

1995

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Marianist Award Lecture/1995

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THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD:
RESPONDING TO THE CALL OF THE COUNCIL

by J. BRYAN HEHIR

Marianist Award Lecture
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THE UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

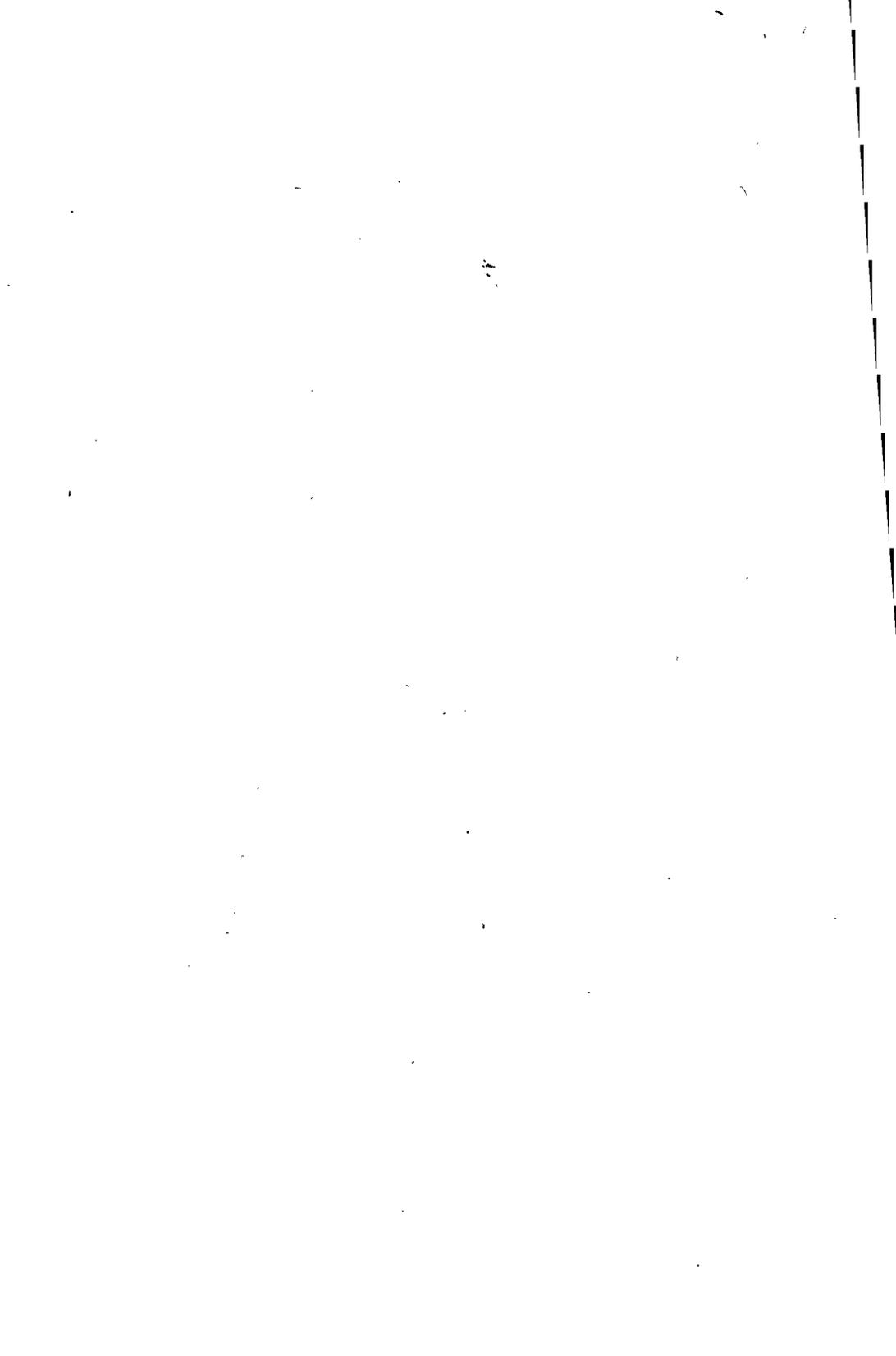
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J. BRYAN HEHIR, Th.D. is Professor of the Practice in Religion and Society, Harvard Divinity School, and a member of the Executive Committee of the Harvard Center for International Affairs. He has lectured extensively in areas of religion, ethics, international politics, and peacemaking. From 1973-1992, Fr. Hehir served in Washington at the U.S. Catholic Conference and at Georgetown University. At the USCC, he was Director of the Office of International Affairs (1973-83), Secretary of the Department of Social Development and World Peace (1984-88), and Counselor for Social Policy (1988-92). He was the principal drafter of the U.S. Catholic Bishops' 1983 pastoral letter on war and peace, which called for a halt in the development of all nuclear weapons.

