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Robert Grosseteste's Understanding of Human Dignity

In 1948 "human dignity" was enshrined by the United Nations in the preamble to its "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" as a basic principle.¹ Some generations earlier, with the rise of socialism, the term appears to have been given currency through encyclical letters of the papacy on the social question, but before then the expression was seldom used in scholarly or legal writings. It was however used frequently in the Roman liturgy, and it is this use that forms the background to Grosseteste's interest in the idea.² The currency of the expression "human dignity" today must be attributed to its use in the human rights tradition.

The idea expressed by the expression, however, is arguably something we come upon naturally. Pico della Mirandola's treatise *Oration on the Dignity of Humanity* (1515) and Kant's *Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) are sometimes mentioned to prove that the idea originated with modernity, but in fact it is found already in Cicero, as well as throughout the Middle Ages.³ It has roots in much ear-

James McEvoy died on 2 October 2010. May God grant him the eternal rest he so desired. The inevitable choices inherent in the revision of this chapter have had to be made by the remaining author. It is my hope they also reflect what we would have agreed upon. The authors wish to express their thanks to Mr Hugh O'Neill for helpful comments on two drafts of this study, to Dr Maeve O'Brien and Dr Amos Edelheit, NUIM for help with translations, and Penny Woods, curator of the Russell Library, for help with finding sources.

¹ Most major documents of relevance in international law emanating from the UN since its foundation have expressed their adherence to the human rights tradition by reaffirming "faith in human dignity and human rights." For extracts from preambles to national constitutions see Centre for Ethics and Law, *Dignity, Ethics and Law: Bibliography* (Copenhagen, 1999); Mette Lebeck, *On the Problem of Human Dignity: A Hermeneutical and Phenomenological Investigation*, *Orbis phaenomenologicus / Studien* 18 (Würzburg, 2008). Please also consult this latter work for the understanding of human dignity at the basis of this article. It is available in a shorter form in Mette Lebeck, "What is Human Dignity?" *Maynooth Philosophical Papers* 2 (2004): 59–69; Mette Lebeck, "On the Problem of Human Dignity," *Bioethics Outlook* 2.1.4 (2010): 3–8, in NUJ Maynooth ePrints and eTheses Archive, <http://eprints.nuim.ie/2374>.

² Giles Staab, *The Dignity of Man in Modern Papal Doctrine: Leo XIII to Pius XII, 1875–1955* (Washington, DC, 1957). See pp. 59–61 below.

³ See Hubert Cancik, "Dignity of Man" and "Persona" in Stoic Anthropology: Some Remarks on Cicero, *De officiis* 1, 105–107, in *The Concept of Human Dignity in Human*

lier thought, in the practice of law and administration in Mesopotamia and in the writings of the Hebrews. In those earlier times and during the Middle Ages the idea of human dignity was intricately mingled with the idea of the human being "created in the image and likeness of God."⁴

A little treatise with a complex history reflects the development of the idea of human dignity throughout the medieval period: *De dignitate conditionis humanae* (The Dignity of the Human Condition).⁵ This treatise goes back to two

Rights Discourse, ed. David Kretzmer and Eckhart Klein (The Hague, 2002), 19–40; Adrian Holderegger, Ruedi Imbach, and Raul Suárez de Miguel, eds, *De dignitate hominis: Mélanges offerts à Carlos-Josaphat Pinto de Oliveira à l'occasion de son 65^e anniversaire* (Freiburg, 1987); Robert Javelot, "Image et ressemblance au douzième siècle de saint Anselme à Alain de Lille" (PhD diss., Université de Strasbourg, 1967); Charles Edward Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought*, 2 vols, Ideas of Human Nature (Chicago, 1970). See also Walter H. Principe, "The Dignity and Rights of the Human Person: As Saved, as Being Saved, as To Be Saved by Christ," *Gregoriana* 65 (1984): 389–430.

⁴ See Yair Lorberbaum, "Blood and the Image of God: On the Sanctity of Life in Biblical and Early Rabbinic Law, Myth and Ritual," in *The Concept of Human Dignity in Human Rights Discourse*, ed. David Kretzmer and Eckhart Klein (The Hague, 2002), 55–86. In our age, characterized as it is by the easy manipulation of images, we could easily overlook the importance of the biblical statement that the human being is created to, or in, the image of God. By the authors of Genesis, in contrast, images were treasured as symbols of the original, for they understood the human being as making manifest the transcendence of God, so that the recognition of the human being is simultaneously the recognition of God, each making the recognition of the other possible. This two-way commerce embodied the Hebrew "democratization" of the prerogative of symbolizing God, something which among other civilized peoples at the time was reserved for the ruling class.

⁵ The translation of the title *De dignitate conditionis humanae* presents some problems. Whereas *conditio* in classical Latin was used to mean "stipulation," "agreement," and indeed "condition" (in the logical sense of a necessary presupposition), *conditor* was common in patristic Latin for "Creator." So whereas *conditio humana* does not have the modern sense – which it has, for instance, in André Malraux (*La condition humaine*) or Hanna Arendt (*The Human Condition*) – where it includes the entire chiastic of human experience, it does mix the classical sense of a necessary precondition with the biblical sense of Creation, so that what is thematized by the title *De dignitate conditionis humanae* is the dignity of the (necessary) condition for the pristine Adam and Eve in their prelapsarian innocence: God as Creator of, and condition for, the human being. Translating the title as *The Dignity of the Creation of Humanity* favors the patristic sense, but may confuse the issue somewhat. *Creatio* like *conditio* was in use already in classical Latin with a meaning closer to "choice," and it remains a fact that the treatise itself, with the systematic explorations that characterize it, is operating in the logical space opened up by the classical use of *conditio*. Restricting the sense of "condition" to the purely logical one, we can thus translate the title as *The Dignity of the Human Condition*. For a translation, discussion, and history of *De dignitate conditionis humanae* see James McEvoy, Mette Lebeck, and John Flood, "De dignitate conditionis humanae: Translation, Commentary, and Reception History of the *Dicta Albrici* (Ps.-Alcuin) and the *Dicta Candidi*," *Viator* 40.2 (2009): 1–34.

dicta (*Dicta Albini* and *Dicta Candidi*) from Carolingian times and was during the Middle Ages attributed to different authors.⁶ It was in part incorporated into the widely available compilation *De spiritu et anima*.⁷ It links personhood and dignity with microcosmism and is the first known work to be devoted specifically and completely to the topic of human dignity (though we have passages relating to human dignity in Cicero, there is no work from his hand dedicated to this topic in particular).

This essay endeavors to identify and interpret the most significant passages in Grosseteste's oeuvre relating to the expression *dignitas conditionis humanae*. The *Tabula* entry, discussed in section 1, gives us indications as to Grosseteste's sources for his understanding of human dignity. Passages relating to the expression to be found in his works are discussed in section 2. Finally the liturgical source mentioned is examined for its contribution to the Christian idea of human dignity in section 3. We shall argue that Grosseteste is a prominent representative of the tradition issuing from the treatise *De dignitate conditionis humanae*. Because of Grosseteste's exploration of the ideas present in this treatise he must be counted among those who have made a significant contribution to the development of the idea of human dignity.⁸

6 For the authorship question see John J. Machielsen, *Clavis patristica pseudepigraphorum medii aevi* (CCSL 2B: 683); John Marenbon, *From the Circle of Alcuin to the School of Auxerre*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought (Cambridge, 1981), 30–43, 144–63. In the fifteenth century it was attributed to St. Ambrose (the treatise of the name *De dignitate conditionis humanae* is printed under the name of St. Ambrose in PL 17: 1105–8), and attributions to St. Augustine were common in the later Middle Ages, but no one has seriously defended those ascriptions since Giovanni Crisostomo Trombelli (1697–1784). Erasmus showed the pseudonymous character of the treatise.

7 Trombellus made a connection between *De dignitate conditionis humanae* and the twelfth-century compilation *De spiritu et anima*, a book “written on the dignity of the human condition, once upon a time attributed to Ambrose. ... In fact the author of *De dignitate conditionis humanae* precisely wrote while expressively teaching: that God exists, lives. ... Held by both Augustine, the author of *De spiritu et anima*, and Theodoretus, the author of the little book *De dignitate conditionis humanae*, but by the latter less developed.” Trombellus, *Dissertationes in epistolam seu libellum sancti Hilarii* 3.1, 3.2 (PL 10: 851, 865). Trombellus thus makes the connection between the treatise *De dignitate conditionis humanae* and the author of *De spiritu et anima*, a connection to which we will turn our attention in section 2.i.

8 On Grosseteste's use of microcosmic motifs and his notion of human dignity see James McEvoy, *The Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste* (Oxford, 1982), 369–404. Richard C. Dales inaugurated the study of the *minor mundus* idea in Grosseteste: Richard C. Dales, “A Medieval View of Human Dignity,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 47 (1977): 557–72.

1. The Tabula Entry

The *Tabula* occupies a unique place in Grosseteste studies.⁹ It is an index of the Bible, the church Fathers, and some pagan and Islamic writers, and consists of topics arranged under nine different “distinctions” (such as “of God,” “of creatures,” and “of the church”). The extensive and detailed entry which alerts us to Grosseteste's interest in the topic of human dignity is contained in the distinction “*de creaturis*.” In common with most of the other topics listed in the *Tabula* there is no evidence to suggest that Grosseteste ever got around to writing it up as a sermon, a treatise, or a piece of biblical exegesis.

