1975) 111–12.

to restate fundamental questions of historical humanity in terms of "big questions" employing the epideictic genre.

Ecclesiastical authorities had consistently denied Teilhard de Chardin permission to publish his work, but Nicholas Boyle has observed that Teilhard's thought, although "not always appreciated at the time," is the "subterranean influence" on *Gaudium et spes*.[93] As early as 1925, Teilhard had been investigated by the Holy Office, asked to sign six propositions—"I weighed up the enormous scandal and damage that an act of indiscipline on my part would have caused"—and had his licence to teach at the Institut Catholique permanently revoked.[94] Ecclesiastical permission was denied in 1944 to publish *The Phenomenon of Man*. In 1948 it was denied yet again (along with *The Human Zoological Group* as well). In addition, Teilhard was forbidden to accept the chair in prehistory at the Collège de France, recently vacated by Abbé Breuil.[95] In 1951, fearing that his works would never be published after his death, Teilhard—"backed by legal advice from the resident Jesuit canon lawyer"—designated Mademoiselle Jeanne Mortier his literary executrix and willed all rights over his nonscientific writings to her. A year before Teilhard's death, the Jesuit general put it bluntly: "There is no need to spread these ideas any further."[96]

After Teilhard's death (in American exile) freed his work from ecclesiastical control, the Paris publishing house Seuil immediately began printing his collected works.[97] Dates of publication demonstrate how the first nine volumes, although written years and in some cases even decades earlier, appeared all at once, making for maximal effect on preconciliar consciousness: *Le phénomène humain* (1955); *L'apparition de l'homme* (1956); *La vision du passé* (1957); *Le milieu divin* (1957); *L'avenir de l'homme* (1959); *L'énergie humaine* (1962); *L'activation de l'énergie* (1963); *La place de l'homme dans la nature* (1963); *Science et Christ* (1965).

In 1958, Seuil had published a small volume with the title *Construire la Terre = Building the Earth*.[98] Bearing the notation "extracts from unpublished works," this slim volume was multilingual, containing the French text along with translations into English, German, Russian, and Arabic. It

[93] Nicholas Boyle, "On Earth, as It Is in Heaven," *Tablet* 259.8596 (July 9, 2005) 12–15, at 12.

[94] Ursula King, *Spirit of Fire: The Life and Vision of Teilhard de Chardin* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1996) 106–8, at 107.

[95] King, *Spirit of Fire* 174, 198–99.

[96] Ibid. 196–99, 207, 224; Mary Lukas and Ellen Lukas, *Teilhard: The Man, the Priest, the Scientist* (New York: Doubleday, 1977) 296–98.

[97] Teilhard's works appeared from Seuil in the series *Oeuvres / de Teilhard de Chardin* from 1955 to 1973 and are listed under individual titles.

[98] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Construire la terre = Building the Earth* (Paris: Seuil, 1958).

launched Teilhard's work into the world beyond France. English and German editions of his collected works began appearing in 1958; Polish translations followed.[99] A sure sign of Teilhard's increasing influence can be seen in his being censured (posthumously) by the Holy Office on June 30, 1962. This was followed the next day by an anonymous negative critique in *L'Osservatore Romano* of Henri de Lubac's *La pensée religieuse du père Pierre Teilhard de Chardin* (1962). This was the state of affairs just four months prior to the opening of Vatican II.[100]

Why did this flood of publications contribute to a sea change in Catholic thought? If we concentrate on what had been at the heart of Teilhard's theological difficulties—i.e., explaining the doctrine of original sin—we can lose sight of the overwhelmingly larger issue. As early as 1922, Teilhard had experienced difficulty in reconciling his scientific findings with traditional doctrine.[101] Although Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Humani generis* (1950) had opened the door to accepting the possibility of evolution, it had explicitly noted and condemned any acceptance of polygenism as well as any alterations to the doctrine of original sin—"which proceeds from a sin actually committed by an individual Adam and which through generation is passed on to all and is in everyone as his own."[102]

However, this particular doctrinal question, important as it might be, obscured the deeper impact of Teilhard's thought, namely, an embrace of temporality—the fact of *change* in human history—and, as a corollary, of the importance of terrestrial existence in salvation history. The shift from a cyclical or static view of human existence to a notion of an always accelerating linear history had taken place gradually between 1500 and 1800. Reinhart Koselleck identifies this shift as the "temporalization (*Verzeitlichung*) of history" that characterizes "modernity" (*Neuzeit*).[103]

[99] For example, *The Phenomenon of Man*, trans. Bernard Wall (New York: Harper, 1959); *Der Mensch im Kosmos*, trans. Othon Marbach (Munich: Beck, 1959); *Człowiek, struktura i kierunki ewolucji grupy zoologicznej ludzkiej* [*Man's Place in Nature: The Human Zoological Group*], trans. Janina i Grzegorz Fedorowscy (Warsaw: Pax, 1962); *Wybór pism* [*Collected Writings*], 2nd ed., ed. W. Sukiennicka, trans. M. Tazbir (Warsaw: Pax, 1966).