At Georgetown University, Fr. Hehir served as the Joseph P. Kennedy Professor of Christian Ethics in the School of Foreign Service and at the Kennedy Institute of Ethics. In 1991-92, he served as Associate Vice President for Church and University Issues. Fr. Hehir now serves as pastor of St. Paul's Parish and is the Senior Chaplain of the Harvard-Radcliffe Student Center.

His extensive publications include the essays "Religion and Politics in the 1980s and 1990s: Evaluating Catholic Positions and Potential" and "From the Pastoral Constitution of Vatican II to *The Challenge of Peace*."



The following lecture was given at the University of Dayton on the occasion of the presentation of the Marianist Award to J. Bryan Hehir, January 26, 1995.

THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD: RESPONDING TO THE CALL OF THE COUNCIL

This lecture is an expression of gratitude to the University of Dayton for the 1995 Marianist Award. There is much for which to be grateful: the intrinsic purpose of the award; the privilege of being associated with the previous honorees, all of whom I have had the privilege of knowing personally; and the personal respect I have for your President and your Provost, both of whom are playing crucial roles in the contemporary dialogue about American Catholic higher education.

The tradition of this lecture invites the speaker to address a substantive issue in Catholic life and to relate it to his or her own intellectual history and professional work. The topic I have chosen, "The Church in the World: Responding to the Call of the Council," allows me to focus upon a significant anniversary in post-conciliar Catholicism and to incorporate personal reflections as well. The year 1995 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the final document of Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* ("The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World").¹ This text is the church's most recent authoritative address to a question which is as ancient as the New Testament and as contemporary as today's *New York Times*. For it addresses the issue of how the church of Christ understands its place in history, how it defines its posture in relationship to secular institutions and how it speaks, by word and example, to the principal political, economic and social issues of the day. Christ framed the question by instructing his disciples to be responsive to both God and Caesar, but the nature of his teaching and the example of his life provided a challenging body

of resources to determine how to fulfill his command with fidelity and integrity. Throughout Christian history the concise but deceptively complex dictum of the Master has left disciples with open-ended questions about both the church and the world.

Vatican II's response, framed in the middle of the twentieth century, echoes earlier answers in the Catholic tradition but moves beyond them. In terms of its content and the catalytic role it has played in the life of the church since 1965, *Gaudium et Spes* already stands as a monumental text. The purpose of this lecture is to provide a sense of the historic significance of the last and longest document of Vatican II. In doing so, it will be a simple task to provide a personal dimension since this text has had a defining impact on my academic work and ministry in public affairs on behalf of the church. It is also the case that the basic direction of my theological teaching and writing has been heavily influenced by individuals whose research provided the foundation on which *Gaudium et Spes* rests. They are all part of that remarkable corps of theologians, born at the beginning of the century, whose work climaxed in Vatican II.

To capture both the significance of the conciliar achievement and to illustrate the role of the theology which shaped it, I propose in this lecture to analyze the church-world question in three steps: first, a statement of the central role it has played in Catholic history; second, an evaluation of the background, content and consequences of *Gaudium et Spes*; and third, a sketch of illustrative issues engaging church and world in the 1990s here in the United States.

I. Church and World: History and Structure of the Question

The pervasive presence of "the world" in the New Testament and the contrasting evaluations given of it guaranteed the church-world question a central place in the history of the church. The scriptures generated more questions than they answered; it was

the task of the tradition to grapple with the problem opened by Christ's dictum about God and Caesar. The references to the world cut across a variety of New Testament texts. St. Luke locates the birth of Christ and the ministry of the Baptist securely in the context of the Roman Empire. All the evangelists place the crucifixion in the context of the ongoing tension between the Jewish leadership and the Empire. St. John's gospel depends heavily on the statement that "God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son" (Jn. 3:16), yet the Son ends his life reminding the disciples that "They are strangers to the world" (Jn. 17:16), and I John warns them not to set their hearts "on the godless world or anything in it" (I Jn. 1:15). St. Paul's theology of history depicts the whole cosmos awaiting redemption ("... the universe itself is to be freed from the shackles of mortality and enter upon the liberty and splendour of the children of God." Rom. 8:21), but he warns the disciples not to be conformed to the pattern of this world (Rom. 12:2).