The compilation refers to a wide range of unexcerpted texts and employs a unique system of logograms (or, more correctly, phraseograms – signs standing for an entire phrase), devised by Grosseteste with a view to the gathering of references for inclusion in the index under a multiplicity of headings.¹⁰ The *Tabula* is incomplete in the sole surviving manuscript, and its editor reached the conclusion that the project must have been discontinued about the year 1230, at a time when Grosseteste was still a regent master at Oxford. Its interest is obvious as it enables the reader to find, under each of the headings assigned, those scriptural references and *authoritates* which its compiler grouped under the numerous headings. The available evidence suggests that Grosseteste himself made use of this table constantly for purposes of detailed reference while composing his work. Each of his theological writings could be examined for the light which the *Tabula* throws upon the sources used in it. The compilation can also help in dating some of Grosseteste's writings, and can even be employed with a view to discerning his thinking concerning topics – such as human dignity – on which he did not produce finished work. Finally, the logograms can be followed up in the dozen or so surviving books which were once in Grosseteste's ownership, in some of which these symbols are placed in the margins as reference marks.¹¹

9 Robert Grosseteste, *Tabula* (CCCM 130: 235–320). For the entry concerning human dignity see CCCM 130: 278. A full discussion of the manuscript, contents and sources of the work can be found in Philipp Rosemann, “Robert Grosseteste's *Tabula*,” in Robert Grosseteste: *New Perspectives on His Thought and Scholarship*, ed. James McEvoy, *Instrumenta patristica* 27 (Turnhout, 1995), 321–55.

10 Grosseteste's friend and collaborator, Adam Marsh OFM, added some of the entries but it is impossible to tell which ones.

11 The pioneering study of the purpose and utility of the concordance predated the edition of it by three decades. Servus Giebert, “Das Abkürzungszeichen F des Robert Grosseteste: ‘Quomodo philosophia accipienda sit a nobis,’” in *Die Metaphysik im Mittelalter: Ihr Ursprung und ihre Bedeutung*, ed. Paul Wilpert and Willehad P. Eckert, *Miscellanea mediaevalia* 2 (Berlin, 1963), 522–34.

In this section we shall investigate first the content of the treatise that bears the same name as the entry, *De dignitate conditionis humane* (i). We then discuss Grosseteste's method of associating textual passages with a theme via logograms (ii), before looking at the scriptural references indicated under the entry (iii) and investigating the theme of human dignity from the passages that can be followed up in Grosseteste's surviving books (iv). Reconstructing what Grosseteste would have written about human dignity is, to say the least, an unusual process.¹² The availability of Grosseteste's own books, however, with his own markings, makes it necessary to say something of what can be gleaned for his understanding of human dignity from his "marginal comments" in the form of logograms.

(i) *De dignitate conditionis humane*

The title of the *Tabula* entry "De dignitate conditionis humane" is arresting, as it recalls the small treatise of the same title mentioned above.¹³ The latter, as one might expect of a treatise coming from the Christian Middle Ages, has the format of an exegesis of sacred scripture (Gen. 1:26: "Let us make man to our image and likeness"). Its underlying, unifying theme is that of communication or relation: God expresses his respect for the creature he is about to make (on the one and only condition of himself), not only by making it in, and to, his own image, but also by taking counsel regarding what he is doing ("Let us make ...") of himself. This "taking counsel" expresses God's making of the human being in terms of a conversation with himself; thereby God identifies humanity as truly worthy of divine notice and attention. As a reflection of God's own communicative nature, the human being is in this "conditioning" consultation thrice graced with dignity (*dignitas*) – in mem-

¹² It is not, however, completely unprecedented. Edith Stein attempts a like procedure as regards Dionysius's unwritten or lost treatise on symbolic theology. On the background of the translation of the extant works of Dionysius from Greek into German, Stein "thinks through" what the author would have had to write on symbolic theology, thus giving a systematic consideration on the topic of symbolic theology from the perspective of Dionysius as perceived by someone who knew his writings very well, and had a particular gift for understanding the fundamental structure of an author's *Gedankenwelt*. Edith Stein, *Wege der Gotteskenntnis: Studie zu Dionysius Areopagita und Übersetzung seiner Werke*, ed. Beate Beckmann and Viki Ranft, Edith Stein Gesamtausgabe 17 (Freiburg, 2003), 22–73. What we do here is much less ambitious; it is to take the sources we know Grosseteste to have compiled and "think through" what he would have found here to be of interest for his developing understanding of human dignity.

¹³ In medieval Latin the word *conditio* was frequently spelled *condicio*, and *humanae* was normally written *humane*. We employ these medieval spellings when referring to writings of Grosseteste, whereas the title of the treatise itself will be cited as *De dignitate conditionis humane*. See McEvoy, Lebech, and Flood, "De dignitate", 2–3.

ory, in intellect, and in will – all united in one person, in the same way that the three divine persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are united in the one God. The supereminence of being thrice one is the image of the Creator that the human being reflects – its triple priority or dignity being conditioned by God's triple priority (three persons in one essence). Human dignity is thus due to God's being superessentially three in one, and it consists in the resulting reflection (the image) of supereminence in the memory, intellect, and will of the human being. The treatise is remarkable in that it understands this dignity to be a fact of relation (to God in his communication with himself), and not some mere accident bestowed on an already-existing created being. A microcosmic theme is also introduced into the treatise: the omnipotence of God in virtue of which he is present in everything is mirrored in the way the rational soul of the human being is actively present everywhere in the body while still making it one.

The analogy which is drawn throughout the treatise between *dignitas* and *persona* – the first being applied to the human being by analogy with the way in which the second applies to God – amounts to a systematic association of the two terms, which, however, stops short of identifying them. Its lack of any reference to Boethius's celebrated definition of the person is somewhat puzzling.¹⁴ The writing marks out the social and logical originality of *dignitas* and *persona* as being substantial subjectivity, and it also foreshadows that *definitio* of person which was known by the Parisian scholastics as *magistralis*: "*hypostasis proprietate distincta ad dignitatem pertinente*" (a subject distinct by a property pertaining to dignity). This definition, referred to by Bonaventure, Albert, and Thomas, cannot at present be traced back any further than *Summa fratris Alexandri* (written between 1235 and 1245), but it may be that it was formed as a systematization of the elements of *De dignitate conditionis humane* present in *De spiritu et anima*.¹⁵ Whoever did formulate it (and we are not suggesting that it was Grosseteste) must have had an Augustinian understanding of the incontrovertibility (and hence the substantiality) of subjectivity. As we shall see, the bishop of Lincoln had such an understanding and this

¹⁴ The treatise makes frequent use of *persona*, in a manner that is strikingly unaffected by Boethius's famous definition, "an individual substance of a rational nature" (*individua substantia naturae rationalis*). *De duabus nat.*, PL 64: 1313.

¹⁵ The definition is mentioned in Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1.29.3, ad 2, ed. Thomas Gilby et al., 61 vols (London, 1964–81); Albert the Great, *Summa theologiae, pars prima* 10.44.2, ed. Auguste Borgnet, Opera omnia 31 (Paris, 1895); Pseudo-Alexander of Hales, *Summa Halensis* 1 no 387.9, ed. Bernardinus Klumper (Grottaferrata, 1924). The authors gratefully acknowledge the letter of Fr. Louis-Jacques Barrallion of the Leonine Commission (22 Dec. 2001) sent in reply to a query: Fr Barrallion looked for the definition in William of Auxerre, Praepositinus, Richard of St. Victor and Alan of Lille, but without success.

allowed him to be associated later in time with Pico's *Oration*, in which the micro-cosmic idea is radicalized by an existential choice of status.¹⁶

(ii) The Association of Logograms with Textual Passages

The first interpreter of Grosseteste's thoughts on human dignity was the person who copied the manuscript of the *Tabula*. Its logographic symbols are given twice, both in the index at the beginning of the work and at the head of each entry. Whether the scribe attempted faithfully to copy the signs as they appeared in the original manuscript or himself added the symbols that stand at the head of some of the entries, is something which we simply cannot know. Whatever the case may be, the two symbols that are entered for *de dignitate condicionis humane* (or *de dignitate condicionis hominis* as it stands in the preliminary index) are quite different.¹⁷ It is the logographic symbol known from the index (the two sloped concave lines meeting each other to form what we take to be a capital D) which is employed in the margins of Grosseteste's books, not the double ring with a connecting link, which likewise stands at the head of the entry on the topic. This may indicate that the double ring was not of Grosseteste's own invention. Even so, it well illustrates the idea of the image of God. The concentric circles may symbolize perfection within perfection, the same symbolism being applied in the following entry, "quod omnia propter hominem" (that all things are for the sake of the human being), and if that is the case then the line connecting the two circles would symbolize the relationship of dependence in which the one is established as the image of the other. Even if the ring were not associated with the covenant alliance (between God and Israel, Christ and the church) it could serve as an icon for the Aristotelian idea of the human being as "somehow all things" by virtue of intelligence. In the context, however, the association with a covenant/alliance underlines a dimension of fidelity that was foreign to classical antiquity.

The use of the *Tabula* is for the most part unproblematic, especially given the learned help which its modern editor has placed at the disposal of readers regarding the patristic and ancient writings on which the compilation is based. However,

16 Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola and Robert Grosseteste, *The Very Elegant Speech on the Dignity of Man, with an Appendix Containing Grosseteste's Man Is a Smaller World*, trans. Charles Glenn Wallis (Annapolis, MD, 1940). Yet Grosseteste's subjectivism, in contrast with Pico's, peacefully coexists with an Aristotelian empiricism which allows him, through the idea of "the image of God," to locate rationality firmly in the human form, and precisely as the form of the material human being (see section 2.1 of this paper). That the human form is a calling to rationality that cannot be abandoned (having its existence in God's own Word) was to be somewhat lost on Pico and his followers, for whom the human body was not meaningful in the same way.