[100] Henri de Lubac, *La pensée religieuse du père Pierre Teilhard de Chardin* (Paris: Aubier, 1962). See Fouilloux, "The Anterpreparatory Phase" 75; Joseph A. Komonchak, "The Struggle for the Council during the Preparation of Vatican II (1960–1962)," in *History of Vatican II* 1:167–356; see 243 n. 291; Norman Tanner, "The Church in the World (*Ecclesia ad Extra*)" in *History of Vatican II* 4:269–386, at 285–86.

[101] King, *Spirit of Fire* 106.

[102] Pius XII, *Humani generis* (August 12, 1950) no. 37, in Carlen, *Papal Encyclicals* 4:175–84, at 182.

[103] Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1985) 3–20.

Perhaps the most salient example of this evolving temporalization was the 18th-century inversion of the meaning of "revolution." The term had once indicated a "circulation" around a fixed center and a return to a point of departure: "All variation, or change, *rerum commutatio*, *rerum conversio*, was insufficient to introduce anything novel into the political world."[104] After 1789 this meaning of "revolution" became barely comprehensible. A "revolution" now signaled a "revolt"—leaving behind a past for a future that was teleologically more advanced—intellectually and morally—than what had been "before." Reactionary Catholic thought, by contrast, clung tenaciously to a classicist model of time and human history in the wake of the French Revolution. As the royalist critic Julien Louis Geoffroy wrote in 1800: "Not only does human reason not perfect itself with time, but this perfection is impossible. It would be necessary to discover new relationships among men, new duties, new moral truths—something that cannot take place in the wake of the Gospel. . . . Nothing beyond Christian morality has been discovered. It is evident that it is the *non plus ultra* of true philosophy, that it is beyond the capacity of human faculties to go farther."[105] If anything, concluded Geoffroy, history taught that the notion of human perfectibility was a "fatal chimera" that had "covered the earth in blood and crimes." Social cohesion depended on clinging to inherited customs, traditions, and beliefs.[106]

This fear of modernity, exemplified most fully in the fear of historicism, shaped the ultramontanist Catholicism—a "supernaturalist eternalism"— that was the official face of the Church from at least 1831 until 1958.[107] There had been a golden age and then there was a fall. Human history was a cyclical effort to realize those lost ideals—not entirely futile but also never perfect. Catholicism was not alone in using a postrevolutionary language of decline. Fellow-travelers included Arthur de Gobineau, Jacob Burckhardt, Friedrich Nietzsche, Henry and Brooks Adams, Oswald Spengler, Arnold Toynbee, and German-Jewish intellectuals who likewise feared historicism's erosion of the sacred.[108]

It was only in 1966, one year after the council's conclusion, that Bernard Lonergan explicitly considered the Church's transition from a classicist worldview to historical-mindedness—one in which "intentionality, mean-

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[104] See ibid. 39–54, at 41.

[105] Julien-Louis Geoffroy, review of Madame de Staël's *De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales* (1800); in McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment* 140.

[106] Geoffroy, in McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment* 141; see also 138–45.

[107] Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism* 27–35.

[108] Arthur Herman, *The Idea of Decline in Western History* (New York: Free Press, 1997); David N. Myers, *Resisting History: Historicism and Its Discontents in German-Jewish Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2003).

ing, is a constitutive component of human living" and "not fixed, static immutable, but shifting, developing, going astray, capable of redemption." Lonergan's verdict about the "Gospel" repudiated Geoffroy's (in 1800, above) with no less apodictic force: "I think our Scripture scholars would agree that (classicism's) abstractness, and the omissions due to abstraction, have no foundation in the revealed word of God."[109]

Teilhard was uniquely positioned to attempt a reconciliation of these views: he was a scientist, a believer, and perhaps most importantly, a survivor of World War I's trenches. As a scientist he had to reconcile belief in divine providence with the brutal competition and tragic waste inherent in the evolutionary process of natural selection. As a soldier serving as a stretcher-bearer—France quite cynically called back its exiled members of male religious orders to serve the *patrie*'s "sacred union"[110]—Teilhard had seen the very worst that human beings can do to one another. Two of his younger brothers were killed in the war, and Teilhard found himself writing his grief-stricken parents "the usual pained and helpless platitudes."[111]

