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Thirty four years ago, the students of the Faculty of Theology, which at that time formed part of what was then "The Royal University of Malta", on their own initiative, and with the aid and support of the University authorities and the faculty staff, gave rise to **Melita Theologica**.

The review was to be edited, published and administered by the Royal University Students' Theological Association (RUSTA), whose members represented the student body of the Theological Faculty. The goals the students have always pursued were to foster interest in, and stimulate academic research among themselves; to share the fruits of their research with the academic world and to offer all scholars, an opportunity to put across their views and writings to their fellow countrymen.

During the past 34 years, successive editorial boards have been instrumental in keeping alive their review and in maintaining high academic standards. It is to their credit that **Melita Theologica** has reached far and wide beyond the shores of the Maltese islands, and features among other and more renowned theological reviews in libraries across the globe. It thus caters and maintains a link — albeit a modest one — between Malta and theological institutions, scholars and students, the world over.

It was felt that the time has come when **Melita Theologica** could become the official review of the Faculty of Theology of Malta, (which since 1978 has been functioning independently of the University of Malta), and hence a joint venture of both staff and students of our Theological Faculty.

This issue, the first number to be produced by the first joint editorial board is a landmark in the life history of **Melita Theologica**.

It is hoped that the decision to make of our review a joint production of staff and students of our Theological Faculty will mean a new spring for the review itself. It is further hoped that it will prove to be an added stimulus to staff and students to continue in their untiring efforts in deepening their theological reflection (particularly on whatever pertains, or is in some way connected with the life of our people), and to share their reflections with theological scholars and students as well as with cultured Christians in Malta and abroad,

The Editor

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE THEOLOGY OF SALVATION

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The concept of salvation is a basic one in the entire christian theology. It is in fact the synthesis of revelation itself. God has wished to open a dialogue with man in order to "save" him. For this purpose God has sent his only-begotten Son, who became man in order to save the world and reconcile man with God. The Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, vivifies the Church and dwells in the faithful, in order to turn the community of Christians into a sacrament of salvation for the entire world.

Thus the plan of salvation is as eternal as God himself, having eternally existed within the Trinity to be realized in time as a new dimension of human history and the supreme fulfilment in the life of each individual human person.

But what is in fact salvation? Divine revelation, as it is now generally admitted, has been progressive and dynamic over the centuries. "At various times in the past and in various different ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own time, the last days, he has spoken to us through his Son"¹. Christ is the fullness of revelation not only in the objective sense, having regard to its content, but also chronologically, for He has fully manifested and fully realized in Himself the fullness of God and of his salvific plan².

By way of a quick glance at the multiple aspects of this dynamic progress already before the first coming of Christ, one notices several shifts of emphasis in the message of salvation: from a predominantly material and temporal content to a more spiritual and religious one; from an individual personal salvation to a collective and social one; from a this-worldly background to an eschatological tension; from liberation from evils to a fullness of life; from a totality of messianic goods to a personal and beatifying union with God himself³.

This gradual and multiple development is to be found already in the

1. Hebr. 1, 1.
2. *Dei Verbum*, n. 4.
3. Cfr. M. Eminyan, S.J., *The Mystery of Salvation* (Malta: University Press, 1973), pp. 7-41.

Old Testament, but it reaches its ultimate realization and confirmation in the New, with the Christ event and its culmination in the Paschal Mysteries. We must not think, however, that the process of development in the concept of salvation has stopped here. It is true that the Deposit of Faith, as it is usually said, has been closed and completed with the death of the Apostles, who were the immediate and official witnesses of what Christ did and said. But this same content of revelation, being infinitely rich as God himself is infinite, could not be fully exhausted during the time of the early Christians as far as its comprehension and realization was concerned. While the early Christian communities were growing in number and consistency throughout Palestine and the surrounding areas, and as these communities were confronted with new difficulties in their efforts to provide for the needs of the faithful and to defend the Faith against creeping errors, the salvific message of Christ gradually became the object of deeper reflection on the part of the pastors and the faithful alike. Thus new ways were being discovered to render this same message ever more actual and relevant. This is precisely what the Fathers of the Church and the Ecumenical Councils have achieved, and this is also what the Magisterium of the Church and Christian theologians have always done and are still doing.