17 Rosemann, "Robert Grosseteste's *Tabula*," 247.

stumbling blocks in the way of the researcher can and do occur: biblical references are made by chapter, leaving the reader to identify the verse(s) which caught Grosseteste's attention; the numbering of the letters of Augustine does not correspond to modern editions, and the same seems to hold true of the letters of Jerome. The most frequently recurring challenge comes from the references to works of the Fathers, which for the most part are made by book only. Here the reader's prayer for inspiration becomes more insistent: to which words (in, say, a particular homily of Gregory the Great *On Ezekiel*) did Grosseteste intend to draw attention? If the book in question is a long one (for example, book 5 of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*), then the odds lengthen – unless of course the word one is looking for (in this instance *dignitas*) actually occurs in the text. If it does, then there is a good chance that it would have been here that Grosseteste would have placed in the margin of his copy his capital D sign, yet that is not certain, as he was searching for meaning, not simply looking for a particular word or phrase.

Statisticians will wish to know the following facts concerning the entry *de dignitate condicionis humane*. Immediately after the seventeen biblical references there comes a series of ninety-four patristic and ancient book-references. These are made by title, or by title and book number, or even in some cases by title, book and chapter. St Augustine scores highest with thirty-five references to fifteen different works (his *City of God* is drawn upon no less than ten times), thirteen references are made to St Gregory's *Exposition of Job*, and Boethius's *Consolation* appears once. There are six references to Seneca, three to St John Chrysostom and nine to St John Damascene. Aristotle's *On Animals* receives an astonishing total of twelve, while St Bernard of Clairvaux merits seven and St Anselm of Canterbury, four.¹⁸

(iii) The Biblical References in the *Tabula* Entry

The scriptural references (Genesis 1, 5, and 6; Judges 8; Wisdom 2, 3, and 9; 2 Maccabees 7; Ecclesiasticus 7 and 17; Hebrews 1; 1 Corinthians 1; 1 John 1, 2, and 3; 2 Peter 1 and Apocalypse 1) are given by chapter only, and hence the search for aspects

18 The complete listing is as follows: Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 12; *Contra Iulianum*, 1; *Super Genes ad litteram*, 3; *De fide ad Petrum*, 2; *Retractiones*, 3; *De libero arbitrio*, 1; *De vera religione*, 1; *Contra adversarios*, 1; *Epistolae*, 3; *Super Ioannem*, 3; *Super Ioannis Epistolam primam*, 1; *Enchiridion*, 1; *De Deo contemplando*, 1; *De Deo diligendo*, 1; *Unde malum*, 1. Gregory the Great: *Moralia*, 13; *Super Ezechielem*, 1; Boethius, *De consolatione*, 1; Jerome, *Super Ad Ephesios*, 1; *Epistole*, 4; Anselm, *Cur Deus homo*, 4; Bernard, *In dicitis*, 5; *Ad Engagement*, 2; *De libero arbitrio*, 1; John Chrysostom, *Super In principio*; *De compunctione cordis*; *De reparatione lapsi*, 4; Damascene, *Sententie*, 9; Seneca, *De beneficiis epistole*, 6; Aristotle, *De animalibus*, 12. Robert Grosseteste, *Tabula* (CCCM 130: 278).

concerning human dignity depends to a greater or lesser extent upon intuition. In some cases there is little doubt: Genesis 1 must surely refer to 1:26–7, on the creation of the human being in the image and likeness of God. Genesis 5 opens with a summary of the Creation narrative concerning the human being made in the image and likeness of God, male and female, and enjoying God's blessing. Genesis 6 is clear enough: the spirit of God was put into the human being (Gen. 6:3), and God made a covenant with Noah.

Judges 8, on the other hand, leaves the reader puzzled: is the notion of the Lord's coming reign the most likely target of the reference to human dignity? Or is it just possible that reference is being made instead to Judith 8, wherein Judith takes it upon herself to help her people to obedience by undertaking single-handed to confuse the army of the enemy? (The abbreviation *Iudic* favors the former alternative, but it is possible that a scribe could have mistread *Iudic* for *Iudit*.) The reference in Judith would be consistent with 2 Maccabees 7, which recounts the torture to death of seven brothers, highlighting the power of faithfulness over the brutal might of oppressors (one of Grosseteste's most personal and deeply held beliefs was that no created power can wrest the upright soul away from God).¹⁹ Ecclesiasticus 7 contains a long series of precepts on justice and righteousness: does Grosseteste consider that human dignity is expressed in just relationships with God and with others? The book of Wisdom, on the other hand, has three unambiguous references: 2:23 (humans were made immortal from Creation, in the image of eternity); 3:5 (they are made worthy of God), and 9:2 (they were created by the Wisdom of God). The reference to Hebrews 1 poses no difficulty either: the Word made flesh, through which the world was made, is a human being, to whom the angelic spirits owe obedience. In citing 1 Corinthians 1 Grosseteste underlines that Christ is the justice, sanctification and redemption of human beings, and hence that he is the reason for human dignity. 1 John, 1, 2, and 3 condense the Johannine theology of love, of walking in the light and of dwelling in God through the keeping of the commandments; 1 John 3:1–2 can be regarded as the culmination, proclaiming believers to be children of God. 2 Peter 1 underlines that everything has been given to us in Christ, even to the point of allowing us to share in the divine nature. Finally, the *Tabula* reference to Apocalypse 1 may refer to 1:6: Christ has made us "a kingdom and priests to God and his Father. To him be glory and empire for ever and ever." There is also the reference to Christ as Alpha and Omega – the template, as it were, for the Christian microcosmic outlook.

19 See James McEvoy, "Robert Grosseteste as Spiritual Guide" in the present volume.

It is thus fairly evident from the biblical material that Grosseteste's conceptualization of the dignity of the human condition is substantiated firstly in relation to the Creator, and secondly in relation to the new creation which redemption has brought about. He is sensitive to the glorious power of the freedom of the children of God (see Romans 8:21) to act in accordance with God's law of love, and to their obedience as those redeemed in Christ and meriting the service of the angels – themes which recur in the patristic references.

(iv) The *Tabula* and Surviving Books That Belonged to Grosseteste

Among the works referred to in the *Tabula* entry on human dignity, three are of particular interest in that Grosseteste's own annotated copy of them has survived.²⁰ Two of these were copied into the same codex, which we have been able to consult, namely Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 198, which has the complete texts of St Augustine's *City of God* and St Gregory's *Exposition of Job*, clearly copied and copiously adorned with the familiar logographic signs.²¹ We shall confine ourselves, in this discussion of Grosseteste's sources, to these two books in this manuscript, simply because it is the one we have been able to lay our hands on. This practical constraint highlights the two authors Grosseteste drew most frequently upon (apart from Aristotle), St Augustine and St Gregory.

The D sign is prominent in the margins of both works, being placed opposite passages in which Grosseteste found something he could fittingly include in his index under the heading "De dignitate conditionis humane." Oxford, Trinity College, MS 17 includes (on folios 1–42v) the text of Boethius's *Consolation*, and its margins contain numerous logographic signs.²² Unfortunately, for the purposes of our enquiry, the text runs out after 4.13, so that the *Tabula* reference to *The Consolation of Philosophy* 5.10 is not there. A search through the margins of the codex for

20 The nine surviving books which were once in Grosseteste's ownership and mention those bearing Grosseteste's logographic signs are listed in Richard W. Hunt, "The Library of Robert Grosseteste," in *Robert Grosseteste: Scholar and Bishop. Essays in Commemoration of the Seventh Centenary of His Death*, ed. D.A. Callus (Oxford, 1955), 121–45, at 133.

21 For an example of the conjoint use of the Bodley MS 198 with the *Tabula* in order to throw light on Grosseteste's exegetical procedure, see Robert Grosseteste, *Expositio in epistolam Sancti Pauli ad Galatas* (CCCM 130: 23–4).

22 Hunt, "Grosseteste as Scholar," 133. *The Consolation of Philosophy* (fols 1–42v) is followed on fol. 43 by a work beginning "Incipit prologus boetii in lib. Arismetice artis" (fol. 43–98r). On fol. 99 a new work begins: *Arator in Acta Apostolorum*.

human being, is not merely a static gift of nature but calls for an appropriate response; it has a threefold "root"²⁷ – in nature, in instruction, and in practice – and hence it is affected by the actions of the one who possesses it.²⁸ It is ultimately due to the creation by God of the human being in his image and to his likeness.²⁹ The themes of good will and its dependence on God are continued in 12.1,³⁰ 12.22,³¹ 13.1,³²

27 Josef Seifert, "The Right to Life and the Fourfold Root of Human Dignity," in *The Nature and Dignity of the Human Person as the Foundation of the Right to Life: The Challenges of the Contemporary Cultural Context*, ed. Vial Correa and Elio Sgreccia (Vatican City, 2003), 183–215.

28 The D stands at "It was in this customary sense, then, that I would employ the term *usus* [practice] among the three things to be considered in judging a man, namely natural endowment, instruction and practice."

29 "We too as a matter of fact recognize in ourselves an image of God, that is of this most high Trinity, even if the image is not equal to him in worth, but rather very far short of being so.... Yet it is nearer to him in the scale of nature than any other thing created by him, although it still requires to be reshaped and perfected, in order to be nearest to him in its likeness to him also. For we both are and know that we are, and we love our existence and our knowledge of it" (Augustine, *City of God* 11.26). The likeness to perfect is the knowing and the loving, and the image perfected through the likeness the fact that we can know and love, like God. In the love of our existence and knowledge we mirror God's creative love and knowledge, and have our dignity in this mirroring: "Since, then, we are men created in the image of our Creator whose eternity is true, whose truth is eternal, and whose cherishing love is eternal and true.... Then, as we contemplate his image in ourselves... we, like the younger son in the Gospel, [should] come to ourselves and arise and go to our Father from whom we had departed through our sin" (Augustine, *City of God* 11.28).