Yet, his "faith in life" was at once both unswerving and unflinching. Writing from the wartime front on the eve of one more Great War massacre, Teilhard summarized his fundamental faith: "When every certainty is shaken and every utterance falters, when every principle appears doubtful, then there is only one ultimate belief on which we can base our rudderless interior life: the belief *that there is an absolute direction of growth*, to which both our duty and our happiness demand that we should conform; and that *life advances in that direction*, taking the most direct road . . . *life is never mistaken*, either about its road or its destination." At the same time, however, he affirmed that the life-principle was one of struggle, not acquiescence. He recalled having been tempted once by an inner voice whispering, "Take the easier road." But suddenly it "was then that faith in life saved" him. He had realized that "it is not by drifting down the current of things that we shall be united with their one, single, soul, but by fighting our way, with them, toward some goal still to come."[112]

It was this affirmation of terrestrial history that came to him during the war, at once tragic and yet unshakeable, that a generation four decades

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[109] Bernard Lonergan, "The Transition from a Classicist World-View to Historical-Mindedness," an address delivered at a meeting of the Canon Law Society of America in 1966; in Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *A Second Collection: Papers*, ed. William F. J. Ryan and Bernard J. Tyrrell (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1996; orig. publ. 1974) 1–9, at 6, 5.

[110] Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism* 84, 105.

[111] Lukas and Lukas, *Teilhard* 46, 55.

[112] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, "Cosmic Life," in *Writings in Time of War* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968) 28–32; in *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*, ed. Ursula King (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1999) 48–49 (emphasis original).

later eagerly sought in Teilhard's posthumous publications. Freed by death from the reach of ecclesiastical censors, these writings seemed fresh in a world that had survived yet another world war and now lived beneath the mushroom cloud of the Cold War.

Like his friend Teilhard who had comforted those shaken by science, Henri de Lubac also extended his reach beyond the confines of the Church. De Lubac had also returned from exile to serve France in World War I, and he suffered an injury that would cause pain throughout his life. Pierre Rousselot, a fellow Jesuit who had an enormous intellectual influence on de Lubac, was killed in the war.[113] Following the war, de Lubac began in 1924 to work on what would become *Surnaturel* (1946).[114] In 1932, he stated his position succinctly: "Moreover, this concept of a pure nature runs into great difficulties, the principal one of which seems to me to be the following: how can a conscious spirit be anything other than an absolute desire for God?"[115] In 1934, he wrote his "Remarks on the History of the Word, 'Supernatural.'" In 1936, his essay on "Some Aspects of Buddhism" made a remarkable claim: "with the exception of the unique Fact in which we adore the vestige and the very Presence of God, Buddhism is without doubt the greatest spiritual fact in the history of man."[116]

During the German occupation of France in the Vichy years, de Lubac worked with other Jesuits of the Fourvière theologate at Lyons in service of France's "spiritual Resistance." In 1940 he fled the approaching German army. From 1941 to 1944, he was one of the principal theologians collaborating in the clandestine *Cahiers du témoignage chrétien* (Notebooks of Christian Witness).[117] In 1943, hunted by the Gestapo, he successfully escaped to Vals, but his fellow Jesuit Yves de Montcheuil was captured, incarcerated, and executed.[118] ("I have let myself digress at length," de

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[113] John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate concerning the Supernatural* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005) 3.

[114] See David L. Schindler, "Introduction to the 1998 Edition," in Henri de Lubac, S.J., *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Crossroad, (1998; orig. publ. 1966) xvi–xvii n. 18; Michel Sales, "Préface," in Henri de Lubac, *Surnaturel: Études historiques*, ed. Michel Sales (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, (1991; orig. publ. 1946) i–xvi.

[115] Letter of Henri de Lubac to Maurice Blondel (April 3, 1932); in Milbank, *Suspended Middle* viii.

[116] Henri de Lubac, *Aspects du bouddhisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1951) 18; in Schindler, "Introduction" xiv.

[117] Henri de Lubac, "The Spirit of the *Cahiers du Témoignage chrétien*," in *Christian Resistance to Anti-Semitism: Memories from 1940–1944*, trans. Sister Elizabeth Englund, O.C.D. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1990) 131–45.

[118] *Three Jesuits Speak: Yves de Montcheuil, 1899–1944, Charles Nicolet, 1897–1961, Jean Zupan, 1899–1968: Characteristic Texts*, presented by Henri de Lubac,

Lubac wrote later. "I have seldom thought of those terrible years.")[119] John Milbank summarizes the theo-political situation: "And it is vital to grasp that de Lubac's and de Montcheuil's *political* opponents—Catholic Rightists supporting the Vichy regime and collaborating with the occupying Germans—were also their *theological* opponents, who reported what they regarded as dubious theological opinions as well as their dubious secular involvements back up the chains of Jesuit and Dominican command to Rome itself."[120]

During the Occupation, de Lubac published parts of what would become *The Drama of Atheist Humanism*. In his preface, poignantly signed "Christmas 1943," he affirmed (like Teilhard) both a thoroughly realistic yet unswerving faith in temporality and terrestrial life: "faith disturbs us and continually upsets the too beautiful balance of our mental conceptions and our social structures. Bursting into a world that perpetually tends to close in upon itself, God brings it the possibility of a harmony that is certainly superior but is to be attained only at the cost of a series of cleavages and struggles coextensive with time itself. . . . The earth, which without God could cease being a chaos only to become a prison, is in reality the magnificent and painful field where our eternal being is worked out."[121]

