

Responsibilities of The Catholic University in The Modern World

By John P. Hittinger

“The modern world shows itself at once powerful and weak, capable of the noblest deeds and the foulest; before it lies the path to freedom or slavery, to progress or retreat, to brotherhood or hatred. Moreover, man is becoming aware that it is his responsibility to guide aright the forces which he has unleashed and which can enslave him or minister to him. That is why he is asking questions.”

Gaudium et spes, n. 9

“The mission which the Church, with great hope, entrusts to Catholic Universities holds a cultural and religious meaning of vital importance because it concerns the very future of humanity. The renewal requested of Catholic Universities will make them better able to respond to the task of bringing the message of Christ to man, society, to the various cultures.”

Ex corde ecclesiae, conclusion

The question of the responsibility of the Catholic university is provoked from both secular and religious quarters. The promulgation of *ex corde ecclesiae* in 1990 raised the issue of the responsibility for Catholic identity and mission. Largely disputed, and then ignored, the demand by *Ex corde* for accountability was but an easy yoke compared to the much more burdensome demands of regional accreditation and now federal demands for accountability. Tuition has increased well above inflation; students drop out and fail to graduate within six years, let alone four. Many students graduate from college yet cannot write, nor think critically; many are woefully ignorant of basic areas of knowledge, such as American heritage, historical frameworks, etc. Who is responsible for such a state of affairs? Faculty seek to avoid teaching or advising students because they are rewarded for research. The narrow specialization of graduate education results in a fragmentation and “Balkanization” of the academic community. Ideological trends and political agendas ravage the integrity of teaching and scholarship. Accreditation and now federal agencies demand assessment of student learning outcomes and quality improvement efforts. Transparency of financial priorities and spending, reporting of retention and graduation rates, and

crime rates on campus are now followed by demands of federal agency to report student achievement of standardized tests. The federal demands, of the so-called Spellings commission, have been blocked and postponed. But the regional accreditation agencies are rigorous in their quest for accountability through assessment, strategic planning, and the like. Many faculty have attempted to resist the assessment movement; administrators have no choice but to comply and implement quality improvement procedures. But I suggest that the assessment movement can be turned to good account. The assessment plan returns us to a statement of identity and mission. In other words, regional accreditation turn us back to *Ex corde ecclesiae*. Prior to new schemes for marketing, recruiting, and retaining students, prior to performing tuition elasticity studies, prior to campaigns and open solicitations, an institution must define itself and embrace its mission.

It should therefore be welcome to the ears of a true educator to hear the tone and direction of *Ex corde ecclesiae* – to affirm the “gaudium de veritate” (n. 1), to build “an authentic human community” (n. 21), to achieve a “higher synthesis of knowledge” (n. 16), to “become an ever more effective instrument of cultural progress” (n. 32), and to form “leaders of tomorrow” (n. 23). The mission of the university is urgent for the well being and progress of the modern world (n. 7) and its presence is a sign of fecundity of the Christian mind (n. 2). Thus, John Paul II concludes his document by saying “The mission which the Church, with great hope, entrusts to Catholic Universities holds a cultural and religious meaning of vital importance because it concerns the very future of humanity. The renewal requested of Catholic Universities will make them better able to respond to the task of bringing the message of Christ to man, society, to the various cultures” (*Ex corde ecclesiae*, conclusion). Indeed, the mission of the Catholic university is a function of evangelization (n. 48). The university must fulfill its “indispensable mission in the new advent of grace that is opening up to the new Millennium” (n. 11). The Catholic university is ultimately responsible to God in cooperating with his grace.¹

Pope John Paul II says that the prescriptions of *Ex corde* are based upon the teaching of Vatican II (n. 11). It is for this reason I would like to explore the theme of responsibility in *Gaudium et spes*. I think that this study of responsibility will not only aid our discussion of responsibility as an anthropological concept but also illuminate the tasks for Catholic universities today. An awareness of responsibility pervades the argument of *Gaudium et spes*. It surprised me to find how central to the intention of Vatican II is the adumbration of the manifold responsibilities of the Christian in the modern world. Education emerges out of this document as the deep responsibility of the Church for its

¹ See *Romano Guardini, Power and Responsibility. A Course of Action for the New Age*, Chicago 1961, pp. 15–16.

own mission and this responsibility for education is carried over to the documents on Christian education and Apostolate of the Laity. As it runs out, we could say that responsible Catholic education is actually education for responsibility. And I should quickly add, a propos our recent discussions, responsibility is more than a legal, or moral category; building on its legal and moral meanings, the term is used in *Gaudium et spes* to indicate the destiny of each individual person and that of the human race as a whole.