The inherent tensions of the biblical texts provided precisely the kind of question which is addressed in the Catholic tradition through systematic theology. The church-world question has been posed at two levels: the conscience and choices of each disciple and the role of the church in history. The responses to the church-world question are woven through the entire history of Catholic theology, beginning with the patristic literature and extending through the pontificate of John Paul II. Augustine structured the argument in classical fashion with his "two cities" doctrine, traces of which are still evident in *Gaudium et Spes*. Also evident is the influence of Aquinas' more positive conception of the state and civil society derived from his fusion of Aristotelean political philosophy and the Christian gospel. The power of Augustine's conception of sin, grace and history and Aquinas' sense of the dual resources of reason and faith will be part of any Catholic understanding of the church-world problem. But neither the Roman Empire nor the medieval *Respublica Christiana* exhausted the range of problems and possibilities which secular institutions

could pose for the church as a community and a social institution. Neither Augustine nor Aquinas had to grapple with the rise of the nation state (secular in character and concentrated in its power), the shattering impact of the Reformation, the transforming scientific power of the Enlightenment, the emergence of democratic polity, the positive and negative effects of the Industrial Revolution. By the nineteenth century the church was in need of a fundamental recasting of the church-world question, something which would approximate in scope and depth the work of an Augustine. For most of the century the response of the church was timid and inadequate; it faced fundamental change by retreat and reaction. Renewal came with the pontificate of Leo XIII (1878-1903) who inaugurated three fundamental reforms in Catholic life: intellectual, social and political.

Intellectually, he launched the Neo-Scholastic revival of philosophy and theology with St. Thomas Aquinas as the patron of the movement; this initiative decisively shaped Catholic thinking and teaching through the middle of the twentieth century, including the work of Jacques Maritain, Etienne Gilson and many authors in the Catholic social tradition. Socially, Leo XIII grasped the challenge posed for the church by the impoverishment of the working classes in Europe and North America; his response, *Rerum Novarum* (1891), the first of the social encyclicals, established a papal tradition of highly visible engagement with socio-economic issues throughout the century. While later encyclicals moved beyond Leo XIII's thought on a number of questions the dominant note of the encyclicals is one of evolutionary development. Politically, Leo XIII devoted a substantial corpus of writing to issues of church-state relations, even as he also reinvigorated the diplomatic role of the Holy See in world affairs. The dynamic of development in Catholic thought on church and state moved quite beyond Leo XIII, but not until the teaching of Vatican II. When development occurred, the break was sharper on church-state than on the social issues.

Taken together these three dimensions of Leo XIII's pontificate made a major contribution to the church's role in the modern world. Leo XIII was a transitional figure; that judgment can be made at the end of the twentieth century. But for two-thirds of this century his teaching set the basic structure for his successors.

To trace the lines of continuity and change which have occurred since Leo XIII, it is not sufficient to analyze "the social teaching" in an undifferentiated manner. The scope and quantity of Catholic teaching about the church's place in society and its relationships with the structures of secular life require some distinctions: church-world, church-society and church-state.

The church-world question, the principal focus of this lecture, is the properly theological understanding of the church's role in history. The argument is cast in theological terms: sin and grace; ecclesiology and eschatology; ethics and anthropology. The church-world question is the framework within which the church-society and church-state issues are developed. The church-society statements, primarily the papal social encyclicals from Leo XIII through John Paul II, seek to relate Catholic moral tradition to a range of socio-economic issues, first within nations and then on a global basis.² The church-state arguments are cast in political-juridical terms, relating Catholic theological ideas to the changing structure of the state in different historical periods. The church-state teaching, principally found in Leo XIII, Pius XII, Vatican II and John Paul II, builds upon the church-world premises but it is more institutional in character.³

This three-dimensional view of Catholic teaching provides a way of thinking about the church's relationship to the *world* as a cosmic and historical reality, to *civil society* in its social, economic and cultural dimensions, and to the *state* as the center of political authority in society. Vatican II's teaching engaged all three levels of Catholic thought, but its major impact was on the church-world question.

II. The Conciliar Text: Background, Content, and Consequences

The sources of the teaching varied in the first half of the twentieth century. The church-society and church-state themes were developed primarily through papal writings. The church-world issues were the stuff of theological discourse and research.

Except for Pius XI's encyclical on the kingship of Christ, *Quas Primas*, papal teaching did not contribute substantially to the theology of church and world. Pius XII's discourses and messages about the apostolate of the laity and his far-reaching contributions in *Mystici Corporis* and *Mediator Dei* provided impetus to the theological work addressing the church-world question directly. The theological writing was both extensive and creative; it was part of a broader process of fundamental theological research which led directly to the Second Vatican Council. While the architects of this theological renewal had no sense that an ecumenical council was just over the horizon, in retrospect we can see the direct and substantial connection between the theology of the 1930s through the 1950s and the documents of Vatican II. The theological work cut across biblical and patristic research, ecclesiology and ecumenism, liturgy and social teaching.