Atheist humanism for de Lubac was "not to be confused with a hedonist and coarsely materialist atheism," nor with "an atheism of despair" to which it was "quite contrary in principle." The problem posed by it was "a human problem—it was *the* human problem—and the solution that is being given to it is one that claims to be positive."[122] Although de Lubac's work was primarily aimed at critiquing atheism, it found a great deal to admire in the search for a genuine postrationalist humanism. Friedrich Nietzsche was an unlikely ally in his critique of historicism, a derivative form of rationalism, and de Lubac shared Nietzsche's convictions expressed in the *Birth of Tragedy*: "But man starved of myths is a man without roots. He is a man who is 'perpetually hungry', an 'abstract' man, devitalized by the ebbing of the sap in him."[123] The keyword for de Lubac was "mystery," and it shared common ground with a Dionysian lack of clarity: "Myth and mystery may both be said to engender a *mystique*, and each provides a way of escape from 'the prison of things that are clear.'" In the end, while de

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trans. K. D. Whitehead (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1987) 30–32. See also de Lubac, "Yves de Montcheuil," in *Christian Resistance* 215–35.

[119] Henri de Lubac, *At the Service of the Church: Henri de Lubac Reflects on the Circumstances That Occasioned His Writings*, trans. Anne Elizabeth Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993) 55.

[120] Milbank, *Suspended Middle* 3.

[121] Henri de Lubac, S.J., *The Drama of Atheist Humanism* (San Francisco: Ignatius, (1995; orig. publ. 1949) 14.

[122] Ibid. 24.   [123] Ibid. 80.

Lubac sided with mystery (Gabriel Marcel) and *mystique* (Charles Péguy) against "myth," he nevertheless maintained his alliance with Nietzsche against the rationalism of "Socrates, or modern man."[124] In his small volume *Affrontements mystiques* (1950) published after the war, de Lubac included a chapter eventually found in the fourth edition of *Atheist Humanism*: "Nietzsche as Mystic." Here he was able to join old interests with current ones as he expounded on Nietzsche's "European Buddhism." "Without a doubt," wrote de Lubac approvingly, "he exalts life instead of sterilizing it. He seeks the central point from which all of life springs forth, not the central point where all of life is extinguished."[125]

"It was in June 1950 that lightning struck Fourvière," de Lubac would later write.[126] As the Holy Office began its crackdown on theologians associated with *nouvelle théologie*,[127] the Jesuit general ordered de Lubac to stop teaching, to stop working at *Recherches de science religieuse*, and to withdraw three of his books and several essays—including *Surnaturel* (1946) and *De la connaissance de Dieu* (1945; 1948)—from Jesuit libraries and further publication.[128] (There is disagreement over the relationship between this censorship and the promulgation of *Humani generis* [1950].)[129] It seems that two main aspects of de Lubac's thought were unacceptable at the time. First, he insisted that for the human being, there is no independent "natural" world; there is only the one world in which humanity's "supernatural" existence is worked out. (In *Atheist Humanism*, his remarks linking Nietzsche and Kierkegaard were titled "Deeper Immersion in Existence.")[130] Second, and somewhat paradoxically, he emphasized divine immanence precisely to preserve transcendence—that is, to prevent the "mystery" of both humanity and God from being reduced to rationally explicable clarity.

Both aspects of de Lubac's thought—"mystery" and "supernatural"—would later find a place in documents of the council. Meanwhile, throughout the 1950s, his description of Kierkegaard could very well have been applied to him. "It is sufficient that this free-lance, outlawed by his Church,

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[124] Ibid. 91, 92.   [125] Ibid. 489.

[126] De Lubac, *At the Service of the Church* 67; for the "Fourvière affair," see 67–92.

[127] See, e.g., Thomas O'Meara, "'Raid on the Dominicans': The Repression of 1954," *America* (5 February 1994) 8–16.

[128] De Lubac, *At the Service of the Church* 64.

[129] Schindler, "Introduction," xxii n. 33; De Lubac, *At the Service of the Church* 308–9; Henri de Lubac, *Theology in History*, trans. Anne Englund Nash (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1996) 281–82.