I. Responsibility in *Gaudium et spes*

Charles Moeller suggests that paragraph 2 of article 2 of *Gaudium et spes* stands as the most important in the pastoral constitution.² It serves, he says, as a “preliminary guide to the whole constitution.” A single sentence, the paragraph reads as follows:

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

The notion of the “world” is a term with “rich content and contrasts.” It denotes a theological perspective of creation, sin, and redemption. But it also affirms the “sum of the realities” (*cum universitate rerum*), that is, the technological, economic, social, cultural, and political realities that emerge from and shape human existence and action. The sentence also mentions the “theatre of man's history” (*mundum, theatrum historiae generis humani*). Article 2 begins with this sentence: “the council yearns to explain to everyone how it conceives of the presence and activity of the Church in the world of today.” In a word, I think we can answer, it is present and active in its sense of responsibility, and through the responsible initiative and actions of its members. The Church is about evangelization, bearing the good news about the emancipation of Christ; to accomplish this the Church must more fully understand and enter into the world, the “sum of the realities” that constitute the human world, and to be an actor in the theatre of human history. Moeller again comments that the teaching of *Lumen gentium* already set the stage for the notion of the Church as a “messianic people which is sent into the world.”³ Moeller says this shows the link of

² Charles Moeller, Preface and Introductory Statement, in: *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Vol. 5: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, edited by Herbert Vorgrimler, New York 1969, p. 90.

³ See *Lumen gentium*, art. 8 and Chapter two passim; Moeller, pp. 86–87.

the Church with mankind and its history. He concludes his commentary on the preface to the document with this summary of *Gaudium et spes*: “It endeavours to sketch the situation of man at this time ... in order to better grasp man’s vocation.” The surface features of the modern world include “upheaval, consciousness of changes, loss of equilibrium” revealing underneath the aspirations to freedom, dignity, and unity of mankind. But there are contradictions in this movement and set of changes in the world. For we find new possibility for forms of servitude, not freedom, new forms of debasement, not affirmation of dignity, and more intense divisions, not unity.⁴ Thus, *Gaudium et spes* first broaches the notion of responsibility in the following concluding remark about the condition of the modern world: “The modern world shows itself at once powerful and weak, capable of the noblest deeds and the foulest; before it lies the path to freedom or slavery, to progress or retreat, to brotherhood or hatred. Moreover, man is becoming aware that it is his responsibility to guide aright the forces which he has unleashed and which can enslave him or minister to him. That is why he is asking questions.”⁵ (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 9) The forces, or powers, have been brought forward by human ingenuity and will and it belongs to man to control them. A sign that human beings are becoming aware of responsibility for the use of power is the concerned questioning about the responsible use and limits of power. Christian must respond to these questions and concerns.

The notion that responsibility derives from human nature and its historical development, i.e., the creative aspect of the powers of the soul over time, means that the development and use of power is part of human experience and human history. The theological endorsement for the development as essentially human may be found in the Bible: “For man, created to God's image, received a mandate to subject to himself the earth and all it contains, and to govern the world with justice and holiness; a mandate to relate himself and the totality of things to Him Who was to be acknowledged as the Lord and Creator of all.” (n. 34) The works of man are not in opposition to God, but rather they are signs of God’s grace and the “flowering of his mysterious design.” This mandate and vocation has taken on a new and greater significance in the modern world according to axiom of responsibility laid down in this article of *Gaudium et spes*: “The greater man’s power becomes, the farther his individual and community responsibility extends.” The power is greater today, and reaches a certain fullness, because its scope is universal or global and its range includes the change

⁴ See *Pope John Paul II*, *Redemptor hominis*, n. 15–16.

⁵ *Praeterea, homo conscius fit ipsius esse recte dirigere vires, quas ipse suscitavit et quae eum opprimere aut ei servire possunt.* A literal translation might read, “Man is aware that it is of his very self to direct rightly the forces which he himself has made arise and which can either oppress him or serve him.” Thanks to Rev. Daniel Gallagher for comments on the latin text.

or transformation of nature itself, and human nature as well. A world wide crisis of culture is engendered by the new possibilities of freedom or servitude, dignity or degradation. This new concept of responsibility builds upon and assumes conscience and personal accountability, but it is demanding a new level of moral action involving social cooperation and recognition of complexity of all elements of action.

The new and higher degree of responsibility requires a corresponding new and higher degree of education. In article 31 it says “In order for individual men to discharge with greater exactness the obligations of their conscience toward themselves and the various groups to which they belong, they must be carefully educated to a higher degree of culture through the use of the immense resources available today to the human race. Above all the education of youth from every social background has to be undertaken, so that there can be produced not only men and women of refined talents, but those great-souled persons who are so desperately required by our times.”

A brief look at the conciliar document on Christian education (*Gravissimum Educationis*) would confirm this connection between responsibility and education. The document opens with a reference to the council’s care for the importance of education “in the life of man and how its influence ever grows in the social progress of this age.” The very conditions of the new era (i.e., growing awareness of human dignity, the movement for an active participation in economic and political life, new leisure, and new means of communication) make it both “easier” and more urgent to achieve this education. Attempts are made “everywhere” to promote “more education.” To fulfill its mandate for evangelization the Church has a role in the “progress and development of education.” The true end of education is the formation of the human person “in the pursuit of his ultimate end and the good of society.” Young people must be helped to “acquire a mature sense of their own responsibility.” (n. 1) Such education should not only achieve the mature sense of their own responsibility but also cultivate awareness of the gift of faith and the opportunity to witness to the hope within them. The Church is responsible for announcing the good news to all men and is bound “to provide an education by which the whole life of man is imbued by the spirit of Christ and to promote the temporal good.” (n. 3) The Catholic university serves as a “public, enduring and pervasive influence of the Christian mind in the furtherance of culture.” Its students will be formed to be outstanding in their training and “ready to undertake weighty responsibilities in society and witness to the faith in the world.” The project of *Gaudium et spes* evidently rests upon an adequate and proper Catholic education.⁶