30 Augustine underlines that "the being that can be happy cannot draw happiness from himself, since he was created out of nothing, but from him by whom he was created. For the attainment of this good makes such a being happy, just as the loss of it makes him unhappy." This dependence for fulfillment, Augustine insists, concerns humans as well as angels: though these as intellectual creatures excel all creatures on earth, they are dependent on the Creator for happiness in the same way as they are dependent for their being. Grosseteste may refer to this passage to indicate that human (and angelic) dignity does not consist in self-sufficiency, but rather in the dependence expressed through the relationship between image and original.

31 This passage underlines good will as a means of becoming equal to the angels (and bad will as a means of becoming brutish).

32 God did not make the human being naturally immortal, but "fulfillment of their duty of obedience was to bring angelic deathlessness [to human beings] and an eternity of bliss with no intervening death, whereas disobedience would be very justly punished with death." Since Grosseteste marks out this passage, he must think that immortality deserved by obedience or good will, is a sign of the dignity of the human condition or that it manifests it. Grosseteste's Augustine "on human dignity" seems indeed to have been quite taken by the relationship between good will and human dignity. This comes out again in 14.11: "God made man upright and consequently of good will, for man

the *dignitas* logograms in books 1 to 4-13 went unrewarded.²³ We can thus look at passages specified by the D sign only in Augustine's *City of God* and St Gregory's *Exposition of Job* as illustrating what Grosseteste included in his entry under "De dignitate conditionis humane."

Grosseteste placed his logographic signs in the margin as he read; often he placed his elongated D sign at a place where the actual word *dignitas* did not appear. In what follows we attempt to present the various meanings which Grosseteste collected under the heading of "De dignitate conditionis humane." It is likely that he placed his marginal sign opposite the beginning of the passage that was of interest to the topic, as a reader could be counted on to read on some words or some lines further, until the passage made sense in the light of the sign. One reference in the *Tabula* sometimes corresponds to several logographic marginal signs in the chapter indexed.

Grosseteste's D mark is placed in the margins of his copy of *The City of God* relatively frequently from book 5 onwards: the *Tabula* refers to 5, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 18 [=14], 15, 16, 19, 21 and 22.²⁴ Upon occasion the D is joined by another symbol, quite frequently by the sign resembling a Greek psi (ψ) and denoting an angel (a stroke with two "wings").²⁵ This association is explained by human and angelic "dignity" being frequently discussed in relation to each other. The passages deal with three interlinked themes: (1) the good will which allows us equality with the angels, (2) which originates in the image of God, (3) bestowing importance on the individuality of the human being.

(1) In *The City of God* 5.11 the high status of the human being is seen as what attracts both punishment and providential care on God's part.²⁶ In 11.25 Augustine indicates that human dignity, insofar as it is what ought to be considered in judging a

23 It is possible to intuit within what the *Tabula* refers to as "V 10" some idea relative to human dignity? In Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy* 5.10, a classical contrast is drawn between the animals' having their faces turned down towards the earth, and the race of men who stand upright and lift their heads high, seeking the sky: "Only those of the race of men lift high their lofty heads / And lightly stand with upright bodies looking down so on the earth." (Boethius, *The Theological Tractates: The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. E.K. Rand, H.F. Stewart, and S.J. Tester, rev. ed., Loeb 74 [London, 1973], 420–1).

24 There are no logographic signs in the margins of book 18 ("18" is undoubtedly the correct reading) but there are in book 14, which seems to be the right book, to judge from the order in which the books are listed (see above).

25 The logogram is reproduced in Robert Grosseteste, *Tabula* (CCCM 130: 247, 277).

26 Augustine proclaims that "when man sinned, God did not permit him to go unpunished, nor yet did he abandon him without mercy." All translations from *The City of God* are taken from Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. George McCracken, William M. Green, David S. Wiesen, et al., 7 vols, Loeb 411–7 (London, 1957–72).

and 22.1.33

(2) At 8.15 Augustine argues that the superior body of the demons should not oblige human beings to consider themselves inferior to the former: "just as we are superior to all of them [the beasts] in reason and understanding, so by a good and honorable life we ought to prove our superiority to the angels as well." He goes on: "For, just as it might and does happen that the birds of the air are not only not superior to us who dwell on the earth, but are even subordinated to us because of the high value set on our rational soul (*propter rationalis animae quae in nobis est dignitatem*), so the demons, although their dwelling is in a higher region of the air, are not better than we are, who live on the earth, merely because the air is higher than the earth." The same thought is continued in 10.2 and 11.16.

(3) In 12.24 Augustine explicitly identifies the classical appreciation of rational originality with the Christian idea of the "image": "God therefore fashioned man in his own image. That is, he endowed him with a soul that enabled him through reason and intelligence to surpass all other animals that move on land or swim or fly, since they had no mind of this sort." This inserts the human being in a cosmic order so that good will is not the only thing of relevance to human dignity.³⁴ It pertains to this cosmic harmony to which human beings are central, that the latter are identifiable in a wondrous, but fitting way, as a race on the one hand, and as individually important on the other. Grosseteste shows himself sensitive to this by placing his D in relation to 21.8: "For who, after reflecting on the matter, would not observe that among the countless number of men naturally so much alike, each individual, strangely enough, has his individual appearance? If men were not alike, their species would not be distinguished from other animals, and again, if they were not different, individuals would not be distinguished from each other. Hence we find that the

would not have been upright without a good will. Good will then is the work of God, since man was created in possession of it by him." That good will is created by God does not detract from its being in fact the good will of the human being, and this, according to Grosseteste's reference, is of relevance to human dignity. One might even say that human dignity consists in it (human dignity being rooted, after all, in nature, instruction, and practice).

33 Good will consists in *enjoying* nothing less than God (and only *using* everything else), and it makes one happy. Unhappiness, in contrast, is like blindness, which, precisely as a defect, confirms that the eye was made for seeing.

34 "God, then, the most wise Creator and most just Creator of all natures, who has set upon the earth as its greatest adornment the mortal human race, has bestowed on men certain good things that befit this life" (Augustine, *City of God* 19.13). Such good things include temporal peace, and the promise of immortality for the just – they include everything needed for this life. The gifts of God reflect the central position of the human being in the cosmic order.

same men that we admit are alike, are also unlike." Thus all, individually, have the privileges bestowed on the human condition.

The *City of God* was only one of the fourteen writings of the bishop of Hippo in which Grosseteste placed his D sign, but to judge from the number of times he referred to it, it is likely to have been his preferred source in Augustine for this topic. Grosseteste's marginalia in his copy of *The City of God* allow us to reconstruct some of the Augustinian themes upon which Grosseteste would have drawn if he had written a treatise *De dignitate humanae conditionis*. His references seem to concentrate on the unique place in creation occupied by the human being as neither angel nor beast, made in the image of God and called to conformity with this image. The references underline how human dignity reflects the order of the cosmos, how it is maintained by good will (which is created by God), and how it relies simultaneously on nature, instruction and action, all of which are finalized by God. He might also have underlined human individuality and subjectivity, which are both linked to the priority of good will as the locus of human dignity, and indeed as the reason why equality with the angels is possible.

The D mark also appears with frequency in the margins of Grosseteste's copy of the *Moralia in Job* (the *Tabula* refers to books 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 25, 26, 27, 32, 34 and 35). These texts indicate in the first place that the rational creature is created to the image of its author (book 5).³⁵ The created image is also the epitome of all creation, since the universe itself is captured in one being who gathers up and summarizes all others (book 6).³⁶ God glorifies human beings in endowing them with the gift of reason (book 8), while these discover just how far rational nature transcends all other things (book 25). Human beings are lifted up by a promise: through redemption, they are not simply sent back to their first created state but are exalted in glory through the promise of a paradise that cannot be lost (book 27). Finally (an idea which became especially dear to Grosseteste), God made two creatures for

35 Gregory the Great, *S. Gregorii magni Moralia in Job* (CCSL 143–143B).

36 In the margin: "Mc 16; a reference to Mark 16:15, 'preach the gospel to every creature.' Gregory, and later Grosseteste, understood the human being as the representative of all creation, so that preaching the gospel to them meant preaching the gospel to all creation. The 'sharing of the human being in both orders,' and thus the uniting of invisible and visible in human nature, is a motif which received official endorsement during Grosseteste's own lifetime, through the *Decretum de fide catholica* approved by the Fourth Council of the Lateran in 1215 (ch. 1 §19). The Holy Trinity, 'the one principle of the universe, the creator of all things, visible and invisible, spiritual and corporeal, by His almighty power from the beginning of time made at once (*simul*) out of nothing both orders of creatures, the spiritual and the corporeal, that is, the angelic and the earthly, and then (*deinde*) the human creature, who as it were shares in both orders, being composed of spirit and body.' Josef Neuner and Jacques Dupuis, eds, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*, rev. ed. (London, 1983), 14.

is why Augustine has this to say when explaining how man is made in the image of God: "just as the one God is always wholly everywhere, enlivening, moving, and governing all things, so the soul is wholly active everywhere in its body, enlivening, governing, and moving it; for it is not larger in the larger members of the body and smaller in the smaller ones, but it is wholly in the smallest members and wholly in the largest ones. And this is the image of the unity of the omnipotent God that the soul has in itself."³⁸