While admitting the existence of a continuous conceptual development in the very content of salvation, a development which was uninterrupted and is still going on, it is not difficult to detect certain particular phases and tendencies within this same continuous development. This has also been the case, after all, with other areas in the field of dogmatic theology, and in fact also with moral and biblical theology. It could be said, however, that in regard to the theology of salvation these orientations have been particularly strong and evident. It suffices to recall, for instance, the decisive change of approach towards the end of the 16th century, at the time of the great geographical discoveries and after the Council of Trent, when the theologian was confronted with an entirely new situation and had to find a solution regarding the possibility of salvation for the many millions of inhabitants in the New World whom the message of the Gospel had not yet reached.

Today we can say that the decisive event has been Vatican II. Shortly after the first theological reflections upon the various Documents of the Council, the notion of "salvation" and the entire problematic related to it has come up again to the surface. Witness to this are the numerous theological works, dealing directly or indirectly with the topic of salvation,

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which have seen the light during the past ten or fifteen years⁴.

One common thread, so to speak, running through most recent theological works on salvation, is the consideration that salvation is not directly or explicitly related to life after death. Thus K. Rahner defines salvation as the fullness of one's existence, or as the realization of one's authentic and complete existence⁵. Along these lines we have Y. Congar's description of salvation, as one's discovery of the meaning of life⁶, or the one proposed by G. Gutierrez, as the communion of men with God and of men among themselves⁷. The concept of fullness of life or perfection of one's being is, indeed, not entirely absent from classical theology, and certainly not from the context of man's ultimate end which we see defined, for example looked upon in St Thomas Aquinas⁸, as "the summit of one's perfection" (*consummata perfectio*). Among contemporary theologians, at any rate, this category of salvation is looked up on without explicit reference to one's ultimate end, but with special regard to one's existential situation and historical environment. Within this perspective one could, no doubt, remark that the Johannine conception of "eternal life" is neither too different from that of "fullness of life", nor does it exclude a reference to life this side of death⁹.

Another aspect, always within the framework of human personality, is to be found among some specialists of the human sciences, for whom man is "potentiality of personal being" actuating itself progressively through a series of historical choices¹⁰. What is interesting, however, is the fact that a similar terminology has penetrated into theological usage. Thus J.H. Walgrave finds no difficulty in affirming that salvation means "integral and definitive realization of one's being"¹¹. Along the same line of thought L. Boff defines Christ as "the archetype of the most perfect

4. See e.g. R. Laurentin, *Developpement et Salut* (Paris: Seuil, 1969); *Mysterium Salutis: I/1. Histoire du salut et Révélation* (Edit. du Cerf, 1969); John L. McKenzie, "The Meaning of Salvation", *The Way* (Oct. 1970); L.S. Chafer, *Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972); Charles Journet, *Per una teologia della Storia della Salvezza* (Napoli: D'Auria, 1972); D. Jenkins, "What does Salvation mean to Christians Today?" in *Living Faiths and Ultimate Goals* (Edit. by S.J. Samartha), (Geneva 1974), 33-44.
5. K. Rahner, "The Christian in his world" in *Theological Investigations* (New York: Herder, 1971), 7:88-99.
6. Y. Congar, *Ma paroisse mon vaste monde* (Paris, 1966).
7. G. Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation* (London: SCM Press, 1974).
8. I — II, a. 1 a. 6.
9. John 3, 15; 17, 3.
10. This approach is very common in contemporary philosophy and finds its theological application in the considerations on the Theology of Death and the Fundamental Option: see e.g. Karl Rahner, *On the Theology of Death* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1961); M. Eminvan, *op. cit.*, 164-171; L. Boros, *The Moment of Truth* (London: Burns & Oates, 1965); L. Monden, *Sin, Liberty and Law* (London: Chapman, 1966).
11. J.H. Walgrave, *Un salut aux dimensions du monde* (Paris 1970).

individualization, . . . the most perfect and fully-integrated being that has ever appeared in the world"¹².

Now man cannot realize himself fully if not in terms of the relationships he is capable of establishing with the others and with the world around him. A healthy society is the proper place for a progressive personification, where each one gives to the other a fragment of his own personality, finds an enrichment for his own personality, and discovers the proper ground for his own full maturation¹³.

Such categories, again, have easily found their place in the theology of salvation. Thus, for instance, the ecclesial communities are "sacraments of salvation" or places where one develops and matures his own christian personality. Salvation itself, in fact, being communion of man with God and of men among themselves, is something real and concrete already now, something which pervades human reality, transforms it and brings it to its fullness in Christ"¹⁴.