⁶ We could also look at Apostolicam actuositatem for the same pattern and argument, e.g., art. 29 on the formation for the apostolate. “The formation for the apostolate presupposes a certain human and well rounded formation ... Well-informed about the mod-

A summary of some key points from *Gaudium et spes* on responsibility:

A1: Responsibility is a function of power and participation

A2: Responsibility is derives from human nature and the human vocation for greater freedom, both individually and collectively

A3: Responsibility is an aspect of human dignity

B1: Power/responsibility develops in a world of networks and structures such as economics, social, cultural and political systems (universitate rerum)

B2: Power/responsibility is historical (theatrum historiae)

B3: Power generates critical or crisis situations because it causes upheaval and change and the power may outpace responsibility, i.e., cooperative action and right use (tragedy and triumph)

C1: A Christian has responsibility to cooperate with fellow human beings for the development of temporal society and to order world to its ultimate end

C2: A Christian must be educated for responsibility in the modern world

It is clear that responsibility is a central theme of *Gaudium et spes*. It is a thread that runs throughout the entire document and in fact pulls together its fundamental insights and reveals the basic thrust and intention of the council. The document extends the notion of responsibility into the five areas or issues of urgent concern. As we shall see below, each area (marriage, culture, economics, politics, and international relations) revolves around the crisis of power and the need for responsibility. The document ends with the commitment “to assist every man of our time, and promote an understanding of our full destiny as human beings, fashioning a world in keeping with human dignity, working for solidarity and brotherhood, working with “a gallant and unified effort born of love” (n. 91). The Church is a sign of human unity and will strive for mutual respect within the Church and dialogue with those others. Christians will shoulder a “gigantic task” to build the earth for which they will be responsible ultimately to God (n. 93).

ern world, the lay person should be a member of his own community and adjusted to its culture.” And in addition to spiritual formation, an education in theology, ethics, and philosophy is required. General culture, practical and technical education must be kept in mind. The laity should learn how to view, judge and do all things in the light of faith.

II. Some lessons on responsibility from contemporary authors

The theme of responsibility in *Gaudium et spes* also brings out some of the new considerations and aspects of Catholic thinking from the council. These include the attention to the subject of human action, the importance of historicity, the differentiation, autonomy and complexity of the secular realms, the role of the laity, and invitation to cooperation and dialogue with others. We can turn to some twentieth century thinkers who paid attention to this theme of responsibility and attendant themes. It could help gain some points for elaboration, confirmation, addition, and perhaps, points of contrast.

Richard Niebuhr wrote an important essay in Christian ethics entitled *The Responsible Self*.⁷ Niebuhr claimed that responsibility was a new category for ethical reflection. It denotes a mode or quality of self-agency developed in response to a challenge; it depends upon a historical context and a certain community of men, therefore it involves contingent and variable judgment about particularities. For this reason he thought that the universality of ideals and moral laws were insufficient to account for modern moral agency. He defines responsibility as follows: "An agent's action as a response to an action upon him in accordance with his interpretation of the latter action and his expectation of response to his response and all of this in a continuing community of agents." (p. 65) The four elements of responsible action are (1) response, (2) interpretation, (3) accountability and (4) social solidarity. Niebuhr attempts to pose the responsible self as an alternative to previous accounts of ethics, models he names "man the maker" and "man the citizen" representing teleological ethics and deontological ethics. The former he says is too abstract and idealistic, the latter too narrow and legalistic. The key question for an ethics of responsibility is "what is going on?" We must interpret the actions on the self, assess the social and technical possibilities, and respond with "the fitting action," an action which is not automatically prescribed by an ideal or a law. So he offers the model of man the answerer, the man in dialogue. Although Niebuhr adds a new dimension to ethical reflection by highlighting the importance of response, he does not obviate the need for a knowledge of the good and nor replace principles of action. But his account brings out the importance of the social context for action, dialogue, and the centrality of character as the stable center for the responsible "self."

⁷ *Helmut Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self. An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy, New York 1963.*

Hans Jonas came to the notion of responsibility through his study of life and organism.⁸ The problem of modern technology has led him to question whether the ethical categories of the past are sufficient for coming to grips with the central challenges of the era. His proposal for a new ethic of responsibility makes a more radical attack on the traditional basis for ethics. The primary axiom he questions is whether “the nature of man and the nature of things was given once and for all.” His claim is that modern technology has so reduced or destroyed the intrinsic ends or purposes of nature that we can no longer take our ethical bearings by a notion of human flourishing: “Modern technology has introduced actions of such novel scale, objects, and consequences that the framework of former ethics can no longer contain them.”⁹ A second claim is that modern technology has altered our temporal frame for decision-making; we can no longer consider the immediate effects of our action, but trace them into the future on a wider scale. And finally, he says that our actions take on a cumulative set of effects such that the unit of a single action can no suffice for evaluating its moral worth. Jonas thinks that we must consider the empirical effects of action, leading to an overall imperative for saving the human species from its own destruction. From Jonas we can that the scope of human power has increased, it is global, and that the cumulative effects of singular actions requires a greater sense of cooperative action and responsibility. “If the new nature of our acting calls for a new ethics of long range responsibility, co-extensive with the range of our power, it calls in the name of that very responsibility for a new kind of humility.”¹⁰ The notion of a new humility, born of a great power unmatched by requisite knowledge and wisdom, has much to commend it. But he dispenses with faith because it is not “necessary” or universally accepted, and he appeals ultimately to fear of disaster for the basis of this humility. Jonas sounds very Hobbesian in this respect. One wonders, in light of *Gaudium et spes*, whether fear of disaster can provide the basis for an ethic of responsibility today. Do we not need a firm basis for understanding the dignity of the person and the purpose of freedom in the modern world? The claim that modern technology has erased the difference between the natural and the artificial seems to beg the question about the ends and purposes of human life and the quality of human flourishing. He begs the question to assert that faith is not necessary for a new imperative of responsibility. Faith alone provides the invitation to all to affirm the dignity of man and the transformative spirit for freedom.