The parallel between the soul's omnipresence in the body and the giving of life, movement and direction to the whole of creation by God points to the divine unity as the exemplar of the image of God that the soul bears within it. The thought is very close to the microcosmic motif, which occupies so prominent a place in Grosseteste's writings. Grosseteste attributes the thought unhesitatingly to St Augustine. But while it is certainly Augustinian in inspiration and flavor, it was doubtless from the pseudo-Augustinian treatise *De spiritu et anima* that Grosseteste himself directly took it, for the words quoted in Epistle 1 are to be found there.³⁹ This writing is a lengthy compilation focused upon central themes of Christian anthropology (such as soul and body, the image and likeness of God, and the freedom of the will). It was put together during the first half of the twelfth century by an anonymous compiler working in a Cistercian milieu.⁴⁰ *De spiritu et anima* ranges widely for its material over Augustine himself, Gennadius, Boethius, Cassiodorus, Isidore, Bede, Hugh of St Victor, St Bernard, Isaac de Stella, and others. Among these "others" the Migne editor signals Alcuin. The *Patrologia latina* prints under his name a short essay entitled "Dicta Beati Albini Levitae. Super illud Genesios: Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram."⁴¹ The content of chapter 35 of *De spiritu et anima* is made up of the *Dicta Albini* plus an interpolation (the paragraph known as *Dicta Candidi*). However, the title given to the chapter – *Dignitas humanae conditionis* – points us back in the direction of its immediate source.⁴²

³⁸ Robert Grosseteste, Letter 1 (trans. Mantello and Goering, 43).

³⁹ *De spiritu et anima liber unus* (PL 40: 779–832, printed among the works of St Augustine).

⁴⁰ The authorship question received a thorough examination in Bernard McGinn ed., *Three Treatises on Man: A Cistercian Anthropology*, Cistercian Fathers (Kalamazoo, MI, 1977). (This includes an English translation of *De spiritu et anima*.)

⁴¹ PL 101: 565–8. The reference to Alcuin (or Albinus, his nickname) as *Leuita* indicates the fact that he remained in deacon's orders to the end of his life. Marenbon, *Circle of Alcuin*, 219. The text has been critically edited along with the related *Dicta Candidi* (a pupil of Alcuin) in *ibid.*, appendix 1, 149–66.

⁴² The remainder of the title reads: "How the human being approaches the image of God. Again, how the image of God is in the soul. How the soul should conduct [itself in] the likeness of God" (*Homo quatenus ad imaginem Dei. Rursus quomodo imago Dei in*

knowledge of himself (human and angel), but through his relation to the physical world the human being transcends even the angelic nature (book 34).

The very fact that Grosseteste had an entry for *de dignitate conditionis humane*, and had the conviction that many biblical, classical, and patristic sources could be read to illuminate the topic indicates a thematization that is not found among his contemporaries. Grosseteste's interest in human dignity led him to collate texts that would allow him to approach the topic systematically.

From these sources several themes present themselves: from the treatise *De dignitate conditionis humanae* the themes of communication and relation as the matrix of human dignity on the one hand and the association of personhood and dignity on the other; from Augustine good will allowing for equality with the angels; and from Gregory the idea that human beings even surpass angels in one respect because they integrate the spiritual and the physical and thus the entire universe. In all of these sources, of course, the idea of the image of God is fundamental. An additional theme to be found in Grosseteste's own writing is the emphasis on the value of the individuality and subjectivity of the human being, which could also be seen to arise from all these sources.

2. Passages Drawn from Grosseteste's Other Writings

Against the background of Grosseteste's reading of patristic and ancient sources, it is now time to study extracts from a range of his own writings in which the motif of human dignity is thematized or occurs. This will be done in chronological order, to the limited extent that the order is presently understood.

(i) Letter 1

Addressed to Adam of Exeter OFM, Letter 1 answers two questions put by Adam of Exeter OFM, the addressee, concerning the relation of the soul to the body, and of the angel to matter.³⁷ The passage from the first letter that directly concerns our inquiry is the following:

Now, just as God is simultaneously and wholly everywhere in the universe, so the soul is simultaneously and wholly everywhere in the animated body. That

³⁷ Robert Grosseteste, *The Letters of Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln*, trans. F.A.C. Mantello and Joseph Goering (Toronto, 2010), 35–49. A dating not long before 1228 has been proposed in James McEvoy, "Der Brief des Robert Grosseteste an Magister Adam Rufus (Adam von Oxford O.F.M.): Ein Daterungsversuch," *Franziskanische Studien* 65 (1981): 221–6.

The quotation whose case we have just examined has a twin, for in the *Hexameron*, as we have already remarked, Grosseteste upon a second occasion draws some lines concerning human dignity and its divine "condition" from "Augustine."⁴⁷ It is the same story repeating itself, for the lines are to be located in the same chapter 35 of *De spiritu et anima*, where they were silently copied out of *De dignitate conditionis humanae*, a fact we will come to in due course.

(ii) *De decem mandatis* and *Dictum 21*

Grosseteste's *De decem mandatis* (On the Ten Commandments) was part of the trilogy of works that included his commentary on Galatians (which preceded it in order of composition) and *De cessatione legalium* (On the Cessation of the Laws).⁴⁸ The trilogy seems to have been written during the decade before Grosseteste left Oxford for Lincoln. In his discussion of the fifth commandment Grosseteste summarizes the "great prerogative" of being created in the image of God in the following way:

Just how serious the transgression of [the fifth] commandment is can be made clear from the fact that the one who kills a human being destroys the most worthy creature of God and wipes out the product made by the Holy Trinity in counsel. [So much is clear from scripture:] In the case of the making of the other creatures all that had to be said was "Let there be ... and it was made," whereas in the case of the human being it was said, as though a consultation were going on, "Let us make." And so the dignity of the human creature in its creation is underlined and brought to our attention. It is no insignificant insult to the Creator when his creature, that is of the highest dignity, the only one which was the outcome of a kind of consultation, is wiped out.⁴⁹

Apart from echoing the same themes as *De dignitate conditionis humanae* (the Trinity taking council in "conditioning" the human being) this passage gives pithy expression to the *minor mundus* topic associated by Grosseteste with human dignity. That the human being is "every creature," incorporating and synthesizing the dimensions of spiritual, animal, vegetable, and mineral nature, is clearly expressed

47 Robert Grosseteste, *Hexameron* 8.11.4 (ed. Dales and Gieben, 249).

48 On the place of this trilogy within Grosseteste's oeuvre, see James McEvoy, *Robert Grosseteste, Great Medieval Thinker* (Oxford, 2000), 101-6.

49 Robert Grosseteste, *De decem mandatis* 5.3, ed. Richard C. Dales and Edward B. King, ABMA 10 (Oxford, 1987), 60-1.

One of the extracts which the compiler of *De spiritu et anima* took over from the *Dicta Albini / Dicta Candidi* (= *De dignitate conditionis humanae*) is the passage concerning soul and body, God and world employed by Grosseteste in Letter 1, wrongly attributed (as we have seen) to Augustine.⁴³ It is logically possible that Grosseteste went back to *De dignitate conditionis humanae* for the quotation that interests us. Two factors, however, seem to run counter to that possibility. In the first place, the very same passage concerning soul/body and God/world is given prominence in part 8 of the *Hexameron* in the discussion of the image of God in his human creature, where it is firmly attributed to Augustine.⁴⁴ In the second, no evidence has been discovered which would prove that Grosseteste possessed any direct acquaintance with the treatise *De dignitate conditionis humanae*; if indeed he was acquainted with it, then it would have been odd if he had not spotted the extensive borrowing from it made in *De spiritu et anima* 35. It is surely of significance that the *Tabula* contains no single reference to the *De dignitate conditionis humanae*, whereas the treatise *De spiritu et anima* figures there as one among thirteen pseudo-Augustinian works which Grosseteste used while compiling his reference-notebook. In fact, *De spiritu et anima* was well known to Grosseteste, who adapted some of the ideas put forward there concerning the powers of the soul.⁴⁵ The compilation circulated widely under the name of St Augustine; among the first to unmask it was Phillip the Chancellor (before 1230), while St Thomas Aquinas suggested a Cistercian origin for it.⁴⁶

anima. Quatenus anima gerat similitudinem Dei.) For an account of the relationships between the *Dicta Albini*, *Dicta Candidi*, the treatise *De dignitate conditionis humanae*, the *De spiritu et anima* and Grosseteste's writings see McEvoy, Lebech, and Flood, "De dignitate."

43 This dependence of *De spiritu* upon *De dignitate* has occasioned some confusion among editors of Grosseteste's first letter. Luard reads "Augustinus," but in a marginal note referred the reader to "De dignitate conditionis humanae. S. Ambrose." Robert Grosseteste, *Robert Grosseteste, episcopi quondam Lincolnensis epistolae*, ed. Henry Richards Luard, Rolls Series (London, 1861), 10. Baur, who reedited the letter among the philosophical opuscula of the bishop of Lincoln, read "Ambrosius" (*Die philosophischen Werke des Robert Grosseteste, Bischofs von Lincoln*, ed. Ludwig Baur, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters 9 [Münster, 1912], 114). Baur must have supposed that Grosseteste was quoting the passage directly from *De dignitate*, widely attributed to St. Ambrose, rather than taking it from an intermediary, namely the compilation *De spiritu*.

44 Robert Grosseteste, *Hexameron* 8.7-1, ed. Richard C. Dales and Servus Gieben, ABMA 6 (Oxford, 1982), 228-9.

45 On the use Grosseteste made of *De spiritu et anima* in psychology, see McEvoy, *Philosophy*, 112-3. See also the numerous references collected there in the Index of Names ("Pseudo-Augustine," 531).