In the midst of these themes, the church-world question held a special status: it was intrinsically important, but it also served as a catalyst for the way in which other theological topics were approached. The principal architects of the broader theological renewal saw the church-world issues as the horizon in light of which specific aspects of theological research would be pursued. Henri de Lubac, the French Jesuit, whose life and work in this period exemplified the vitality and vision of pre-conciliar French Catholicism, focused his research on overcoming a "separated theology" pursued apart from the major intellectual and social currents of the day.⁴ Yves Congar, the French Dominican, whose

life and work complemented that of de Lubac, described the way in which their theology was shaped by a sense of responsibility for the church-world question:

I cannot exaggerate the importance of the new consciousness which theologians have acquired of their responsibility to the church and to the internal credibility of the faith which the church must offer mankind.⁵

On a personal note, it was Congar who served as my introduction to the church-world questions. I had by nature, family influences and study a clear orientation to social and political issues by the time I entered seminary. While I had a general sense of the social significance of Christian faith, it was by reading Congar's *Lay People in the Church* in my first year of seminary that I encountered a qualitatively new level of understanding of the church's teaching and its role in society. Congar, de Lubac and their Jesuit and Dominican colleagues were pursuing a two-tiered research agenda, engaging the most pressing contemporary political, social and cultural issues, and seeking to respond to them from the biblical, patristic and liturgical sources of the faith. Joseph Komanchak, analyzing the dynamic of de Lubac's research, also describes the spirit of the theological enterprise leading to Vatican II:

It was an attempt to recover a Christianity intellectually rich and spiritually powerful enough to be impatient with the marginal role with which too many theologians had become content and to be eager to exercise a redemptive role in all of human life.⁶

Describing even minimally the scope and substance of this theological project is a task which exceeds this lecture; it would have to encompass the work of prolific authors like Marie-Dominique Chenu, O.P., Jean Danielou, S.J., and the Belgian priest Gustave Thils. All contributed original research on the church-

world question as did Karl Rahner, S.J., and Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P., writing in a different theological style from the French Jesuits and Dominicans. All that is possible here is a snapshot of how these theologians established a foundation for Vatican II's decisive contribution to the church-world question.⁷

Henri de Lubac, seeking both to overcome a "separated theology" and to share with the church and the world an "intellectually rich and spiritually powerful" Christian vision, produced in 1938 a fundamental interpretation of Catholic faith in his book *Catholicism: A Study of the Corporate Destiny of Mankind*. De Lubac's basic concern in this book which evolved from a series of essays was to demonstrate the *essentially* social character of Catholicism. In one sense the motivating force of the book is apologetic, because it seeks to refute a conception of Christian faith as inherently individualist and inevitably isolated from the larger issues of society and history. One can feel de Lubac's visceral and intellectual reaction to such a view of faith in his introduction to *Catholicism*:

We are accused of being individualists even in spite of ourselves, by the logic of our faith, whereas in reality Catholicism is essentially social. It is social in the deepest sense of the word: not merely in its applications in the field of natural institutions but first and foremost in itself, in the heart of its mystery, in the essence of its dogma.⁸

De Lubac's commentary, appearing almost fifty years after the first social encyclical, is obviously intended to go well beyond the claim that the church has a social concern and a social teaching. He seeks in *Catholicism* to illustrate the social nature of this faith in two ways. First, to show the social character of Catholicism as expressed in its sacramental life, its conception of community and its doctrine. Secondly, to illustrate how the intrinsically social nature of the church in turn produces a perspective on history, the

meaning of the person and the theory of society which places Catholicism at the center of the world and its quest for unity at the spiritual, social and political levels of life. Far from being individualist and escapist in character, de Lubac understood the church to be deeply engaged in a quest for unity which is rooted in human nature, but brought to a new level of meaning and solidarity by faith:

Humanity is one, organically one by its divine structure; it is the Church's mission to reveal to man that pristine unity that they have lost, to restore and complete it.⁹

For de Lubac the faith and the church *are* social before they articulate a response to social needs and social questions. His conception of both Christian faith and the Catholic church established a foundation for the church-world question which is reflected in the opening paragraph of *Gaudium et Spes*:

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts That is why this community realizes that it is truly and intimately linked with mankind and its history.¹⁰

Foundations, however, need to be elaborated in terms of a structural framework. It is this which Yves Congar provided in his study of ecclesiology and eschatology. In *Lay People in the Church*, Congar explores the history of the church-world question in Catholicism in terms of the key structural concepts of church, kingdom and history. Drawing on the work of Thils, as well as the contrary view of Louis Bouyer, Congar provided both a summary of the church-world debate and a statement of his own position. He begins with a lucid and comprehensive definition of the question:

Many are preoccupied by this question today, and it is approached sometimes as the theology of history, sometimes as the theology of earthly things. The problem is to know whether what we do in the secular sphere of this world is altogether irrelevant and without importance for what will be the kingdom of God Education, increase of knowledge, advance in techniques and methods of production, use of the world's resources, development of our physical bodies—has all that a relationship, some continuity, with the final reality of God's kingdom? And if so, what?"