⁸ *Hans Jonas*, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, in: *Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*, Chicago 1984. Also *Philosophical Essays: From Ancient Creed to technological Man*, New Jersey 1975.

⁹ *Philosophical essays*, p. 8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

I now turn to two Catholic thinkers who have treated the theme of responsibility. Bernard Lonergan devoted much thought to the emergence of historicity and the differentiation of human knowledge and culture.¹¹ In a very insightful essay on “Natural Right and Historical Mindedness,” first presented at the American Catholic Philosophical Association annual meeting, attempts to think together the elements which Niebuhr and Jonas have sundered, namely “a constant, human nature,” and “a variable, human historicity.” In this essay he tends to equate nature with what is given at birth, looking at origins, and deflects the question of ends and purposes to the elaboration of the process of self-transcendence in biological, psychic and rational processes. It is a question he takes up in other essays. Historicity is identified with culture and education. Education produces differences and variability in individuals. “The family, the state, the law, the economy, are not fixed and immutable entities.” No doubt, the Vatican Council looked at problems of special urgency because they were dynamic processes which are undergoing upheaval and change, and they invite new thinking and modes of responsibility. These entities change because of a change in meaning. They must be sustained by a set of common meanings, culture I would think. But Lonergan’s main point here is to say that “to understand men and their institutions we must understand their history.” In history we find “man’s making of man” and his “progress or regress.” In order to determine norms in historicity Lonergan turns to the process of human understanding rather than turn directly to propositions and “naturally known truths.” His process of understanding and reflection must pass through a deliberation upon the nature of human goods and to ultimate self-transcendence in love. With this he sets the backdrop for a few very useful formulations about responsibility.

Responsibility is primarily a term for individual action. To be responsible is requires that one pay attention, ask questions, judge reasonably, assent to evidence, and act deliberately in light of conscience. Collective responsibility, he says, is “not without its difficulty.” Collective responsibility is not “an established fact,” but it may be possible, and perhaps even desirable. People are responsible for the lives they lead and “collectively for the world in which they live them.” Somewhat paradoxically, we could say that individuals are formed by culture, by the collective or common meanings, but no one or no one group is responsible for the cultural meanings. But as *Gaudium et spes* points out, men are becoming more aware that they are the authors and artisans of culture, and

¹¹ *Bernard J. F. Lonergan*, *Natural Right and Historical Mindedness*, in: *A Third Collection, Papers*, edited by Frederick E. Crowe, pp. 169–183, New York/London 1985; *Self-Transcendence: Intellectual, Moral, Religious*, in: *Philosophical and Theological Papers, 1965–1980*, edited by Robert C. Croken, Robert M. Doran and Lonergan Research Institute, pp. 313–331; published for Lonergan Research Institute of Regis College, Toronto 2004. I wish to thank Jeremy Wilkins, Theology, University of St. Thomas, for showing me these essays and for his assistance in understanding Lonergan.

thus are responsible for the common meaning which forms others. But if the normative source of meaning resides in conscience (it is of the individual reflecting upon one's own action) how do we as a community come to achieve responsibility for the common meanings? We look to history, and see ourselves as historical actors – for as “the immanent source becomes revealed in its effects, in the functioning order of society, in cultural vitality and achievement, in the unfolding of human history, does the manifold of isolated responsibilities coalesce into a single object that can gain collective attention.” History however reveals a mixed situation – the social or historical dimension brings out intelligence and obtuseness, truth and falsity, love and hatred. Lonergan calls this the “dialectic of radically opposed tendencies.” In the dialectic we must find the “link between natural right and historical mindedness.” I will forego his intricate analysis of the dialectic. Lonergan has set up an interesting account of personal and collective responsibility. He sees in the social, the personal “writ large.” In history he suggests that we will find an “experimental verification or refutation of the validity of a people's way of life.” And in this attention to the historical we can not dismiss the personal as it is caught up with the historical: “what before could be dismissed as an infinitesimal in the total fabric of social and cultural history, now has taken on the dimensions of collective triumph or disaster.” Lonergan ends his subtle analysis of the dialectic of history with an appeal to dialogue at the end of the process, for dialogue affirms that “every person is an embodiment of natural right.” He concludes his essay with a very adroit turn: “While the dialectic of history coldly relates our conflicts, dialogue adds the principle that prompts us to cure them, the natural right that is the inmost core of our being.” Perhaps this means that dialogue is the most responsible activity for achieving collective responsibility.