[130] De Lubac, *Drama of Atheist Humanism* 95–111. The title quotes Søren Kierkegaard's *Post-scriptum*: "Preparation for becoming attentive to Christianity does not consist in reading books or in making surveys of world history, but in *deeper immersion in existence*" (ibid. 111).

was the witness chosen by God to compel a world that increasingly disowned it to contemplate the greatness of faith; that, in a century carried away by immanentism, he was the herald of transcendence."[131]

If de Lubac's Christian humanism had existentialist overtones, Karl Rahner's was more explicitly so. His "Christian pessimism,"[132] intellectually grounded in his 1930s exposure to existentialism— his study with Martin Heidegger was a lasting influence on his thought—would be filled out with experience as a German in World War II. (Heidegger, Rahner later wrote, "developed an important philosophy of Being. That can and will always have a fascinating significance for a Catholic theologian, for whom God is and remains the inexpressible Mystery.")[133] In 1939 the Nazis dissolved the Jesuit College in Innsbruck; Jesuits were placed under a "district prohibition." Rahner accepted a position at the Pastoral Institute in Vienna, a group whose theological work and pastoral care worked against the Nazis. As the Allied front advanced, Rahner moved from Vienna to Lower Bavaria, spending July 1944 to August 1945 caring for villagers and refugees in Mariakirchen.[134] On February 2, 1945, Alfred Delp, Rahner's younger fellow Jesuit to whom he had taught Latin, would be executed by the German Reich. (Delp's work on the philosophy of Heidegger, *Tragische Existenz* [Tragic Existence], was published in 1935. Although Rahner later criticized it for misunderstanding Heidegger, he nonetheless considered Delp to have been in "the front ranks of those witnesses who were motivated by Christianity to resist the evils of Nazism.")[135]

Rahner survived and immersed himself in the task of reconciling Christian faith with a modern consciousness radically altered by the war. Throughout the 1950s he would be subject to occasional censures for his thought; in March 1961, an intervention by Pope John XXIII averted a more serious censure of Rahner by the Vatican. However, on June 7, 1962, quite unexpectedly—and just three weeks before the Holy Office's posthumous censure of Teilhard (June 30, 1962) and *L'Osservatore Romano*'s

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[131] Ibid.

[132] Karl Rahner, "Christian Pessimism," in *Theological Investigations* 22, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Crossroad, 1991) 155–62. See also Paul G. Crowley, "Rahner's Christian Pessimism: A Response to the Sorrow of AIDS," *Theological Studies* 58 (1997) 286–307.

[133] Herbert Vorgrimler, *Understanding Karl Rahner: An Introduction to His Life and Thought*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1986) 58–62, at 59.

[134] Ibid. 68–70.

[135] Mary Frances Coady, *With Bound Hands: A Jesuit in Nazi Germany. The Life and Selected Prison Letters of Alfred Delp* (Chicago: Loyola, 2003) 10, 23–24; Rahner, quoted in Harvey D. Egan, S.J., *Karl Rahner: The Mystic of Everyday Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1998) 22. See also Alan C. Mitchell, "Biographical Preface," in *Alfred Delp, S.J.: Prison Writings*, intro. Thomas Merton (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2004; orig. publ. 1963) vii–xix.

assault on de Lubac—Rahner's Jesuit superiors "informed him that from now on everything that he wrote had to be submitted to a preliminary censorship in Rome."[136] Rahner told the Jesuit general that he "had no intention of submitting anything to the Roman censorship but would rather write nothing at all; nor would [he] keep quiet about the matter, but would describe it all quite candidly."[137] By May 28, 1963, the Holy Office had retreated completely. In the meantime, Rahner had been nominated by John XXIII as a council *peritus*, and he became the private adviser on all council documents for Cardinals König and Döpfner. By 1964, Rahner had come to be regarded by a number of friends and foes as "the most powerful man" at the council.[138]

While the "existentialist" or Heideggerian aspect of Rahner's thought might be systematized more thoroughly in his large academic works (especially *Hearers of the Word* [1969] and *Foundations of Christian Faith* [1978]), it comes across with greatest immediacy in sermons delivered in the rubble of the war's aftermath. In Lent 1946, while teaching at the Jesuit philosophy faculty in Munich, Rahner preached sermons at St. Michael's Church.[139] He appealed to the vivid memories of Allied firebombing (recently the subject of great controversy[140]) and his parishioners' traumatic experience of terror.

Do you remember the nights in the cellar, the nights of deadly loneliness amidst the harrowing crush of people? The nights of helplessness and of waiting for a senseless death? The nights when the lights went out, when horror and impotence gripped one's heart, when one mimed being courageous and unaffected? . . . When one finally gave up, when one became silent, when one only waited hopelessly for the end, death? Alone, powerless, empty. And if the cellar really became buried by rubble, then the picture of today's man is complete.[141]

Rahner's concrete description of existential isolation—of *Dasein*'s being "thrown" into a historical existence without whence or whither—seemed to invite the most despairing kind of pessimism. But this was a rhetorical prelude to a description of humanity's common destiny as the necessary starting point for religious experience:

[136] Vorgrimler, *Understanding Karl Rahner* 92.
[137] Letter of Karl Rahner to Herbert Vorgimler (June 26, 1962); in ibid. 149–51, at 150.
[138] Ibid. 92–101; quotation from Carolus Balić, O.F.M., at 99.
[139] Collected as Karl Rahner, *The Need and the Blessing of Prayer*, trans. Bruce W. Gillette (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1997).
[140] Lothar Kettenacker, ed., *Ein Volk von Opfern? Die neue Debatte um den Bombenkrieg, 1940–45* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2003); Jörg Friedrich, *Der Brand: Deutschland im Bombenkrieg 1940–1945* (Berlin: Propyläen, 2002).
[141] Rahner, Prayer 3.