Salvation as "liberty" is a frequent theme in contemporary theological writings. Freedom here is described as integral mystery over one's life, a radical ability to decide about one's own person and one's concerns, a readiness to make choices in full freedom regarding one's own identity and to actualize them in one's history. Hence salvation, in this context, means promotion or completion of freedom in all its various aspects¹⁵. This way of theologizing is made in regard to peoples as well as individuals, and perhaps to the former more than to the latter, as it is in the community that the individual conquers his own liberty through a series of liberating relationships.

The ideal of unity between the various components of the human person, or between the various social classes in the same nation, or between the various peoples of the world, is also looked upon as an absolute and universal value and therefore as salvation. It is true to say that man is experiencing today a profound conflict within himself, within his own thoughts and desires, a conflict between these and his actions, between what he thinks is right and what he is inclined to do. Such a conflict is so universal today, that one could almost call it a "dimension" of modern man. The unification of man's resources and of all human efforts is, according to many, the only thing that can "save" mankind from total catastrophe. And the proclamation of the good news of Christianity in-

12. L. Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator* (New York: Orbis Books, 1978), pp. 179f.; N.N., "Salvezza cristiana e liberazione umana", *Civiltà Cattolica* (5 October 1974), 3-10.
13. Cf. Eric Fromm, *Psicanalisi della Società Contemporanea* (Milano 1970); also E. Fromm (ed.), *The Nature of Man* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1968).
14. G. Gutierrez, *op. cit.*, p. 150.
15. Cf. M. Merlé, *Idéologie de liberation et message du salut* (Strasbourg, 1973).

tends precisely to announce the possibility and the initial realization of this unity in man and between men. This is, indeed, what is suggested by *Gaudium et Spes*¹⁶ as regards personal unity, and by *Lumen Gentium*¹⁷ as regards unity between classes and nations.

Theological reflection upon our technological age and its dangers and responsibilities has also contributed some important elements to the problematic of salvation. The technological civilization of our time has, in a way, turned upside down our human existence and has led to the disappearance of some points of reference which had been traditionally vital. Thus the man of our time has gradually lost the meaning of life itself. Recent changes in almost every aspect of human life have been so rapid and all-embracing, that man has indeed lost his sense of direction. Hence, one notes not only a lack of clarity in man's ideas, but a devastating confusion and lack of logic in his thinking. The man of today does not really know what he wants or where he is going. He is contradicting himself all the time, he is undoing in a day what has taken him ages to build. According to some thinkers, men cannot be saved from this deleterious situation unless the meaning of his existence is indicated to him¹⁸. Typical in this trend of thought is Y. Congar, who identifies salvation with the ability to discover the meaning of life, which can be achieved fully only in Christ through the Church. "Losing one's salvation means in actual fact missing the whole meaning of life"¹⁹.

As in classical theology, negative aspects in regard to the concept of salvation are not lacking in contemporary theology. Salvation, in other words, can be considered not only as an attainment of something positive, but as freedom from what is negative and harmful. Foremost in this line of thinking is the idea of liberation from the frustrations and privations which beset modern life and which are the source of much unhappiness and despair. Many of these frustrations are due to isolation and loneliness: inability to accept oneself and others invariably leads to inability to communicate with others. It is from situations like these that so many people of today, especially youths, need to be saved. Hence, salvation in these cases means freedom from the chains of one's selfishness and greed, liberation from enslaving anxiety and fear²⁰.

There is then freedom from alienations, which tend to divert man from his real fulfilment and slow down his personal growth. Depth psychology has in recent times singled out the numerous factors which

16. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 10.

17. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 1.

18. H. and S. Rath, *Values and Teachings* (Columbus, Ohio, 1966) pp. 15-17.

19. Y. Congar, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

20. Cfr. Ch. Bonnet, *Politique, Eglise et Foi* (Paris, 1972); A. Dumas *Political Theology and the Life of the Church* (London: SCM Press 1978).

keep an individual unduly tied down to other persons; similarly the sociological sciences, and to some extent also marxism itself, have described the various mechanisms of alienation in contexts of work, politics, education, entertainment, etc.²¹ In this context, therefore, salvation consists in the help one can give to the alienated man of today to realize himself by fully accepting himself, but especially by eliminating from his life, even if gradually and by pacific means, all undue influences, distractions and pre-occupations. Modern theology has become aware of the critical task which is hers today in this regard, not in the name of an ideology or of a historically-oriented exigency, but for the sake of the Kingdom of God, which has its roots and must propagate itself in this world before it finds its eschatological fulfilment in the world to come. This is the basis of the so-called "Theology of Liberation", which knows its birth in the Catholic Church in the sixties and has contributed much to clarify many issues coming from the Theology of Progress and of Human Realities. Thus one could also speak of the social and political aspect of salvation²².