Lonergan makes a bold step in the direction of a comprehensive account of responsibility, in an admittedly brief sketch or thought experiment. The need to combine natural right and historical mindedness is the challenge we face. The account of natural right and the discovery of the normative in the processes of human understanding, rather than in the “universal propositions” is a matter for question. That is, we may have an account of human nature which is normative and confirmed by revelation, as a touchstone for the process of self-transcendence and inquiry. The idea of experimental verification in the historical achievement of cultures is important. There are other Christian thinkers who have launched this project. Christopher Dawson is the chief advocate of the study of Christian culture and its fate in the modern world. Dawson puts forward the study of Christian culture as the basis for Catholic education today. I shall pass on commenting on his project and its relevance for the theme of responsibility, but I would like to end this brief survey with a look at Romano Guardini.

Romano Guardini wrote a seminal essay on power and responsibility which finds much resonance in *Gaudium et spes*.¹² He touches on most of the themes raised by the contemporary thinkers we have briefly summarized. Romano Guardini was aware of the “newness” of power and responsibility in the modern world from the time of early writing on *Letters from Lake Como*.¹³ The core of the new epoch’s task will be to “integrate power into life in such a way that man can employ power without forfeiting his humanity.” (p. XIII.) Guardini defines power in terms of “real energies capable of changing the reality of things” combined with an “awareness of those energies, the will to establish specific goals.” This entails responsibility, or being accountable for its use. “There is no such thing as power that is not answered for.” A serious danger arises when the bearers of power refuse to admit their role in the complex action and choose to remain anonymous. Into the void of the anonymous rush the demons, according to Guardini. Despite its dangers, power is not an evil, but an essential facet of human nature. Guardini traces the responsibility of power to the very nature of human existence: “Consciousness of power has a general ontological aspect. It is a direct expression of existence, an expression which can turn to the positive or negative, to truth or semblance.” Further amplification of responsibility for power can be found in the Genesis account on the creation of man. Man’s natural God-likeness consists in a capacity for power. This exercise of power is “essential to his humanity.” But this power is on loan, and must be exercised responsibly. It must respect the truth of things. Man’s sovereignty is not meant to establish an independent world, but to complete the world of God.” Guardini remark sounds a theme similar to *Gaudium et spes* n. 36 on the autonomy of the world, an acknowledgement of the true law and weight of the world, but without the denial that things come from God and return to him, like the *exitus/reditus* of St. Thomas.

There are the signs of the new age or signs of the times heralded by *Gaudium et spes*. We are aware of the world as a unit, and no longer parochial in concern; we are aware of greater interdependence with other people and nature; and we have cultivated greater freedom, bringing greater mobility, flexibility and potentialities. Men now “exist in a world of knowledge-works possibilities that have outstripped the earlier norms.” (p. 41) Guardini recognizes the possibility of blurring the line between nature and artifice, as does Jonas, but he views this with a critical eye. Guardini believes that the standard of human integrity and human dignity can serve as a check on the destruction of natural form. He coins the term “non-human humanity” to describe the result of the technological deg-

¹² *Romano Guardini, Power and Responsibility. A Course of Action for the New Age*, Chicago 1961; reprinted with a companion piece in: *Romano Guardini, The end of the modern world*, Wilmington 1998.

¹³ *Romano Guardini, Letters from Lake Como. Explorations in technology and the human race*, Grand Rapids 1994.

radation of man. He predicts the growth of violent destruction and a crippling of the spirit in its relationship to the true and good (a “sickening of the spirit”). Men will seek to ignore or by-pass the personal center of existence, since this requires reverence, encouragement and patience. Power will corrupt, because in man, “the relation between power and its direction, between energy and measure, impulse and order are profoundly confused.” (p. 64) There will be a crisis, a crisis of humanity. It is the breakdown of social structures and cultural forms because of a growth of power and structures beyond man’s measure. But Guardini’s hope is that we can refashion and build a more human approach to life. It will require an awareness of responsibility for the use of power. But this provides an opportunity for man to seize the initiative. It is a source of hope. Guardini, unlike Jonas, claims to be a certain type of utopian, one who can “collect fragments of hints, hopes, experiments, miscarried developments, and try to make some sort of pattern” (p. 83). Maritain spoke of an “integral humanism” and a “new Christendom,” and his disciple Pope Paul VI spoke of a humanism and authentic development. Pope John Paul II called the task a building of a “civilization of love” or “culture of life.” Guardini was one of the first to identify this task; in the early Letters, he said about the coming task, the Christian must say “Yes” to our age, to “love the tremendous power of the age and its readiness for responsibility.” He articulated the requirements for the formation of personal perception, judgment, and decision in his many books. We must regain a relationship to the truth of things and acquire a contemplative attitude. We need magnanimity, courage, realism and respect for freedom, respect for the absolute, readiness to cooperate, and self-discipline. Finally, Guardini thinks we must have religion. The full measure of human responsibility is found in the right relationship to truth of things, the demands of his deepest self, and finally to God. For “the only kind of man that exists in man-in-relationship-to-God; and what he understands by that relationship, how seriously he takes it, and what he does about are the determining factors of his character.” (p. 103)