For such are we people of today, even if we already have crawled out of the rubbled-over cellars, even if our everyday has already begun again. . . . We men of today are still the rubbled-over because as such we have already entered into an exterior destiny, because the exterior destiny . . . is only the shadow of events which have occurred in the depths of men: that their hearts are rubbled-over.[142]

And what must one do after finding oneself in such a situation of the "rubbled-over heart"? One must "stand firm and submit to it." This is the beginning of true faith, of being "freed into the freedom of the infinite God." Admittedly, being rubbled-over can also lead to an atheistic human- ism, but the twilight of the gods can also lead further to the one true God. Those in despair "curse, they hate themselves and the world and say there is no God. They say there is no God because they confuse the true God with what they held to be their God. And they are actually right in their opinion. The God that they meant really does not exist." These people do not understand their own despair correctly, for "they saw in it the death of God and not his true advent."[143]

Thus Rahner counsels: "In this occurrence of the heart, let despair take everything away from you, in truth you will only lose the finite and the futile, no matter how great and wonderful it was, even if it is you your- self . . . you with your image of God which resembled you instead of the Incomprehensible himself. Whatever can be taken from you is never God." Perhaps slyly alluding to Sartre's *No Exit* (1944), Rahner adds: "Let all your exits be blocked, only the exits to the finite will be rubbled-over and the ways into the really futile." When all of this is accepted, one will find oneself "laid in the hands of this God, this Father whose deadly decree became love."[144]

In the sermons that follow, Rahner uses pastoral language to visit themes like those considered by de Lubac. In the "recent decades of European intellectual history," thinkers considered the human being "to be free, unbound, limitless, only responsible to the inner law of his nature, to be the autonomous person." But what is this "I" that "notices nothing and is devoid of this Spirit? This I does not exist at all, the I that doesn't have *more* in it than what even the outermost surface of our nature, that we usually call our consciousness, can oversee. This I is an abstraction of the Enlightenment's philistine of the nineteenth century. Who am 'I' then? I am in truth the man of infinite possibilities, enormous abysses, incalculable expanses!" If both the human being and God are mystery, then we must immerse ourselves in existence: "God must be sought and found *in* the world, therefore the everyday must become God's day, going out into the

[142] Ibid.   [143] Ibid. 6, 7.
[144] Ibid. 8, 12.

world must become going inward with God, the everyday must become a 'day of recollection.' The everyday itself must be prayed."[145]

Rahner would also, like de Lubac, concern himself with what Archbishop Denis Hurley of South Africa called "the central theological problem of the century," namely, the relationship of the natural order to humanity's supernatural end. The creature, Rahner wrote, "is endowed, by virtue of its inmost essence and constitution, with the possibility of being assumed, of being the material of a possible history of God."[146] Conciliar passages that reflect his existentialist outlook offer little solace to readers looking for sentimental certitude: "It was completely alien to Rahner to lull hopeful, seeking or perplexed people to prayer with comforting words, or to envelop real problems of life in a religious mist."[147] But to those who had experienced the very worst that the bloodiest of centuries had to offer, Rahner's honest acknowledgment of humanity's "rubbled-over" condition had a solace all its own—the consolation that comes from being understood and not dismissed. As for the Germans after the war—those who lived in a divided country that was ground zero for a nuclear confrontation—existential angst was not neurosis. It was simply an appropriate response to life in the atomic age.

CONTENT: TAKING TEMPORALITY SERIOUSLY OR, WHAT IS SALVATION?

The themes of temporality, existentialism, and atheism emerge most movingly in *Gaudium et spes*. Not coincidentally, this document—although it was criticized by some for not having a developed notion of sin—differs markedly from the earlier decrees by explicitly admitting anxiety over human fragmentation. In its introduction, addressing "The Situation of Man in the World Today," the council spoke about *both* hope *and* "anguish" within the context of an unprecedented temporal epoch. It began with a classically Marxist analysis of the base-superstructure relationship: "Ours is a new age of history with critical and swift upheavals spreading gradually to all corners of the earth. They are the products of man's intelligence and creative activity, but they recoil upon him, upon his judgments and desires, both individual and collective, upon his ways of thinking and acting in regard to people and things." It continued with Marx's notion of the producer's "alienation" from the product: "Increase in power is not

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[145] Ibid. 15, 20, 45.
[146] Hurley quoted in Rynne, *History of Vatican II* 349; Rahner quoted in Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism* 3. See Karl Rahner, *Nature and Grace: Dilemmas in the Modern Church* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1963; orig. publ. 1950).
[147] Vorgrimler, *Understanding Karl Rahner* 3.

always accompanied by control of that power for the benefit of man." It concluded with the anxiety that comes from a human person's being thrown into "the laws of social living": "man often seems more uncertain than ever of himself . . . he is perplexed by uncertainty" (no. 4).

