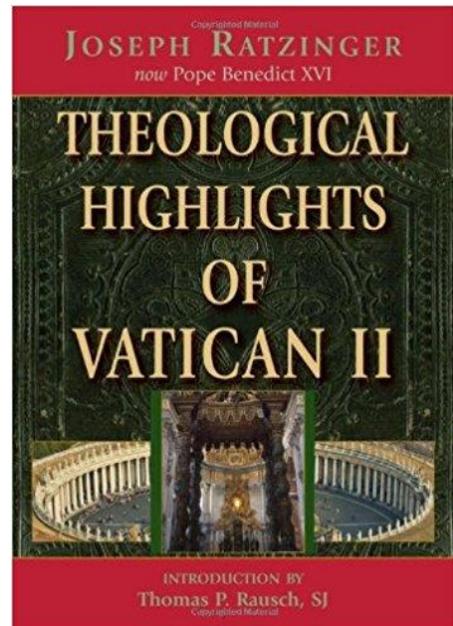


From Joseph Ratzinger,
THEOLOGICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF VATICAN II
(Paulist Press, 2009 edition)

From the Preface to the English Edition, 1966 [page vii]:

This book was originally published in four separate booklets which appeared after each of the four sessions of Vatican Council II. In each I tried to give an account of what had happened during that particular session and a preview of what still remained to be done.... Thus this book clearly has its own specific character. It is not an attempt to appraise past events from the detached viewpoint of the historian. Rather, it is the account of a personal journey through the landscape of each session, with an open view toward future developments.... The Council, as an event of the Church, is still a matter of unfinished business.



From “Part Four: The Fourth Session (‘III. The Struggle over Schema 13’ [pages 231-235])”

3. ON THE FINAL TEXT OF THE CONSTITUTION

Even though we must still discuss the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* in terms of its problems and its openness, yet it would be wrong to stress this aspect alone. Despite its preliminary character, the document offers comprehensive orientations which must be briefly considered in a concluding survey. Since the document was increased to 85 pages of Latin text (two pages were added), it would be beyond the scope of this study to give anything more than a sketchy presentation. We will therefore confine ourselves to a consideration of three examples of the methods and procedures of the Constitution in order to give some idea

of the character of the resultant work in its attempt to deal with the problems and questions of contemporary man.

a. The Christian and the Technological World

The first example will continue with the basic question examined above, i.e., the relationship of the Christian to the technological world, treated in the third chapter of the first part (“Man’s Activity throughout the World”). The text begins by formulating the problem (n. 33). It points to the new historical situation in which a variety of human cultures are being superseded by a common technological civilization, leading to an increasing unification of mankind.

Characteristic of this situation is the fact that technological application of scientific insights has given man an entirely new kind of power over the world. This in turn implies a new orientation toward human existence, based on the opportunity to make things functional in the service of man. But this alters the basic relation of man to reality. He now views reality essentially from the functional point of view. He no longer approaches the world from the viewpoint of contemplation and wonder, but as one who measures, weighs and acts. Thus religious mystery largely vanishes from things because this mystery cannot be methodologically examined. The attitude of the expectant suppliant gives way to an attitude of conscious responsibility for man’s own destiny. Faced by this situation, the Council does not bemoan and deplore it; rather, it begins by delimiting its own sphere of competency. The text says that faith offers men directive guidance about their origin and destiny (n. 33). But this does not mean that the Church has ready answers for all specific questions. Rather the Church links its own search—a search in faith—with the search of mankind for solutions to these specific problems. The text then goes on to affirm that the new attitude is basically legitimate. There was an insertion in the following section of the text (n. 34) to the effect that an attitude which candidly considers things as things corresponds more closely to the concept of creation and is welcome as a repudiation of a magical view. Latin American bishops, involved in a struggle against magical distortions of Christian faith, had asked for this insertion. They recognized their best ally in the sober scientific view which divests things of magical glamor. The objectivity of science is much

more in line with the idea of creation than a false divinization of the world which science and faith equally reject. In the final text this insertion was eliminated, but the meaning is retained in a reference to the idea of creation. The scientific view of the world, which presupposes both the world's non-divinity and its logical and comprehensible structure, is profoundly in accord with the view of the world as created (and thus non-divine): the world as produced by the Logos, God's Spirit-filled Word. Thus, like the Logos, the world is rationally and spiritually structured. One might even say that only such a basic attitude makes natural science possible in its full scope. In this context, a statement begins to make sense which would otherwise sound like cheap apologetics: "This makes it clear that the Christian message does not draw people away from the building up of the world or move men to neglect the welfare of their fellowmen; rather, it moves them more strongly to dedication to the task" (n. 3 4).

In a subsequent passage this idea is developed into an explicit doctrine on the autonomy of the secular. In individual chapters of the second part this idea is taken up again and applies to the realms of science and political life.³ The text does not refrain from pointing to the Church's past misunderstanding of these fundamentals, and in a footnote it refers to the case of Galileo (note 7). The results can be summarized in the maxim that Christian action is action in line with the nature of things, without a wrong immediate regulation by the Church which would contradict the innate integrity of things and which would obscure the difference between the Church and the kingdom of God. The Church is temporal and limited in its competence in secular matters. Of course these positive statements do not stand alone, and they must not stand alone, because the technological world, as we remarked earlier, also has its problems and

³ Section 36: "For by the very circumstance of their having been created, all things are endowed with their own stability, truth, goodness, proper laws and order. Man must respect these as he isolates them by the appropriate methods of the individual sciences or arts Consequently, we cannot but deplore certain habits of mind, sometimes also found among Christians, which do not sufficiently attend to the rightful independence of science. The arguments and controversies which they spark lead many minds to conclude that faith and science are mutually opposed." Cf. section 42: "Christ, to be sure, gave his Church no proper mission in the political, economic or social order. The purpose which he set before it is a religious one." In section 76 we find application to the political sphere: "The role and competence of the Church being what it is, it must in no way be confused with the political community or bound to any political system. For it is at once a sign and a safeguard of the transcendence of the human person. In their proper spheres, the political community and the Church are mutually independent and autonomous (cf. W Abbott, *op. cit.* [*The Documents of Vatican II: New York: American Press, 1966*], pp. 233-34, 241, 287-88).

dubious aspects. To decipher the physical structure of things is not the same thing as to decode the meaning of existence itself. Rather, it introduces us to the enigmatic character of existence in its full mystery and thus shows us the riddle of our own existence. Why discuss all this? Because from such problems as these the properly Christian sphere comes into view—not in competition with technology but concerned with the basic human questions which the technological world gives a new place to without being able to eliminate them. What is authentically Christian reality first comes through in a text-sentence based on a quotation from Gabriel Marcel: “Man is more important in what he is than what he has” (n. 35). “To be” and “to have” appear as two distinct categories of human existence. But “being” is the authentic area of human decision-making which remains unchanged through all vicissitudes of “having.” Against the background of such permanence the ambivalence of such progress looms large. Progress makes increasingly possible both human self-destruction and genuine humanization. There is about progress, then, an eerily two-faced quality. Technology does not decide whether progress works to salvation or destruction; this decision comes from some other source (n. 37). Thus a perspective opens up which looks toward the only redemptive force—the saving power of love. Love finds its guarantee ultimately only in him who is essentially love: he who not only *has* love but *is* love.