46 Thomas Aquinas, *Questiones disputatae de anima* 12.1, ed. B.-C. Bazán, Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P.M. edita 24.1 (Rome, 1996).

[cf. Gen. 4:13-16], come back to unity, come back to mercy's compassion! You shall not cruelly murder Abel, rather, where you can, spare life with mercy.⁵²

(iii) *De confessione (Deus est)*

The *De confessione* (On Confession) makes masterly use in its prologue of ideas that derive from pseudo-Dionysius, something that might incline one to place its composition within Grosseteste's episcopal years (after 1235). On the other hand, Hugh of St Victor's commentary on the *Celestial Hierarchy* figures in the *Tabula*, and the pseudo-Dionysian ideas might have come from that source, in which case the work on confession could have been written before 1230. We just cannot tell. At any rate, *On Confession* is a work of maturity, and part of Grosseteste's pastoral oeuvre, which he began to build up after he took up office as archdeacon of Leicester in 1229.

In *On Confession* it becomes clear that it is because humanity synthesizes all of creation that it has the greatest dignity of all creatures. The unity which all things enjoy in God, the universal cause, is present in the human being, the last effect, since all things, which in the world are diverse, are in him brought back to unity. This is why, Grosseteste says, a human being is called a "smaller world" (*minor mundus*), equal to all but not directly comparable with anything, the "template" (*exemplar*) of all. It also is the reason why humanity was created last, so that all other creatures might be prepared in detail for the synthesis that would come about in the human creature and nowhere else:

In the last place the Most High set up a certain product, namely the human being, something like the template of all the aforesaid [creatures] and taken from them all. He did this somewhat in the way of a writer making single editions of his wisdom and editing them into a summa. [The human being] is indeed made the equal of the angels through its soul, [and is made] similarly to the animals through sensibility, and to growing things through vegetation. With the other corporeal things the human being has a similarity in some bodily parts. Regarding the body, therefore, the human being is akin to the least worthwhile and is, one might say, the most imperfect thing. Regarding the soul humanity is equal to the best creature, and so [is] the most noble thing. Taken in all of what the human being is, however, humanity has the greatest dignity of all creatures. This creature, I say, is among all the other creatures the one which most resembles the Creator, for the reason that just as in God all things

⁵² *Dictum* 2.1 in Robert Grosseteste, *Dicta*, ed. Joseph Goering and Edwin J. Westermann, in *The Electronic Grosseteste* (last modified 2003), <http://www.grosseteste.com/dicta.htm>.

and is invoked to justify the prohibition of homicide on the grounds that a cosmic offence is committed affecting the whole of creation when the latter is violated in the creature that thus synthesizes it all:

Since the rest of the universe was made with humanity in mind, one who attempts to bring death to a human being – who is placed over the remainder of creation [Gen. 1:28] – does violence to the other creatures, made as they are on account of humanity. For one does one's very best to wrest from human beings the purpose of their existence if one takes and kills one from the center of creation: one does one's best to deprive them of well-being, since a reality is in a good state when it has attained to the end for which it was made. And since a human being possesses something of every creature, whence it is called the microcosm, and even the voice of truth itself refers to a human as "every creature" when it says, "Preach the Gospel to every creature" [Mark 16:15], one who deprives a human being of existence by that very act mutilates the being of every creature in some part of itself.⁵⁰

Speaking of the seriousness of the "theft" involved in marital infidelity, Grosseteste has a chance to reaffirm that no creature is of greater dignity than the human being: "The more precious the thing that is the object of theft, the more serious is the sin of the thief. And again, the degree in which fidelity and love is due to the person from whom something is stolen, is the same as the degree of seriousness of the sin of that theft; but no creature is of greater price or worth than a human being."⁵¹

A parallel appeal to the idea of human dignity can be found in *Dictum* 2.1, where, commenting at length on the complaint of Hosea that "There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land" (Hosea 4:1-2), Grosseteste points his lesson thus:

In this worthless earth which we tread there is not the slightest part which does not render aid to each other part in bringing ease to creatures. Yet a human being, who by its creation has the greatest dignity of any creature, disturbs and annoys others of the same nature! There can be no doubt that such a one is not worthy to live even on this worthless earth, nor even in heaven or on any element. Lest, therefore, every creature drive you away from the face of the Lord

⁵⁰ Robert Grosseteste, *De decem mandatis* 5.4 (ed. Dales and King, 61).

⁵¹ Robert Grosseteste, *De decem mandatis* 6.6 (ed. Dales and King, 67).

that human dignity consists. The *dictum* calls for not offending in this word (the interior is the origin of the exterior), and thus the Word, and its closeness to words, seems to open up the space of consciousness: rationality and moral consistency are all one in the *forum internum*, as the oneness of the self is the unity of rationality in each and every individual human self for whom the Word is the interior reality:

Add to this that we are like to God in the interior word; in speaking and producing the exterior word, the likeness to the Word Incarnate is expressed. What, therefore, ought to be watched with more diligence than the word, in which stands our highest dignity, because he who guards his word guards his soul, as is evident from what has already been stated? Solomon says, in Proverbs thirteen, "He who guards his mouth guards his soul" [Prov. 13:3], in which "He who offends not [in word] is perfect" as James says in chapter three [James 3:2]. And in Proverbs fourteen: "He who guards his tongue is most wise" [Prov. 10:19]. And Ecclesiasticus: "Blessed is the man who has not fallen by a word from his mouth" [Sir. 14:1]. And since the noun "word" combines the interior with the exterior word, and the interior word is the origin of every work, it is evident that he who offends not in word offends not, because if he were to offend at all, he must first offend in the word which is the origin of that work.⁵³

(v) *Hexaëmeron*

On the *Six Days of Creation*, part 8 of which contains Grosseteste's most extensive discussion of human dignity, was in all probability completed towards the end of his professorial career, or even slightly into the episcopal years (1235–6). The hexaëmeral genre covered a thousand years of Christian composition. In the lengthy series of hexaëmeral compositions, Fathers of the church and medieval writers undertook the exegesis of the first chapter of the book of Genesis, where the work

53 Joseph Goering and Randall Rosenfeld, "The Tongue Is a Pen: Robert Grosseteste's *Dictum* 54 and Scribal Technology," *Journal of Medieval Latin* 12 (2002): 114–40, at 125, 127. An instructive variant of the central idea is to be found in *Dictum* 21: "The word is the only thing that pollutes. That is why 'Not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man' [Matt. 15:11]. The reason is that there is no deed that is unclean, save inasmuch as it comes out of an unclean word of mouth or heart. Furthermore, there is nothing that bears such an express likeness of the Incarnate Word as the [human] word which consists in voice and understanding. That is why even if there were no other reason [the word] would have, with the utmost diligence, to be kept free from all contamination, out of reverence for him, I mean our Redeemer, of whom [the word] is so express a likeness."

stand through the cause, so in the human being the whole universe shines back through the effect, and it is on this account that a human being is called a smaller world. And because a human being is the best among them all – being not equal to each but equated with all – all creatures obey humanity by their nature, and so the human is the image of God. And this is what the Lord said: "Let us make man to our image and likeness." The Lord granted humanity dominion over all the things, of which it was made the template.⁵⁴

It is evident that Grosseteste attempted to combine the ancient idea deriving from Greek philosophy, of man as a microcosm of the universe, with biblical inspiration.⁵⁴ Humanity's dignity derives from its being the microcosm of all creation. Human beings have even greater dignity than the angels, and are more like God than are any other creatures. All created realities, even the angels, are to minister to them (see Heb. 1:14); in this they are the image of the God whom all things serve.

(iv) *Dictum* 54

The 147 *dicta* were all written before 1235 while Grosseteste was still teaching in the schools (as he testifies in the prologue to the collection). *Dictum* 54 locates godlikeness and dignity in the ability to communicate and speak. We have already seen that the theme of communication or consultation is present in Letter 1 and *Dictum* 21. Here, the theme is expanded: communication, the kind of sharing of which only intelligent beings are capable (and increasingly capable the more intelligent they are), is seen as the root of human dignity. Human beings bring forth words from their interior in the way that God brings forth his Word, and it is in this similarity

53 "Ultimo namque facturam quandam, hominem scilicet, statuit Alnissimus quasi praedictorum omnium exemplar et ex omnibus acceptam ad modum facientis singulas editiones suae sapientiae et in summam unam redigentis. Purificatur quidem angelis per animam, animalibus similiter per sensibilitatem, crescentibus per vegetationem; cum ceteris corporibus in quibusdam corporis partibus habet similitudinem. Secundum corpus ergo vilissimo simile et sicut imperfectissimum, secundum animam aequale optima creaturae et ita nobilissimum, secundum vero se totum omnium creaturarum dignissimum. Haec inquam creatura inter ceteras creaturas creatori est simillima, quia sicut in Deo omnia sunt per causam, sic in homine relucet universa per effectum. Et ob hoc est quod homo minor mundus appellatur. Et quoniam inter cuncta optimus est, cum singulis sit impar et omnibus aequatus, obediunt ei naturaliter universa, et sic Dei imago nostrum? Dedit ei Dominus cunctorum dominium, quorum fuit factus exemplum." Stegried Wenzel, "Robert Grosseteste's Treatise on Confession, *Deus est*," *Franciscan Studies* 30 (1970): 218–93, at 241.