The passage continues with the paradoxes of the present: "*In no other age* has mankind enjoyed such an abundance . . . and yet a huge proportion of the people of the world is plagued. . . . *At no time* have men had such a keen sense of freedom, only to be faced by new forms of slavery. . . . There is on the one hand *a lively feeling of unity and of compelling solidarity*, of mutual dependence, and on the other *a lamentable cleavage of bitterly opposing camps*. We have not yet seen the last of bitter political, social, and economic hostility, and racial and ideological antagonism, nor are we free from the spectre of *a war of total destruction*." As a result, contemporaries "hover between *hope* and *anxiety* and *wonder uneasily* about the present course of events. It is a situation that challenges men to respond; *they cannot escape*" (no. 4). This analysis succinctly presents a theology of *crisis*—of Heideggerian dread, Sartrean authenticity, and a Kierkegaardian demand for decision.

The influence of Teilhard de Chardin is felt keenly at this point under the rubric "Deep-seated changes," and it marks a turning point in Catholic thought from classicism to historical-mindedness. First comes a seeming allusion to Teilhard's notion of a noosphere, a global unifying of intelligence that brings with it a corollary demand for taking responsibility: "The human mind is, in a certain sense, broadening mastery over time. . . ." Then follows a sense of what Alvin Toffler's best-seller would soon call *Future Shock* (1970):[148] "The accelerated pace of history is such that one can scarcely keep abreast of it. . . ." Finally comes an acknowledgment of the need to accept modernity's sense of temporalization: "And so mankind substitutes a dynamic and more evolutionary concept of nature for a static one." Realizing that such a radical change in worldview comes with costs, the passage immediately reinforces the notions of anxiety and decision: "the result is an immense series of new problems calling for a new endeavor of analysis and synthesis" (no. 5). The double bind of modernization and modernity is summed up in a thoroughly Teilhardian declaration: "Man is growing conscious that the forces he has unleashed are in his own hands and that it is up to him to control them or be enslaved by them. Here lies the modern dilemma" (no. 9).

Poignantly, the document immediately moves from this structuralist approach to an existentialist one. Under the heading "Man's deeper questionings," the focus shifts to the interior: "The dichotomy affecting the modern world is, in fact, a symptom of the deeper dichotomy that is in man

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[148] Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York: Random House, 1970).

himself. He is the meeting point of many conflicting forces." Once again comes the Kierkegaardian analysis of dread: "In his condition as a created being he is subject to a thousand shortcomings, but feels untrammeled in his inclination and destined for a higher form of life." This human dualism—the condition of being both an angel and a beast—leads to dread and decision: "Torn by a welter of anxieties he is compelled to choose between them and repudiate some among them." However, as St. Paul says, a person "often does the very thing he hates and does not do what he wants. And so he feels himself divided." Being thus reminded of humanity's irreducible bind, the council invokes the big questions: "there is a growing body of men who are asking the most fundamental of all questions or are glimpsing them with a keener insight: What is man? What is the meaning of suffering, evil, death, which have not been eliminated by all this progress? . . . What happens after this earthly life is ended?" The section ends with a nod to de Lubac: "that is why the Council . . . proposes to speak to all men in order *to unfold the mystery that is man*" (no. 10).

The following chapter, "The Dignity of the Human Person," sets out the question: "But what is man?" Depending on whether one emphasizes the angel or the beast, "he either sets himself up as the absolute measure of all things, or debases himself to the point of despair. Hence his *doubt* and his *anguish*" (no. 12). There is a dignity to human intellect, truth, conscience, and freedom. But there is also "The Mystery of Death," and it is in this regard "that man's condition is most shrouded in *doubt*. Man is tormented not only by pain and by the gradual breaking-up of his body but also, and even more, by the *dread* of forever ceasing to be" (no. 18).