The classical theme of salvation as liberation from sin has not indeed been absent from post-conciliar theological reflection. It is, in fact, bound to remain in the centre of one's consideration, if one is to remain faithful to the Gospel. The tendency, however, is to place this kind of salvation on the collective and social level rather than on the individual one. It is, indeed, a matter of emphasis. Hence sin is often considered as a "collective" evil, or "sin of the world". One often meets the expression "structure of sin", or "sinful institutions", with special reference, of course, to social injustice and the oppression of one people by another, or of one class by another. In other words, modern theology tends to focus upon the "historicity" of sin, understanding by this the fact that sin is not only an offence against God and an obstacle of union with him here on earth and in heaven, but a self-limitation and a self destruction of man himself²³. The Good News of the Gospel proclaims that, in the fullness of time, God has sent to us his own Son, so that by becoming man, he might set free all men from all kinds of slavery to which their own sin and the sin of others keeps them bound: ignorance, hunger, misery and oppression; in other words, from injustice and hatred, which owe their origin to man's self-love. Sin is, therefore, the fundamental alienation which cannot really be reached in itself and attacked directly, but only in its various

21. Cfr. e.g. A.G. Gish, *The New Left and Christian Radicalism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1970).
22. Cfr. E. Dussel, *Historie et Théologie de la libération* (Paris, 1974); J. Metz, *Theology of the World* (London, 1969); G. Gutierrez, *op. cit.*, and by the same author, "The Poor in the Church", in *Concilium: The Poor and the Church* (New York, The Seabury Press, 1977), pp. 11-16.
23. Cfr. Helder Camara, *Spiral of Violence* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1971).

historical concretizations and articulated expressions, namely in other particular forms of alienation. It is impossible to understand the fundamental alienation of sin without grasping the particular ones.

Once we deal with the temporal aspect of salvation, we must also revise, so to speak, our thinking in regard to the "means" of salvation. There is still insistence upon the need of personal conversion and reconciliation, but more often than not on a social background. Hence the need is felt to reawaken the social consciousness in a community and to revitalize the communitary habits, a need which is much insisted upon among the theologians and the bishops of Latin America, where the term "conscientization", very often used by Helder Camara, has its origin. This conscientization is not a purely passive attitude of awareness before an oppressive reality, neither is it one of critical opposition only, but rather one of initiative and reformative action²⁴.

Agreement is not always found in theological writings in regard to the way of assessing revolutionary movements and struggles for freedom. On the one hand we have the supporters of a "Theology of Revolution"²⁵ or indeed of a "Theology of Violence"²⁶. These, while specifying that fighting does not necessarily mean hating, assert that in certain circumstances institutionalized violence cannot be overcome except by violence. Those particularly who adopt terms and concepts suggested by Marxism in their analysis of the social situation, justify their support for class struggle advocated by Marxism as only a phase in the process of liberation, and therefore as an aspect of salvation as understood today²⁷. Others prefer to speak about revolution and violence in more nuanced terms to avoid the risk of presenting their ideas as an ideology and their "means" of salvation as unevangelical²⁸.

24. One should note here that the idea of social reform is coextensive with the world influenced by Christianity. In Japan, for instance, the trade union movement was begun by a Christian called Kagawa. In China, the father of the social revolution was the Christian Sun Yat-sen. Even Gandhi confessed that he thought up the idea of a pacifist revolution while reading the Sermon on the Mount. Cfr. L. Boff, *op. cit.*, p. 321.
25. J. Moltmann, *Religione, Rivoluzione e Futuro* (Brescia: Quereriniana, 1971); A.G. Gish, *op. cit.*; P. Bigo, *The Church and the Third World Revolution* (New York: Orbis Books, 1977).
26. J. Ellul, *Violence: Reflections from a Christian Perspective* (London: Mowbrays, 1978); cfr. also Martin Luther King, *The Trumpet of Conscience* (London: Herder & Stoughton, 1968) and R. Schultz, *Violent for Peace* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1970).
27. Thus, for instance, G. Girardi, *Marxism and Christianity* (Dublin: Gill, 1968). and, by the same author, *Cristianesimo, Liberazione, Lotta di Classe* (Assisi, 1979); J.M. Diez Alegria, *La Teologia di fronte alla società storica* (Assisi, 1973).
28. See, for instance, the excellent article by S. Rayan, S.J., "Christian participation in the struggle for Social Justice: Some theological reflections", in *The Clergy Monthly* (Aug. 1974), 282-296; cf. also A. Saldanka, *In the Service of Liberation* (St. Mary's Town: Bangalore, 1974).