There are many affinities between these contemporary authors and the thrust of *Gaudium et spes* on the issue of responsibility. The special problem of quality of responsibility emerges with some newness because of the development of power in the modern world. The range of things that can be changed or transformed (including the human itself, and life itself), the global and temporal scope of action, and the complexity of social interactions, together give rise to a new awareness and quality of responsibility. It is rooted in the classical understanding, the classical recognition and limits if you will, but requires elaboration for a new age and its new possibilities. The claim of a new age is neither a Gnostic attribution of spirit nor a Marxist expectation of utopia. The account of the crisis is the result of a sober analysis of the trends of the modern world

which have now culminated in an on-going and accelerated crisis. The crisis is a time for both realistic expectations and hopeful endeavor. Neither optimism nor pessimism are appropriate categories to assess the vision of *Gaudium et spes* or the writers we have briefly alluded to above. The aspirations to greater freedom and the realization of human dignity offer the hope for cooperative action and a willingness to cultivate a new found sense of responsibility. The mutual discovery of meaning and the pursuit of dialogue are essential to the task.

III. The mission of the Catholic university as education for responsibility

A great Catholic university must achieve its greatness in becoming greatly a *Catholic* university. Rarely does one find acknowledgement of the universities role in evangelization through penetrating “all strata of human society” (Paul VI). *Ex corde* states that “by its very nature each Catholic university makes an important contribution to the Church’s work of evangelization.” (n. 49) This is very important especially in a culture “marked by secularism” such as our own. “All the basic academic activities of a Catholic university are connected with and in harmony with the evangelizing mission of the Church.” The purpose of *Ex corde* is said to be that of enabling Catholic Universities to “fulfill their indispensable mission in the new advent of grace that is opening up to the new Millennium.” (n. 11) It will require “courageous creativity and rigorous fidelity” (n. 8).

Ex corde states that the Catholic university offers an “education offered in a faith-context that forms men and women capable of rational and critical judgment and conscious of the transcendent dignity of the human person.” We could formulate the ultimate outcomes for the students who benefit from a Catholic education. The outcomes pertain to wisdom, evangelization, dialogue, and service. In order to attain this capacity or habit requires that the student has achieved a level of integration or higher synthesis. The elements of the synthesis are (a) Faith and Reason; (b) inter-disciplinary and holistic view of knowledge; (c) personal life style and faith, or simply faith and life. The student must have the resources to become a witness to faith in the environments which the student will live and work. The student should participate in dialogue with cultures, particularly dialogue with men and women of other faith traditions, but also including cultural forms of meaning self-understanding such art and science. Finally, the student should develop a willingness to serve humanity and exhibit respect for the human person.

The student must understand the world in its various complexities. If we return to the key paragraph of article 2 we may have a great guide star for study at theology in the Catholic university. “Therefore, the council focuses its attention on the world of men, the whole human family along with the sum of those reali-

ties in the midst of which it lives; that world which is the theater of man's history, and the heir of his energies, his tragedies and his triumphs; that world which the Christian sees as created and sustained by its Maker's love, fallen indeed into the bondage of sin, yet emancipated now by Christ, Who was crucified and rose again to break the strangle hold of personified evil, so that the world might be fashioned anew according to God's design and reach its fulfillment." The first part of the sentence outlines the various aspects of the world, the realities of family, culture, economics, politics and international relationships. The second part of the sentence outlines the basic articles of faith. It is also clear that students must understand the philosophical and theological basis for the anthropological basis of the witness. The theological and philosophical basis for human dignity, the nature of human freedom, and the communities in which he finds fulfillment or flourishing provide the perspective for coming to terms with and assuming responsibility for the issues of special urgency.

In light of these considerations, we can explore the second part of *Gaudium et spes* concerning those areas of special concern and urgency discussed in part two of the document: Marriage & Family, Culture, Economics, Politics, and International order. I should like to briefly identify the use of the term responsibility in each of these areas of special concern. We can trace the notion of responsibility into specific requirements for action and formation in each area, thus coming to better understand the responsibility of the Catholic University in the modern world.

The concerns of marriage & family are treated in articles 47–52. Given the nature of marriage as a fundamental unity of society and its special end or purpose for begetting and educating children, Christians are said to have a responsibility to fulfill this mandate. Modern conditions (no doubt the *universitate rerum*) offer a special challenge to married couple to fulfill their duties and to recognize legitimate reasons for limitation of family size. Although these difficult and changing circumstances present a great challenge, a couple must have a "generous human and Christian sense of responsibility." Further, this responsibility belongs to the married couple and to no one else. Certainly it is not the state's responsibility. The document refers to the imperative to harmonize conjugal love with responsible transmission of life. What is the responsible transmission of human life? The Council fathers assumed the traditional teaching of the Church regarding the use of artificial contraceptives, a dynamic new possibility offered by the new technology and endorsed by the new modes of thinking in the medical establishment and the emerging new social norms. The specificity of this responsibility will be articulated by Paul VI in *Humanae vitae* and also by Pope John Paul II in his Wednesday audiences (and lectures, Love and

Responsibility).¹⁴ Obviously, the witness to the faith in contemporary society would not be an easy task and it would require a tremendous effort in formation and pastoral care. In addition to this challenge, parents hold an additional responsibility in their education of their children to make a responsible choice of vocation, perhaps the deepest meaning of responsibility as a response to God's grace and call. "Children should be so educated that as adults they can follow their vocation, including a religious one, with a mature sense of responsibility and can choose their state of life."

