

Adams asserts that "[n]o one simply as a human being has authority over another. It is always with respect to some special office or position that one holds [*sc.* that one has authority]" (6). But, then, subsequently, he says that "[t]o be a man . . . is, as it were, to have an office, a position, defined by the imperative to live so that one would stand justified under rational criticism"; and in this connection, he speaks of man's "office as a human being" (14).

On the face of it, these statements seem incoherent, involving, as they do, both denying and affirming that being a human being simply as such is a matter or holding, or having, an office or position. But perhaps what makes this apparent incoherence no more than that is that Adams is tacitly assuming a distinction between holding or having the *general* office or position of being a human being simply as such and holding or having some *special* office or position above and beyond that general office. At any rate, he uses the qualifier "special" as one would expect him to do if this were his meaning, although, admittedly, he makes no use at all of the corresponding qualifier "general."

My position is that it makes perfectly good sense—in terms of any theistic, or, perhaps, even any religious, outlook—to think and speak of being a human being simply as such as a matter of holding or having a certain general office or position. To this extent, any human being simply as such is a *de jure* authority having all the responsibilities and rights belonging thereto. In Christian terms, any woman or man simply as such is subject to the imperative to accept the truth that she or he is the beloved child of God and to lead her or his life, and so bear witness, accordingly. Thus any woman or man simply as such is authorized both to declare the true status of every human being as a beloved child of God and to call her or him to understand her- or himself and to lead her or his life accordingly. This includes the executive authority to confront all human beings with the command, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself"; and it includes the nonexecutive authority of teaching and living accordingly.

9 July 1996