It goes without saying that the salvific action on the part of God is considered as basically indispensable in modern theology no less than in classical theology. Even those who, more than others, underline the earthly aspect of salvation and man's individual commitment to it, explicitly affirm that, in every case, salvation is from God. The illuministic myth, in the sense that the diffusion of knowledge is sufficient by itself to liberate man, as Hegel had suggested, no longer influences Catholic theologians. Also without real influence upon theologians today is the myth which presents progress and economic development as a necessary condition for man's salvation. The theologians of today, however, have felt the need of clarifying the role of faith in the process of salvation, underlining always that God does not operate man's total salvation without the cooperation of other fellow men²⁹.

The Christological dimension of salvation is also present, more than ever before perhaps, in modern theology. Christ's own experience on earth has, so to speak, an anticipatory function, in the sense that both the possibility and the validity of certain human attitudes (such as loving oblation on the Cross leading to the Resurrection) are vindicated³⁰.

The foregoing are, in our view, the main traits which characterize the theology of salvation in recent times. There is continuity with preconciliar and classical soteriology, because the Christian message is one; but there is also development, in as much as the anthropological approach, considering man in his totality as an evolving being in a rapidly changing world, is predominant. The Kingdom of God, in which man attains his salvation, is indeed an eschatological reality, but it is also being established here and now, and indeed within us, proclaiming the Good News that all men are children of God the Saviour, who has sent his Son on earth in order to set them free in a world of truth, justice and love, and to share with them his own eternal happiness.

29. Cf. e.g. M. Emynan, S.J., *The Mystery of Salvation* (Malta: University Press, 1973), pp. 89-99.

30. Most important here is L. Boff, *op. cit.*, and J. Moltmann, *The Theology of Hope* (London: SCM, 1970).

THE CHRISTIAN HUMANISM OF JOHN PAUL II

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In one of the central passages of his beautiful encyclical **Redemptor Hominis** John Paul II declares:

What is in question here is man in all his truth, in his full magnitude. We are not dealing with the "abstract" man, but the real, "concrete", "historical" man. We are dealing with "each" man, for each one is included in the mystery of the Redemption and with each one Christ has united himself for ever through this mystery (. . .) Man as "willed" by God, as "chosen" by him from eternity and called, destined for grace and glory — this is "each" man, "the most concrete" man, "the most real"; this is man in all the fullness of the mystery in which he has become a sharer in Jesus Christ, the mystery in which each one of the four thousand million human beings living on our planet has become a sharer from the moment he is conceived beneath the heart of his mother (. . .) Man in the full truth of his existence, of his personal being — in the sphere of his own family, in the sphere of society and very diverse contexts, in the sphere of his own nation or people (perhaps still only that of his clan or tribe), and in the sphere of the whole of mankind — this man is the primary route that the Church must travel in fulfilling her mission: **he is the primary and fundamental way for the Church**, the way traced out by Christ himself, the way that leads invariably through the mystery of the Incarnation and the Redemption (nn. 13-14)

This famous text shows very clearly the anthropological interest of John Paul II: everything that he does or says is centred on man, on the Christian man, man both in his human and divine, natural and supernatural dimensions. **Redemptor Hominis** is a marvellous, actualized synthesis of Christian humanism. In this authoritative document John Paul II claims for the Church a humanistic import that modern culture has

never been willing to recognize to her. Laicism and atheism have always maintained to be the only defendants of man and the true supporters of humanism. On humanistic grounds they have constantly attacked the Church and religion, assuming that by submitting man to God, they deprive him of his freedom and autonomy, stifle his activity and hinder his progress.