The issues of special urgency with respect to culture are treated in articles 53–62. Culture is essentially education, broadly construed. "Man comes to a true and full humanity only through culture, that is through the cultivation of the goods and values of nature ... The word 'culture' in its general sense indicates everything whereby man develops and perfects his many bodily and spiritual qualities; he strives by his knowledge and his labor, to bring the world itself under his control." (n. 53) Culture is the primary medium for the very development of power and the awareness of responsibility. Modern culture is marked by both an awareness of diversity and pluralism as well as the pull towards a universal and mass culture. Article 55 is a crucial one – man is becoming aware that he is the "author and artisan" of culture. Therefore, there is "a mounting increase in the sense of autonomy as well as responsibility" for culture. The increased capacity for collaboration and common venture for improvement gives birth to "a new humanism" defined in terms of responsibility to all men, global awareness, and for history. But the increased awareness of responsibility increases the anxiety about the critical situation, the need to resolve many intractable problems and contradictions. In addition, there is a sense that men have a certain right to culture based upon dignity, and this is expressed as a deprivation of opportunity "to exercise responsibility" (n. 57). In other words, responsibility is not only a moral obligation resting upon an agent in a historical situation as a bearer of power, it is also a condition for human development and fulfillment of freedom. As mentioned above, because power/responsibility derive from human nature and the divine mandate to human beings, it is a demand of respect for human dignity to seek greater and wider participation in the offices of responsibility. This occurs through education, broadly construed. But there are specific educational requirements for Christian education for responsibility. Education must continue to aim for a unification or synthesis of the disciplines, to attain a holistic view, particularly focused upon the "whole human person" (n. 61). Literature and art are also mentioned as important for Christians to better understand man's place in history and the world (n. 62).

¹⁴ *Karol Wojtyła*, *Love and responsibility*, translated by H. T. Willets, San Francisco 1981.

The issues of special urgency with respect to economics are treated in articles 63–72. The focus of the use of the term responsibility in this section focus upon the subjective participation in responsible decision-making. Deprived of the opportunity to exercise responsibility because of either a lack of material conditions or a lack of meaningful participation in the economic system, many human beings are oppressed and lack the status of human dignity (n. 63, 67, 68, 71). New forms of slavery and degradation emerge in the use of others for profit (see previous statement in n. 31).

The issues of special urgency with respect to politics are treated in articles 73–78. In this case, leaders are urged to rule by way of respect for the initiative and responsibility of the citizens and not by force or coercion (n. 74). Responsibility is a term to use in light of subsidiarity and the new defense of democracy. Responsibility is part of cooperative action and the work for the common good (n. 75). Finally, responsibility is important for understanding the relation of church and state. The Church does not intervene directly in political affairs, but by the education of the whole person and the pastoral formation of conscience, each Christian may act as any other citizen in their own responsibility to act for the common good (n. 76).

The issues of special urgency with respect to international order are treated in articles 79–89. Responsibility is mentioned twice in the opening articles with respect to the weightiness of public responsibility when it comes to armed force and war. Grave matters must be conducted “soberly.” Leaders have a “gigantic responsibility” to avoid war. And all must evaluate war with a new attitude. The crisis of population growth leads to an appeal for the respect of the conscience of parents and an acknowledgement that the chief responsibility for regulation of birth lies with parents, in light of divine law and circumstances (n. 87). Christians should become a sign and agent of peace by cooperation with others, a spirit of service and justice. This will come about if Christians are true to their calling and act conscious of “their responsibility as men and Christians.” Education of the young is particularly urgent. Catholics are particularly well suited to build global cooperation. They possess an international or universal outlook, make international association, and can help to form “an awareness of genuine solidarity and responsibility” (n. 90).

In considering marriage & family, how would we educate young people for responsible parenthood? They must know that marriage is aimed at begetting and educating children. It requires a “generous human and Christian sense of responsibility.” There is the difficulty of knowing how one may harmonize conjugal love with the responsible transmission of life. Finally one must understand the notion of vocation and various vocations in the church and the world today. The Gospel of Life would be of great assistance in this education.

What is the responsible approach to culture? It is the means of coming to “a true and full humanity.” One must appreciate not only the diversity and plural-

ism of culture but also the pull towards a universal and mass culture. Students must be taught in the spirit “a new humanism” defined in terms of responsibility to all men, global awareness, and history. But the increased awareness of responsibility increases the anxiety about the critical situation, the need to resolve many intractable problems and contradictions. In addition, there is a sense that men have a certain right to culture based upon dignity, and this is expressed as a deprivation of opportunity “to exercise responsibility” (n. 57). Education must continue to aim for a unification or synthesis of the disciplines, to attain a holistic view, particularly focused upon the “whole human person” (n. 61). Literature and art are also mentioned as important for Christians to better understand man’s place in history and the world (n. 62). Economics is particularly important to learn for protection of human dignity. How do economic systems provide for a meaningful participation in the economic system and what is the line between profit making and slavery? One thinks of Pope John Paul II encyclicals on political economics.