While acknowledging the permanent validity and presence in the community of the church of what Congar calls "the dualist-eschatological view," as expressed in the monastic vocation's search for conformity "with the City that is to come," he finds more convincing as a basic position for the church, "a certain continuity between the human work of this world on the one side and the kingdom of God on the other"¹² Congar takes care to distinguish his position from Thils and others who, in his view, collapse the distinctions among church, world, and kingdom too easily. But the differences between Congar and Thils are a matter of degree. They both advocate a transformative view of ecclesiology and eschatology: the kingdom ultimately is a work of the Spirit, a gift of God, but the Spirit transforms what has been prepared in history by human work through culture, scholarship, politics, art, economics and law.

The structure which Congar provides for the church-world problem leads directly toward *Gaudium et Spes*. While the conciliar text will manifest the fifteen years of theological work between *Lay People in the Church* and *Gaudium et Spes*, Congar's basic design of the problem remains. The kingdom is both present in history and transcends history: it is within us and ahead of us. The created world, while ambivalent and ambiguous in terms of its orientation toward the kingdom because of sin, provides the raw material for the heavenly Jerusalem. The work of human

intelligence and creativity which perfects the created order points toward the culmination of history in the eschaton—hence the lasting value of human work. Both the church and world are destined for the kingdom, both serve the purposes of the kingdom but using different means and with different purposes in the overall design of God. Without denying the legitimate autonomy of secular society and history, Congar sees the church's ministry in terms of directing the world toward the kingdom:

The Church is the direct preparation for the kingdom, having within herself the strength of the Holy Spirit, and she cannot but strive to transform the world to the utmost. Of necessity she seeks as much as possible to reduce the evil in the world, to rebuild it in good order, to make operative the healing, uplifting, transforming force of which we have spoken above, the gifts of grace.¹³

Both the foundational theology and the framework (ecclesiological and eschatological) of the church-world question in the twentieth century were given their critical impetus in European theology. But the framework sets the stage for the next level of reflection, the specific forms of relationships which should exist between the church and the secular institutions. While Congar, de Lubac and others addressed this issue productively, the most important single contribution came from the American Jesuit, John Courtney Murray, a contemporary of the European theologians, whose sure grasp of the intersection of theology, law and politics allowed him to recast the church-society-state relationships in a way that moved beyond both Leo XIII and Pius XII.

Murray's work, pursued over twenty years prior to Vatican II, involved a double dynamic. Convinced that the nineteenth-century formulation of the church-society-state question prevented the church from engaging democratic theory and practice, imprisoned it in a debate which had been superseded by changes in the secular world and, thereby, distracted it from the larger task

of renewing its witness in the world, Murray first had to relativize the authority of nineteenth-century papal teaching on state and society. He then had to construct from the resources of the Catholic tradition and his understanding of contemporary political theory a conception of church-society-state relations for this century and beyond. To accomplish both tasks he used a sophisticated blend of theology and history. He reviewed the tradition with great respect, in search of “transtemporal” structural principles which are rooted in the nature of the church and society, but always reminding his audience that the principles assume multiple forms in different historical periods.¹⁴ Drawing on diverse authorities reaching across the span of Catholic history (Popes Gelasius and Gregory VII; Jean of Paris and Pius XII) Murray culled a set of principles which should structure the church’s relationship with the institutions of the world. They included respect for the distinct origins, purposes and methods of church and state; defense of the principle of freedom of the church from secular dominance; respect for the primacy of spiritual values, combined with the need for collaboration between church and state; and acceptance of religious pluralism as the context of the church’s ministry. Use of these principles would allow the church to shape the church-world problem in a way which placed the church in defense of human dignity and human rights, and in a position to serve civil society without being subordinated to secular power.¹⁵

This sketch of theological research prior to Vatican II conveys a sense of a time of profound change and development in Catholic thought. Part of the narrative, told well in other sources, is the fact that those doing the basic research were severely burdened in their work by a pattern of suspicion, restriction and repression which affected most of the key contributors to Vatican II. Rather than detail this history, my focus must remain on the relationship between the theological work summarized thus far and the product of Vatican II on church and world. The relationship can be defined in two ways: the conciliar text *Gaudium et Spes* is

dependent upon and emerges from the theology of the previous thirty years; but it also surpasses the earlier work, having its own distinctive character which could not have been simply predicted from the research prior to the council.

Gaudium et Spes moves beyond previous writing on the church-world question because of its synthetic quality. The text draws on both the resources of Catholic social teaching and the theological work which we have surveyed in this lecture. The major contribution of the text lies in Part I which is the explicitly theological section of *Gaudium et Spes*. Part II resembles the social encyclicals, and, while it makes important contributions in its chapters on marriage and on international relations, the innovative character of the document remains the ecclesiological vision of Part I. In a council centered on the church, *Gaudium et Spes* adds a decisive chapter to Catholic ecclesiology.