John Paul does not pay attention to these big lies, and does not take care to defend the Church by condemning atheism, marxism, communism, nazism or other ideologies or anticlerical and irreligious systems that claim to enhance the liberation of man by depriving him of his religious dimension and of the Christian faith; but on the very subject of humanism the Pope launches a challenge to them and depicts with a firm hand and with a poetic language the image of the greatness and nobility of man, as has been planned and willed by God.

Of man the **Redemptor Hominis** presents two fundamental aspects: one based on human reason, the other on Christian faith. Treating the first he brings forth the qualities, the powers, the difficulties, the desires, the anxieties, the failures of man in this present age. Dealing with the second he gives a warm exposition of the Christian doctrine on man: man as surrounded by the love of God and transformed by the grace of Jesus Christ, and as object and way of the Church.

1. The problem of man

Who is man? This is the big question, the question of all the questions.

Our mind is assailed by numberless questions, and there are many of great interest; yet no other question comes before this in order of importance, urgency and gravity, for the question "Who is man?" does not regard facts, things, persons foreign or far away from us, but concerns directly our own being, our origin and our destiny. Before many other questions we may keep indifferent and let somebody else look for the adequate answer. We cannot take this stand of indifference before the question: "Who is man?", since from its solution depends the planning of our individual and social life, our behaviour, our relations with the other persons and with the world.

Hence the question "Who is man" is a basic question but a very difficult one, because of the complexity of our being, our great dynamism, our strong and high aspirations, our many capacities for good and evil, hate and love, progress and regress.

That the problem of man cannot be easily solved is clearly testified

from history: it has always been studied but never definitively solved. There is no great philosopher who has not coped with it. From Socrates to Plato, from Aristotle to Plotinus, from St. Augustine to St. Thomas, from Descartes to Spinoza, from Hume to Kant, from Hegel to Marx, from Nietzsche to Freud, from Heidegger to Maritain etc man has always been on the forefront of philosophical research. In the modern times scientists have faced the problem of man with no less passion, looking into his physical and psychical, external and internal, individual and social, conscious and unconscious, speculative and practical aspects. But notwithstanding so many efforts man continues to remain "a great mystery", as St. Augustin used to say.

In the **Redemptor Hominis** John Paul II, according to his peculiar style of facing a problem gradually, raises the question concerning the being of man, his desires and his destiny again and again. He does not proceed according to the deductive method of classical philosophy, that attempted to explain man's nature in the light of the universal principles of being and knowing, but follows the phenomenological and existential method of looking attentively into the many aspects and dimensions of man's being. By exploiting the best and sure results of existential analysis and personalistic philosophy the Pope outlines a phenomenological image of man, whose main marks are the uniqueness, intersubjectivity, liberty, anxiety and manipulation of man.

First of all, man is a "person", that is "in his reality he has a history of his soul that is his own" (n. 14) Each human being is unique: "in all the unrepeatable reality of what he is and what he does, of his intellect and will, of his conscience and heart" (*ibid.*)

But this uniqueness does not imply that man is shut in himself, that he is a monad "without doors and windows" according to Leibnitz' saying and as it has been taught by a great deal of modern philosophy from Descartes to Rousseau, from Hegel to Heidegger. Man is essentially a social being who lives **together**, works **together**, **corresponds**, **dialogues**, **communicates** with others, Without a **Thou** there is no **I**. Human existence is always a social, intersubjective existence. "In keeping with the openness of his spirit within and also with the many diverse needs of his body and his existence in time, man writes his personal history through numerous bonds, contacts, situations, and social structures linking him with other men, beginning to do so from the first moment of his conception and birth" (*ibid.*)

Essentially united to the other fellow men, each human person discovers to be deeply **divided** within himself. This universal experience of interior division, described so well by saint Paul, saint Augustine, Luther and many others is vividly portrayed by the Pope when he quotes **Gaudium**

et spes (10): "In man himself many elements wrestle with one another. Thus, on the one hand, as a creature he experiences his limitations in a multitude of ways. On the other, he feels himself to be boundless in his desires and summoned to a higher life. Pulled by manifold attractions, he is constantly forced to choose among them and to renounce some. Indeed, as a weak and sinful being, he often does what he would not, and fails to do what he would. Hence he suffers from internal divisions, and from these flow so many and such great discords in society".