As I have argued previously, the section on politics may be the most strategic in the document. The document urges the teaching of political principle so that by strengthen “basic convictions as to the true nature of the political community and the aim, right exercise, and sphere of action of public authority.” Authority, freedom, rights, common good, subsidiarity, church and state are all important for understanding the possibilities for action today so that each Christian may act as any other citizen to act on their own responsibility to act for the common good (n. 76).

We are urged to consider war with an entirely new attitude. The crisis of population growth leads to an appeal for the respect of the conscience of parents and an acknowledgement that the chief responsibility for regulation of birth lies with parents, in light of divine law and circumstances (n. 87). Education of the young is particularly urgent. Catholics are particularly well suited to build global cooperation. They possess an international or universal outlook, make international association, and can help to form “an awareness of genuine solidarity and responsibility” (n. 90). A correct and genuine responsibility in international affairs must respect divine law. Catholic education can impart of divine and natural law about international issues. Finally, the function of dialogue will require that students become aware of other religions and cultures.

Catholic education is uniquely positioned to “promote an understanding of our full destiny as human beings, fashioning a world in keeping with human dignity.” (n. 91) Responsible education is education for responsibility. If Catholic University would step up to this responsibility and live up to the vision and requirements of *Ex corde*, the new Christendom or the civilization of love would become a more distinct possibility.

We must conclude with a few reflections about who is responsible for this education, for Catholic education for the new millennium? Board, faculty, administration, and bishop each have their role to play.

Summary

In this paper I explore the theme of responsibility in *Gaudium et spes*, provide some philosophical and theological context for the expanded notion of responsibility, and apply the results to the mission of Catholic higher education in the modern world. Responsibility emerges as an important theme in the document on the *Church in the Modern World*. It is a basic concept for understanding human dignity and the role of the Christian in the modern world. Responsibility echoes throughout each of the special sections on problems of special urgency in the world today, family, culture, economics, politics, and international cooperation. A Christian has responsibility to cooperate with fellow human beings for the development of temporal society and to order the world to its ultimate end. A Christian must be educated for responsibility in the modern world. We can discover affinities between contemporary authors, H. Richard Niebuhr, Hans Jonas, Bernard Lonergan, and Romano Guardini, and the teaching of *Gaudium et spes* on the issue of responsibility. The special problem of responsibility emerges because of the development of power in the modern world. The range of things that can be changed or transformed, the global and temporal scope of action, and the complexity of social interactions, together give rise to a new awareness and quality of responsibility. Neither optimism nor pessimism are appropriate categories to assess the vision of *Gaudium et spes* or the writers we have briefly alluded to above. The aspirations to greater freedom and the realization of human dignity offer the hope for cooperative action and a willingness to cultivate a new found sense of responsibility. A Catholic university must contribute to the evangelization of the world through the cultivation of responsible men and women who can unify faith and professional life and thereby sanctify the world.

Zusammenfassung

Der Beitrag untersucht die Frage der Verantwortung in *Gaudium et spes*. Er will einige philosophische und theologische Zusammenhänge für den erweiterten Begriff der Verantwortung offenlegen und setzt die Ergebnisse in Beziehung zum Auftrag der katholischen Hochschulbildung in unserer Zeit. Verantwortung ist ein wichtiges Anliegen im Konzilsdokument „Über die Kirche in der Welt von heute“. Sie ist ein Grundbegriff für das Verständnis der Würde des Menschen und der Rolle des Christen in der modernen Welt. Die Thematik der Verantwortung durchzieht in *Gaudium et spes* alle Abschnitte, die Probleme besonderer Vordringlichkeit in der heutigen Welt behandeln, wie der Familie, der Kultur, der Ökonomie, der Politik und der internationalen Zusammenarbeit. Ein Christ hat die Verantwortung, mit seinen Mitmenschen für die Entwicklung der Gesellschaft zusammenzuarbeiten und die Welt auf ihr letztes Ziel hin zu lenken. Ein Christ muss aber auch zur Verantwortung in der modernen Welt erzogen werden. Wir können Ähnlichkeiten zwischen zeitgenössischen Autoren wie H. Richard Niebuhr, Hans Jonas, Bernard Lonergan, Romano Guardini und der Lehre von *Gaudium et spes* bezüglich der Frage der Verantwortung entdecken. Das Problem der Verantwortung entsteht in der Moderne aufgrund der Ausprägung neuer Formen von Macht. Die Größenordnung von Verhältnissen, die verändert oder umgewandelt werden können, die globalen und zeitlichen Handlungsräume und die Komplexität sozialer Interaktionen, führen

zusammen zu einem neuen Bewusstsein und einer neuen Qualität der Verantwortung. Weder sind Optimismus noch Pessimismus geeignete Kategorien, um die Vision von *Gaudium et spes* zu verstehen bzw. der Autoren, auf die wir oben kurz hingewiesen haben. Das Verlangen nach größerer Freiheit und die Verwirklichung der Würde des Menschen geben Hoffnung für gemeinschaftliches Handeln und die Bereitschaft, den Sinn für Verantwortung neu zu kultivieren. Eine katholische Universität muss einen Beitrag leisten zur Evangelisierung der Welt durch die Ausbildung verantwortlicher Männer und Frauen, die den Glauben und den beruflichen Alltag zusammenbringen und auf diese Weise mitwirken an der Heiligung der Welt.