The synthetic quality of the text resides in the way in which ecclesiology is located within a broader theological argument. Part I joins theological anthropology, eschatology and ecclesiology. The conciliar text locates the church *in* the world. From a nineteenth-century posture which placed the church *against* the world, this text moves even beyond a conception of the church *and* the world to one in which the world in its cosmic and historical dimensions is the starting point for theological reflection. After reviewing the "signs of the times" which characterize the world of our time, the council locates the church in the midst of the world as "a sacrament of unity," an active agent of unity in human history. The location of the church then raises the question of how the church should fulfill its unifying ministry. The answer of Vatican II is that the distinctive mark of the church's ministry should be its capacity for dialogue with the world in its multiple dimensions. The dialogue, as Fr. Congar notes in his commentary in *Gaudium et Spes*, is not that of a teacher and a pupil; reciprocity must mark the church-world dialogue since the church has

something to learn and something to teach about the topics raised in Part II of *Gaudium et Spes*.¹⁶ One way in which the conciliar text fosters reciprocity is the clear recognition of the intrinsic value and validity of secular institutions and secular disciplines. In affirming the role and value of secular institutions, *Gaudium et Spes* is complemented and deepened by *Dignitatis Humanae* ("The Declaration on Religious Freedom"). Both texts led the church to acknowledge the legitimate autonomy of the world; this respect for legitimate secularity is shown by the council's regard for the secular character of the state, its respect for the established methods of research in various fields of knowledge and its recognition that effective dialogue means speaking in terms which secular audiences can grasp. Productive dialogue, therefore, requires a pastoral strategy based upon recognition of and respect for the secular context of the world in which the church finds itself.

Gaudium et Spes is not content, however, simply to locate the church in the world and sustain a dialogue about issues affecting both church and world. The conciliar text seeks to give its answer to the church-world problem summarized above by Fr. Congar. To some degree *Gaudium et Spes* is a response to the theological debate about church-world themes which had been underway for thirty years. Congar had classified one response as a dualist-eschatology, one which stressed a sharp break between the results of human effort and the final gift of the kingdom which would be purely and simply a work of the Spirit. I characterized Congar's own position as a transformative view in which a close connection exists between ecclesiology and eschatology, and the final product of the kingdom is a result of human effort consecrated and transformed by the work of the Spirit.

In light of this background, it is clear that *Gaudium et Spes* opts for the transformative model. While there is a clear warning in the text that human progress should not be confused with the growth

of the kingdom, at a deeper level the teaching of Vatican II affirms the lasting significance of human work, culture, science and politics viewed from the perspective of faith:

For after we have obeyed the Lord, and in His Spirit nurtured on earth the value of human dignity, brotherhood and freedom, and indeed all the good fruits of our nature and enterprise, we will find them again, but freed of stain, burnished and transfigured.¹⁷

While the council's statement lays stress on the continuity of human effort and divine intervention, the theology of *Gaudium et Spes* is not a unilateral affirmation that the kingdom of God is a human creature. The structure of the conciliar argument is anthropological in its foundation, eschatological in its culmination, ecclesiological in its focus and christological in its content.

Congar's commentary on *Gaudium et Spes* argues that the shift in the church-world question manifested in the council is a move from a political-judicial conception of the church's role in the world to an anthropological perspective.¹⁸ The person is the link between church and world; it is because of its ministry to the person that the church is engaged in enhancing the moral and material conditions of the world. Anthropology leads therefore to ecclesiology: the church's work in the world is at one level a response to the concrete needs of the person. Ecclesiology is tied to eschatology: the church responds to the needs of the person in the first instance because of the intrinsic moral value of meeting human needs, but the work of the church in the world has eternal meaning and value; it prepares for the kingdom. Finally a strong christological theme ties anthropology, ecclesiology and eschatology together; each of the four chapters of Part I concludes with a christological summary.

The rich theological argument of *Gaudium et Spes* brings the earlier theological work of de Lubac, Congar et al., to a new level

of integration, and with new authority in the Catholic tradition. The principal achievement of the text was to provide a new basis for Catholic social teaching and social ministry. By rooting them in the service of the person and showing this ministry's relationship to the eschaton, Vatican II provided a rationale for the church's engagement in the world which was previously lacking. A second value was the subordination of the classical church-state questions to the broader apostolic conception of the church as a servant in the world. The institutional questions of relationships with the state and other secular entities retain a crucial importance, but they are couched in a broader vision of ministry.