54 This combination receives some comment in McEvoy, *Philosophy*, 378–401.

of God the Creator is depicted.⁵⁶ The author of the first writing to bear the name *Hexaëmeron* was St Basil the Great (ca. 330–79). His younger contemporary, St Ambrose of Milan (ca. 340–97) introduced the genre into Latin, while retaining the Greek title of the work which was his model and to which he owed many ideas. Sometimes Latin authors preferred to render the title as *De operibus sex dierum* or *De mundi creatione*. Characteristic of this genre was the integration of current scientific and cosmological thought concerning nature into the biblical belief in Creation. Allegorical interpretation enabled numerous exegetes to find in Genesis 1 statements about the Trinity, prophecies of Christ and moral-spiritual truths. Close on two hundred Latin writings on the Creation have come down to us from the Middle Ages. The twelfth century was to witness the zenith of hexaëmeral composition. The best-known thirteenth-century works bearing the Greek title are probably Grosseteste's and the *Collationes in hexaëmeron* ("Talks on the Six Days") by St Bonaventure.⁵⁷

Commenting on the Genesis narrative Grosseteste again underlines the theme of communication as the one through which human dignity is best understood. He does so in phrases reminiscent of *De dignitate conditionis humanae*, and hence of Letter 1. The "privilege of dignity of the creation of the human being" is what is suggested by God's "consulting himself" when creating humanity. God is, as it were, employing all his skill to bring forth what is to be in the image of himself, and thus he talks about himself as "us," in contradistinction to the singular "I" who was creating during the first five days of the narrative.

This consultation, which is the name used by the expositors of this passage, is not a consultation in the strict sense, since, as John Damascene says, "God does not consult, since consulting belongs to ignorance. No one consults on something that he knows. God, then, who knows all things without qualification, does not consult." What is suggested by the word "consultation" here, and by the consultative manner of talking, when it says: "Let us make man to our image," is the privilege of dignity of the creation of the human being, that is, that the most honored of living things is being brought to life. It also suggests the special care and providence of the Creator in making this perfect work of his that

⁵⁶ See the article and bibliography in R. Peppermüller, "Hexaëmeron," in *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, 10 vols (Munich and Zurich, 1977–99), 4: 2199–200; *Brepolis Medieval Encyclopedia* – *Lexikon des Mittelalters Online*, <http://www.brepolis.net/>.

⁵⁷ These latter were delivered at Paris during Lent in the year 1273. The series of conferences was broken off after the twenty-third, due to the elevation of their author to the cardinalate (28 May). He died on 15 July 1274 at Lyons during the council being held there.

is most precious and most dear to him, the work that is done with most wisdom and most craft and is admirable among all his other works for the exceptional skill with which it is made. For in the human being we find joined in the unity of a person both the supreme creature – the rational understanding that has free will – and the lowest element of creation, namely earth; and not just any earth, but dust taken from the earth. As it says further on, in the translation of the Septuagint, "God formed man taking dust from the earth." What could be conceived of that would be more wonderful or more skillful than the union of things that are so distant from each other?⁵⁸

Grosseteste brings together the great prerogative/privilege of human dignity and the triune counsel:

We should not neglect the fact that, as Augustine says, "it is not only by the word of the divine command that humanity was made as was the case regarding the other works of the six days, but by the counsel of the Holy Trinity and by the work of the Lord's majesty."⁵⁹ [It was done thus] in order that the human being should comprehend, on the basis of the honor of its first-creating, how much it would owe to its Creator, since in the creation the Creator granted the privilege of dignity ... so that the more the human being would understand the wonderful way in which it was made by him, the more ardently it would love his Creator.⁶⁰

As we have already indicated, the passage quoted above is to be found in the pseudo-Augustinian *De spiritu et anima*. The compiler of that work quarried it in the treatise *De dignitate conditionis humanae*, just as he did the paragraph on the soul and the body which Grosseteste employed both in Letter 1 and at *Hexaëmeron* 8.7.1. The treatise *De dignitate* incorporated the *Dicta Albini* and *Dicta Candidi* by sandwiching the latter (*Dicta Candidi*) in between the two parts of the former (*Dicta Albini*). Thus, the *Dicta Albini* is the source to which the paragraph Grosseteste so admired must be traced back.

⁵⁸ The extract printed above (Robert Grosseteste, *Hexaëmeron* 8.11.4) is taken with slight adaptations from Robert Grosseteste, *On the Six Days of Creation: A Translation of "The Hexaëmeron"*, trans. C.F.J. Martin, ABMA 6.2 (Oxford, 1996), 238. The notion of "a counsel of the Holy Trinity" is also expressed in, for example, Alcuin, *Interrogationes et responsiones in Genesis* no. 36 (PL 100: 520) as well as Ambrose of Milan, *Hexaëmeron* 6.7.40–1 (CSEL 32.1: 231–3); Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* 3.19 (CSEL 28: 85–6); Bede, *In Genesim* 1 (CCSL 118A: 25).

⁵⁹ Cf. Marenbon, *Circle of Alcuin*, 158.

⁶⁰ Robert Grosseteste, *Hexaëmeron* 8.11.1 (ed. Dales and Gieben, 232).

Here is the paragraph from Grosseteste's work, with the quotation included in it:

The same plural ["he made *them*"] means that we have to understand that the woman too was made to the image of God. When it is separated out, the attribute (namely, being made to the image of God), should be joined to each, since it was joined in the last sentence to the human being without differentiation. Hence Basil says: "And so the woman comes to be according to the image of God as much as does the man. For their natures are of the *same dignity*, their virtues are equal, their struggles are equal, and their rewards are equal. The woman should not say "I am weak." Weakness belongs to the flesh, but power is in the soul. ..." For in all things that have to do with true virtues the woman can be the equal of the man, if she wants.⁶⁴

Grosseteste had remarked a few lines earlier: "It is only with regard to the body that there is a distinction between the sexes."⁶⁵

Basil spoke of the two *physis*, of male and female as being *homoiois homotimoi*, "similarly of similar honor" (in an admittedly overliteral translation). Grosseteste, we may speculate, balked at an absolutely literal, word for word version: *similiter simul-honorati* (similarly the same-honored) would have more closely imitated the Greek of *homoiois homo-timoi*. He unhesitatingly rendered *homo-timoi* (of the same honor), not in terms of *honor/honorare* but by *eiusdem dignitatis* (of the same dignity). In Latin translations from Greek, such as the *Analytics* and the *Ethics* of Aristotle, *dignitas* mostly translates the Greek term *axia* (or its derivative *axioma*), but in this instance Grosseteste found it more telling to use it to render the Greek word *timé* (which is sometimes used to mean the same as *axia*). Grosseteste's translation of the paragraph of Basil amounts to a striking assertion, not only of the spiritual and moral equality of man and woman, but of the dignity of the human nature common to them – of human dignity.

3. A Neglected Liturgical Source Concerned with Human Dignity

The following prayer from the Roman Missal may be considered to be a liturgical source of the Christian understanding of human dignity. Grosseteste would have

64 Slightly adapted (with added italics) from Robert Grosseteste, *Hexaëmeron* 8.18 (trans. C.F.J. Martin, 249).

65 He is summarizing a thought of Augustine, *On the Literal Meaning of Genesis* 3.22: "From these words of Augustine it is clear that what is added afterwards, 'male and female he created them' is to show that here the human being was made not only as regards the soul, but also as regards the body. It is only with regard to the body that there is distinction of sexes." Robert Grosseteste, *Hexaëmeron* 8.18 (trans. C.F.J. Martin, 249).

Hexaëmeron 8.18 addresses itself to the creation of Adam and Eve.⁶¹ At the point that is of interest to us Grosseteste includes a quotation from the *Hexaëmeron* of St Basil. As Grosseteste's editors point out, the existing Latin translation-phrase of the Basilian work reached down only as far as the end of Homily 9. Grosseteste, however, continued to employ the work through Homilies 10 and 11 (which are sometimes misleadingly referred to as though they constituted a separate work *On the Creation of Man*). The obvious conclusion is that he had a full Greek copy and was working directly from it, translating some passages, and in particular the one that concerns human dignity. This is what he read, rendered into somewhat colloquial English:

"And God made man according to his image" [Gen. 1:27]. "The *man*" says the woman, "does that concern me? – it was a *man* who came into being." And she continues: "For [God] did not say, 'man' [*anthrōpos*] with the feminine article, but used the masculine article to include the male [only]."⁶² However, lest someone should foolishly understand the address to "man" as being used exclusively of a male, [scripture] added, "Male and female he made them." To the woman it belongs as well, equally with the man, to have been made according to the image of God. These natures are similarly of like honor [*homo-timoi*], their virtues are equal, their rewards and their condemnation are likewise equal. Let the woman not say "I am weak" – weakness is of the body, power is in the soul.⁶³

61 Part 8 opens with the quotation of Gen. 1:26. In the copy which Grosseteste himself corrected and annotated, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS lat. theol. c. 17, the logogram for human dignity is placed in the margin opposite the biblical quotation. Some reflections on *Hexaëmeron* 8.18.3–4 are to be found in James McEvoy, "Dignitas humana: The Equal Dignity of Man and Woman through Their Creation in the Image of God: Basil the Great's Outlook and Robert Grosseteste's Reception of It," *Magnus Opus Philosophical Papers* 2 (2004): 84–8.

62 In Greek the substantive *anthrōpos* can be qualified by either the masculine form of the definite article (*ho anthrōpos*) or the feminine (*hē anthrōpos*). Latin lacks the article, both definite and indefinite, hence the semantics of *homo* differ significantly from those of *anthrōpos*.