Having taken pains to acknowledge just how much modern consciousness is marked by what Ernest Becker would soon call *The Denial of Death* (1973),[149] the document turns to "Kinds of Atheism and Its Causes" and declares: "Atheism must therefore be regarded as one of the most serious problems of our time, and one that deserves more thorough treatment." In its delineation of the strands of atheism the document echoed Rahner's 1946 sermons preached in the rubble: "Yet others have such a false notion of God that when they disown this product of the imagination their denial has no reference to the God of the Gospels." Remarkably, the council here reversed over a century of combative rhetoric[150] by placing some of the responsibility for the modern situation on the shoulders of Christians: "But believers themselves often share some responsibility for this situation. . . . To the extent that they are careless about their instruction in the faith, or present its teaching falsely, or even fail in their religious, moral, or social

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[149] Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1973).
[150] Chadwick, *Secularization* 48–139.

life, they must be said to conceal rather than to reveal the true nature of God and of religion" (no. 19).

More importantly, it took the criticisms of atheism seriously: "Well knowing how important are the problems raised by atheism . . . she considers that these motives deserve an honest and more thorough scrutiny." Instead of simplistic condemnations, it returned to deep sources where belief and unbelief originate: "Meanwhile, every man remains a question to himself, one that is dimly perceived and left unanswered. For there are times, especially in the major events of life, when no man can altogether escape from such self-questioning." Where belief and unbelief eventually part company is in the decision to embrace or reject mystery: "God alone, who calls man to deeper thought and to more humble probing, can fully and with complete certainty supply an answer to this questioning." Realizing that atheism is a fact of modernity, the council urges both parties to transcend their differences over belief and step back to see pressing terrestrial needs: "Although the Church altogether rejects atheism, she nevertheless sincerely proclaims that all men, those who believe as well as those who do not, should help establish right order in this world where all live together" (no. 21).

In its prelude to consideration of practical problems needing urgent attention, the chapter entitled "Man's Activity in the Universe" begins once again with the posing of big questions: "In the face of this immense enterprise now involving the whole human race men are troubled by many questionings. What is the meaning and value of this feverish activity? How ought all of these things be used? To what goal is all this individual and collective enterprise heading?" (no. 33). It is in the light of these questions that the council defined its "salvific purpose" in modern times: first, to "communicate divine life to men"; second, to cast "the reflected light of that divine life over all the earth"—that is, as a light to the nations. The Church "believes it can contribute much to *humanizing* the family of man and its history," above all in three ways: (1) "in the way it heals and elevates the *dignity of the human person*"; (2) "in the way it *consolidates society*"; and, in a direct response to the large questions raised above, (3) in the way that it "endows the daily activity of men with a *deeper sense and meaning*" (no. 40). As Rahner had preached in the rubble of 1946: "if we let ourselves be taken by the everyday . . . then the everyday is no longer the everyday, then it is prayer."[151]

What is salvation? And what is the "salvific purpose" of the Church? By the time the council had come to its conclusion in December 1965, it had arrived at a remarkably different place than where it had begun in 1962. While not neglecting the details of the Church's internal life, it had stepped

[151] Rahner, *Prayer* 46, 47.

back from perspectives specific to Catholicism, Christianity, and even re-
ligion in general. It had stepped back to see the world—humanity, history,
existence—from the perspective of the broadest possible horizons. It asked
anew what its purpose was—and what the purpose of Christian believers
was—in a world populated by nations and cultures whose difference and
diversity were finally being acknowledged in a postcolonialist world.
Speaking in the modern dialects of science, existentialism, atheism, and
historical-mindedness, it situated itself as a dialogue partner with a bloc of
nonbelievers (in both West and East) whose questions could no longer
simply be condemned or dismissed.

CONCLUSION

This new language—a language of going "back to the sources" not only
of faith but of human existence itself—was not merely novel. It was an
ethical necessity. It was a consequence of gathering representatives from all
over the decolonized globe in the years 1962 to 1965, a time in which no
one could have known whether "the world's deepest anxieties"—that is,
the annihilation of the human race—were going to be realized or not.

Now that the Cold War is being forgotten by those who lived through it
and is practically unknown to those who did not, it is too easy—and, for
some, suspiciously expedient—to forget what it had once been like to be
compelled by anxiety to return to sources. But it should not be forgotten,
not by unwitting ignorance or willful amnesia. We should remember it not
only for the sake of truth. We should remember it for the sake of the good.

The council's call for the Church to be a "humanizing" force was an
ethically necessary response to a century that had been, in Nietzsche's
ironic phrase, "human, all too human." The form was appropriate to the
context: a magnanimous voice, rising above all pusillanimity, calling people
back to the fundamental questions and evoking generosity and goodwill.
Of all the reasons it did this, none stands out so boldly as the anxiety of
those "Thirteen Days" in October 1962 that eerily coincided with—and set
the defining stage for—the council's first hours: Warned by the possibility
of the catastrophes that man has created, let us profit by the respite we now
enjoy, thanks to the divine favor, to take stock of our responsibilities and
find ways of resolving controversies in a manner worthy of human beings.
Providence urgently demands of us that we free ourselves from the age-old
slavery of war. If we refuse to make this effort, there is no knowing where
we will be led on the fatal path we have taken (*Gaudium et spes* no. 81).