The consequences of *Gaudium et Spes* in the church are best evaluated at two levels in the life of post-conciliar Catholicism. First, the record of Catholic engagement with the world in defense of human dignity and in support of human rights, in public advocacy for peace and in support of social justice demands a systematic explanation. While this kind of secular engagement is hardly new with Vatican II, there has been a pattern of Catholic activism in diverse political and cultural settings which points toward a common source. The ecclesiological significance attributed to serving and shaping the world by *Gaudium et Spes* provides an authoritative impetus for such activity, giving it a substantive theological basis. This theological rationale, ecclesial and eschatological, has provided the basic motivation and even methods of ministry for the church in Latin America, the Philippines, Central Europe, South Africa and the United States. A Catholic "activism" with solid theological credentials has been the signature of post-conciliar Catholicism.

Second, *Gaudium et Spes* has catalyzed distinctive theological movements since 1965. While both the Theology of Liberation and Political Theology move beyond the conciliar text, they reflect methodological and substantive themes found in it. In a more detailed treatment one could both find the lines of continuity from

the council to post-conciliar theologies, and specify the distinctive contributions which such theological reflection has added to the conciliar vision.

III. Church and World: Contemporary Issues

In the United States the impact of *Gaudium et Spes* was clearly evident in the pastoral letters of the 1980s on nuclear policy and the economy. In both instances the teaching of the bishops *extended* the style and substance of *Gaudium et Spes* to the setting of one "local church." Unlike Political Theology in Europe or the Theology of Liberation in Latin America, the church in the United States has produced less a distinctive school of theology than a linear elaboration of the conciliar vision.

In closing I seek to provide a sense of how that extension of *Gaudium et Spes* takes shape in the world on a range of issues. The goal here is not an indepth analysis of any issue, but an illustration of how the Catholic conception of church/world/society yields a position on specific topics.

In foreign policy the core Catholic concept is the unity of the human family, based on common origin, common nature and common destiny. Sustaining this idea are the theological doctrines of creation and eschatology as well as the philosophical premise of a natural law ethic. This idea of the unity of the human community was central to de Lubac's *Catholicism* as well as to Augustine, Aquinas and the Spanish Scholastics (Vitoria and Suarez). In the structure of Catholic teaching on international relations, the unity of the human community is the master concept for the following more specific themes.

In twentieth-century papal teaching on international relations, the basic structure posits the existence of a human community, united by moral bonds of rights and duties, but lacking an adequate legal, political and economic structure to achieve its

destiny. Pius XII articulated the basic lines of this argument which has since then been developed politically by John XXIII in *Pacem In Terris* (1963) and economically by Paul VI in *Populorum Progressio* (1967) and by John Paul II in his human rights address to the United Nations (1979). Flowing from this basic structure is Catholic teaching on the status of the nation-state; the state has clear moral standing but its role is relativized by the pre-existing moral obligations which unite and bind all persons. Such a view of the nation-state, which sets clear moral limits on its claims and its power, establishes the basis for Catholic teaching on war (a *limited* right of defense exists) and its teaching on economics (both individuals and states bear responsibilities for policies affecting economic justice at the global level).

In brief, Catholic teaching on international relations affirms a moral structure for the world which goes quite beyond any existing political framework, but which arises directly from de Lubac's conception of "the corporate destiny" of the human community.

In terms of U.S. foreign policy in the 1990s, the premises (and, to be honest, the tensions) of Catholic teaching are evident when confronting the issue of military intervention. In the secular political debate, the norm of nonintervention, which has been in possession politically and legally for three hundred years, is now under pressure and under review. Proposals are advanced from several sources to rethink and to relativize the nonintervention norm in the name of protecting human rights and quelling civil conflicts which threaten entire societies like Bosnia and Rwanda. The logic of Catholic teaching, rooted in human unity, has always been at odds with an absolute conception of nonintervention. Some forms of military intervention have been understood as obligations of human solidarity.

The tension in contemporary Catholic teaching arises because the ethic of war has grown increasingly restrictive in light of the

destructive capabilities of modern warfare. The Catholic ethic of intervention seeks to reconcile an expansive conception of transnational moral responsibility with a very narrow conception of when force can be used as an instrument of policy. In the context of the contemporary U.S. policy debate, the Catholic position both presses the case for engagement and sets rigorous standards of limits in fulfilling the engagement.

On a quite different front, Catholic teaching on bioethics also exemplifies its conception of church-world engagement. Here the controlling concepts are the sacredness of life and the notion of stewardship. The sacredness of every person is the foundational idea for Catholic political ethics and for bioethics. The defense of the person, in John Courtney Murray's words, is the *locus standi* for the church in the world, its point of entry to the political order and its rationale for social engagement.¹⁹ The concept of sacredness leads directly to the principle of stewardship, the idea that both positive duties and decisive restraints govern the "taking" or the "touching" of human life. This double moral agenda, for *care* of human life and for *restraint* in the exercise of care undergirds Catholic teaching in *Donum Vitae* (1987) and *Evangelium Vitae* (1995). The stewardship principle governs both texts, affirming a right and responsibility for science and medicine to explore the range of therapeutic measures which can enhance and extend human life, while asserting firm prohibitions against abortion, euthanasia, and experimentation with fetal life. Catholic bioethics is shaped by themes which are central to the church-world question: responsibility for the world, exercised through research and technological innovation; conviction about the social nature of the person which in turn sets the context for assessing issues of bioethics from a social perspective; a sense of the real but limited nature of human responsibility (that of creatures not the creator) which is shaped by an understanding of history and eschatology.