63 "Καὶ ἐποίησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν ἀνθρώπου κατ' εἰκόνα." – "Τὸν ἀνθρώπου, φησὶν ἡ γυνή, τί πρὸς ἐμέ; ὁ ἀνὴρ ἐγένετο οὐ γὰρ εἶπε τὴν ἀνθρώπου, φησὶν, ἀλλὰ τὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου προσθήκη τὸ ἀρρενικὸν ἐνέφηνεν." Ἀλλ' ἵνα μὴ ἀμαθῶς τις τὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου προσθήκη ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἢ μόνου κεχηρημένους, προσεθήκεν "Ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς." Καὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἔχει τὸ κατ' εἰκόνα Θεοῦ γεγενῆσθαι, ὡς καὶ ὁ ἀνὴρ. Ὁμοίως ὁμοίμοι αὐ φῶσεις, ἵσα αὐ ἀρεταί, ἀθλα ἴσα, ἡ κατὰδίκην ὁμοία. Μὴ λεγέτω· Ἀσθενὴς εἰμι. Ἡ ἀσθένεια σαρκὸς, ἐν ψυχῇ τὸ δυνατὸν ἔστιν. Basil of Caesarea, Homily 10.18 (*Sur l'origine de l'homme* [*Hom. X et XI de l'Hexaëmeron*], ed. Alexis Smets and Michel Van Esbroeck, Sources chrétiennes 160 [Paris, 1970], 212).

occurrence in Roman prayers, but, with the exceptions mentioned, it is used in the ancient sense of "office" or "holy orders" (for example, that of the Roman Pontiff). The related verb *dignari* frequently occurs in prayers, in the sense generally translated in English by "deign to." Notably, the prayer here singled out identifies the seat of dignity neither in actions nor in office but in the very substance of the human being created in the image of God, and subsequently redeemed and restored.

The prayer has a long history. It was present in the compilation known as the *Leonine Sacramentary* (ca 540). It may go back to the time of Pope Leo (440–61), or it may even have originated before then, since the genre itself encouraged the preservation of older material. Something of its sense is present in Pope Leo's well-known spiritual challenge to the believer: "Acknowledge, O Christian, your dignity: you have been made to share in the divine nature, so do not return to old baseness by unworthy behavior."⁶⁹ The Christmas theme is beautifully expressed through the idea of the exchange: Christ came to partake in human nature so that humanity, through redemption, might be made sharers in his divinity. The prayer is present in sacramentaries of the Roman church, subsequent to Leo, being found in the Gelasian (early eighth century, but incorporating much older material), and Gregorian (Pope St Gregory, ca 540–604) collections.

The wording of the prayer may have influenced the medieval attempts to articulate an understanding of human dignity. In the prayer the idea is expressed, with typically Latin economy, that human dignity is inherent in the human creature — that it can be, and indeed has been, lost to a great extent, but that it has been restored "even more wonderfully." Some concrete evidence for the theological diffusion of the human-dignity motif in the mid-twelfth century is to be found as we have seen in the influential compilation *De spiritu et anima* and equally in the source of that work, *De dignitate conditionis humanae*, in the words taken by the former from the latter: "When the quality of the soul becomes apparent, then let it be like him, who first established it wondrously in his own image in the human being, and even more wondrously then reformed it in himself."⁷⁰ We have seen this formulation in the *Dicta Albini* as well as in the prayer — both may have been sources for the author of *De spiritu et anima* and all three may have inspired Grosseteste.

Reflections on human dignity which can be intuited in the importance we ascribe to human beings seem to be present at all times, never being very far from thought,

69 "Agnosce, O Christiane, dignitatem tuam, et diuinae consors factus naturae, noli in ueterem uilitatem degeneri conuersatione redire." Sermon 21 in Leo the Great, *Tractatus* (CCSL 138: 88).

70 *De spiritu et anima* (PL 40: 805).

known it all his life, and would have read it, perhaps even every day, when celebrating Mass possibly even before the time of his priestly ordination (presumably in 1226, shortly after being appointed Rector of Abbotsley) up to his death.⁶⁶ "O God, who wondrously created the dignity of the human being and still more wondrously has renewed it, grant us through the mystery of this water and wine to become partakers in the divinity of him who has deigned to share in our humanity, Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in unity with God the Holy Spirit forever and ever."⁶⁷

This is not the only prayer of the Roman Missal to invoke the idea of human dignity, but it is the most significant.⁶⁸ The word *dignitas* is of relatively frequent

66 The only suggestion that has hitherto been put forward regarding the date of Grosseteste's priestly ordination came from the late Leonard E. Boyle OP, who wrote: "Since Grosseteste was appointed to Abbotsley on 25 April 1225, in the third week after Easter, it may be suggested that he was ordained a month later on 24 May 1225, that is, on the Whitsun Ember Saturday, the nearest regular day for ordination to the priesthood after his institution as rector." Leonard E. Boyle, "Robert Grosseteste and the Pastoral Care," in *Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 8, ed. Dale B. J. Randall, Proceedings of the Southeastern Institute of Medieval and Renaissance Studies (Durham, NC, 1979), 3–51, at 4.

67 "Deus, qui humanae substantiae dignitatem / et mirabiliter condidisti, et mirabiliter reformasti, / da, quaesumus, nobis eius diuinitatis esse consortes, / qui humanitatis nostrae fieri dignatus est particeps." "In Natiuitate Domini, Ad missam in die, Collecta," *Missale Romanum*, 3rd ed. (Vatican City, 2002), 160. The prayer is in use today as a Christmas prayer (without the reference to the water and wine), which it seems to have been before its adaptation, perhaps as early as the Third Council of Braga (675), to fit a prayer over the gifts accompanying the mixing of water and wine. In the Tridentine Missal, however, it was known in the form including the reference to the water and wine. *Missale Romanum ex decreto sacrosancti Concilii Tridentini* (Dublin, 1804), xlv. The prayer is cited in its entirety by Pierre Le Brun, who suggests that its origin goes back to the Council of Braga. In some places the deacon said the prayer, if he was the one to mix the water with the wine. Le Brun mentions this custom as going back to the twelfth century. Pierre Le Brun, *Explicatio litteralis, historica, et dogmatica precum, et caeremoniarum missae* (Venice, 1770), 150.

68 Other collects are linked in meaning: Feria IV post domm. II, IV et VI Paschae, Collecta hebdom. II, 318: "Recalling the annual mysteries by which, through the renewed dignity of its origin, human nature received the hope of the resurrection" (Annua recolentes mysteria, quibus per renovatam originis dignitatem humana substantia spem resurrectionis accepit). Feria V post domm. II, IV et VI Paschae, Collecta hebdom. IV, 319: "O God, who repairs human nature beyond the dignity of its first creation, look upon the unsayable sacramental mystery of your faithfulness" (Deus, qui humanam naturam supra primae originis reparas dignitatem, respice ad pietatis tuae ineffabile sacramentum). In Celeb. Matrimonii C, Praef. Propr. 7544: "Who have willed that man, created by the gift of your fidelity, should be raised up to so great a dignity" (Qui hominem pietatis tuae dono creatum ad tantam uoluitis dignitatem exrolli). Thaddaus A. Schnitker and Wolfgang A. Slapp, eds, *Concordantia uerbalia Missalis Romani. Partes eucharisticae* (Münster, 1983).

but, on the other hand, very rarely being thematized as such. Grosseteste's explicit interest in the idea marks him out among the thinkers of his time. His reception of the treatise *De dignitate conditionis humanae* places him in a special category, since this work focuses more than does any other document of its age specifically on human dignity. Grosseteste inherited the themes of communication and relation as the matrix of human dignity from the author or authors of this treatise, as well as the association of personhood and dignity. From Augustine he inherited the idea of good will allowing for equality with the angels, and from Gregory the idea that human beings even surpass angels because they integrate the spiritual and the physical dimensions. From the liturgical source he was supported in attributing dignity to human nature as such, in its creation and its redemption. From all of these sources, in which the idea of the image of God is fundamental, he also inherited the idea of the value of the individuality and subjectivity of the human being.

But Grosseteste went beyond his sources in important respects, which is why he merits recognition as someone who has contributed to the development of the philosophy of human dignity. Grosseteste's thoughts constitute a stepping stone in the line that links antiquity to the present day, bringing the *Dicta Albini* and the treatise *De dignitate conditionis humanae* into proximity with the so-called *diffinitio magistralis* known to the scholastics from circa 1227 onwards. His *Tabula* provides still further references (of which we have explored only those that could with certainty be identified from the books in Grosseteste's possession), which, if painstakingly followed up, might provide even further stepping stones.

Grosseteste's focus on human dignity is contained in his microcosmism, which unites the biblical doctrine of man as *imago Dei* with the idea that man is at the same time *imago mundi*. It underlines two things in particular, namely, that the Trinity's consultation is the condition for the human being – a privilege not even the angels were granted in their making – and that the creation of human beings in the Word constitutes them and obliges them to godlikeness in speech. Although the first is firmly rooted in the patristic tradition, the second is a flower of Grosseteste's own hermeneutic activity. Together they lead us to conclude that Grosseteste associated human dignity with communication in a quite an original manner: communication in God, communication with God, and communication between human beings. The idea that human dignity consists in being able to bring forth the word, as God does, and that this Godlikeness obliges us to be God-like in speech in particular is specific to Grosseteste and shows him developing inherited themes creatively. He intuited human dignity as the reason for, and the source of, the originality of human beings in their ability to communicate by means of rationality in words, much as God does. By accentuating the idea of communication as the notion in and through which this dignity is best expressed and

understood, Grosseteste reached back to the Greek (or natural) intuition that reason is shared with the gods. He also reached out towards the future in his Augustinian insistence on choice and in his principled gender neutrality formulated in terms of equality in *dignity*, human dignity. Human dignity is, for Grosseteste, the irreducible originality of the human individual, that allows for reciprocity and thus for communication, in a manner that reflects the interpersonal relationships of the three persons of the Trinity.