The product of these themes is an ethic for medicine and the life sciences which is neither passive in terms of human respon-

sibility nor willing simply to affirm human autonomy in the face of issues of life and death. Like the ethic of intervention Catholic bioethics is in tension, affirming broad responsibilities for the world, but interpreting responsibility in precisely defined categories.

A similar tension marks the Catholic ethic of the state. While church-state relations are subordinated to the wider church-world issues by *Gaudium et Spes*, the institution of the state uniquely represents challenges posed for the church by the world. The research of Congar and Murray helped Catholicism to affirm the secularity of the state as a good while still maintaining a double restraint on state power. The state was “relativized” by measuring its temporal role against another more lasting “city” as Augustine did; the state was also “limited” in history by the claims of a specific institution, the church.

These restraints on the power of the state did not seek to produce, however, a doctrine of the minimalist state. In fact Catholic teaching prescribes for the state a broad range of moral responsibilities, articulated in terms of its teaching on human rights and social justice. The tension of the Catholic ethic of the state is embodied in its support for the subsidiarity principle (restraining resort to state power) and its support for the view that the state is not simply an instrument of order, but an active moral agent in pursuit of the common good for all.

Each of these issues, at the heart of the U.S. policy debate today in terms of Bosnia, abortion and euthanasia, and budgets and social policy, requires a lecture to show how the tensions of the Catholic ethic are worked out in detail in a church-world dialogue. My more limited purpose has been to show how the macro-categories of church-world theology take shape in a Catholic social ethic which engages the world, seeking to collaborate in building a society “which even now is able to give some kind of foreshadowing of the new age.”

Thirty years ago *Gaudium et Spes* opened a new chapter in the long history of the church-world question, urging Catholics to use the resources of faith and reason to reflect the new age even now in this age of history. It is essential to the purposes of Catholic higher education to assist the church in responding to the world in all its complexity and challenge. The opportunity and the obligation to do so for the church in the United States are measured by the evident needs of our own society and the inevitable impact the United States has on the world.

It has been a privilege to use the Marianist Lecture to renew the call of the council, and to recognize the gift *Gaudium et Spes* has been to the church and the world in our time.

ENDNOTES

1. "Gaudium et Spes," in W.M. Abbott, S.J., ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966). Citations will refer to paragraphs in the conciliar text and page numbers in the volume.
2. For most of the major social encyclicals, see D. J. O'Brien and T.A. Shannon, eds., *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992).
3. For an historical and analytical evaluation of developments on church and state see the collection of essays of John Courtney Murray, S.J.: J. Leon Hooper, S.J., ed., *Religious Liberty: Catholic Struggles with Pluralism* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993.)
4. See the assessment of de Lubac's work in: J. A. Komanchak, "Theology and Culture at Mid-Century: The Example of Henri de Lubac," *Theological Studies*, 51 (1993) pp. 579-602; also H. Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Henri de Lubac: An Overview* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1991).
5. Y. M.-J. Congar, O.P., *A History of Theology* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1968) p. 14.
6. Komanchak, cited, p. 593.
7. For background on the broader theological work, cf. Congar, cited; H. de Lubac, *At the Service of the Church: Henri de Lubac Reflects on the Circumstances that Occasioned His Writings* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1993) pp. 60-96.
8. H. de Lubac, *Catholicism: A Study of the Corporate Destiny of Mankind* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1958) p. x.

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9. Same, p. 19.
 10. *Gaudium et Spes*, #1, p. 199-200.
 11. Y. M.-J. Congar, *Lay People in the Church: A Study for a Theology of the Laity* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1957) p. 78.
 12. Same, p. 81.
 13. Same, p. 91.
 14. J. C. Murray, "On the Structure of the Church-State Problem," in W. Gurian and M. A. Fitzsimmons, eds., *The Catholic Church in World Affairs* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1954) pp. 11-32.
 15. J. C. Murray, "The Issue of Church and State at Vatican Council II," in L. Hooper, cited, pp. 199-228.
 16. Y. M.-J. Congar, "The Role of the Church in the Modern World" (Part I, Ch. 4) in H. Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* (Freiburg: Herder, 1969) vol. V, p. 220.
 17. *Gaudium et Spes*, #39, p. 237.
 18. Congar, *The Role of the Church*, cited, p. 208.
 19. Murray, *The Issue of Church and State*, cited, p. 220.

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