Coming from nothing and moving toward death, man feels himself ceaselessly threatened in his own being. Whereas in the past he used to place the causes of the menace of annihilation in some external powers, superior to him (Fate, Gods, Nature), today he has become aware of the fact that the mortal dangers that threaten his life are the products of his own hands: technology, the H bomb, even the automobile with its enormous consumption of energy. "All too soon, and often in an unforeseeable way, what this manifold activity of man yields is not only subjected to 'alienation', in the sense that it is simply taken away from the person who produces it, but rather it turns against man himself, at least in part, through the indirect consequences of its effects returning on himself. It is or can be directed against him. This seems to make up the main chapter of the drama of present-day human existence in its broadcast and universal dimension" (R.H., 15).

To a threat of mortal dangers naturally follows **fear**, more precisely, since what is in question is our own being, it follows **anxiety**. We fear that at any moment one of the marvellous means that we have created escapes our control and turns against us. "Man therefore lives increasingly in fear. He is afraid that what he produces — not all of it, of course, or even most of it, but part of it and precisely that part that contains a special share of his genius and initiative — can radically turn against himself; he is afraid that it can become the means and instrument for an unimaginable self-destruction, compared with which all the cataclysms and catastrophes of history known to us seem to fade away" (*ibid.*). Since, however, he does not know either the time or the place or the way all this may happen and is unable to localize clearly the danger, his heart becomes full of anxiety.

Another sad feeling that contemporary man lives within his soul is that of being quite frequently object of **manipulation**. It is a sad sensation about which much has been written by philosophers and novelists in recent years (E. Fromm, M. Heidegger, J. Moltmann, A. Camus, H. Cox etc.) With regard to this experience of modern man the Pope writes: "There is a real perceptible danger that, while man's dominion over the world of things is making enormous advances, he should lose the essential threads of his dominion and in various ways let his humanity be subjected to

the world and become himself something subject to manipulation in many ways — even if the manipulation is often not perceptible directly — through the whole of the organization of community life, through the production system and through pressure from the means of social communication. Man cannot relinquish himself or the place in the world that belongs to him; he cannot become the slave of things, the slave of economic systems, the slave of production, the slave of his own products. A civilization purely materialistic in outline condemns man to such slavery, even if at times, no doubt, this occurs contrary to the intentions and the very premises of its pioneers" (n. 116).

But even through the feelings of anxiety and, especially, through the protest and rebellion against all that degrades human existence, the greatness of man comes to the fore. Such feelings reveal man's capacity to overcome any situation, that going ahead, that power of self-transcendence that clearly distinguishes man from animals. In these feelings like in every expression of love and thought, of culture and technique one can see "a continual aspiration to truth, the good, the beautiful, justice and love" (n.14).

2. Human answers to the man's problem

Man carries on his face the marks of an extraordinary nobility, beauty, sovereignty, greatness. In his works he leaves clear signs of power and talent and sometime of great dedication and love.

But all human achievements and man himself seem doomed to destruction. Death does not spare any human being and corruption assails every human work. This experience raises some poignant questions: What is man's absolute future? What will happen to his person after death?

To these most serious questions philosophers of all ages have attempted to find an answer by studying man's nature or some of his specific activities such as knowledge, freedom, language. Many modern philosophers instead of studying a peculiar activity try to reach a better understanding of man by considering that phenomenon so typical of him, called **self-transcendence**: the interior dynamism that drives man to go always ahead, to go beyond all that he has been able to think and achieve. Now what is the cause and the meaning of this impulsion that leaves man unsatisfied of all his achievements and even of his own being? What does it reveal of the true reality and destiny of man? What is the aim of all his efforts to go beyond the present situation?

The answers that human wisdom has found for this tremendous problem may be reduced to three, that I call egocentric, eterocentric and theocentric.

According to the egocentric solution self-transcendence aims at the self-realization of the being who transcends himself.

According to the eterocentric or philanthropic solution self-transcendence aims at a further improvement of mankind in the future.

Finally according to the theocentric solution self-transcendence is directed towards God: man by transcending himself moves towards God.

The clearest exposition of the egocentric solution was given by F. Nietzsche. In his *Zarathustra* he asserts that life in general and human life in particular is a constant effort of overcoming itself. "Life itself — declares Zarathustra — has revealed to me this secret: See, I am a continuous necessary overcoming of myself". And elsewhere: "Life seeks to ascend more and more, and by ascending to overcome itself". According to Nietzsche the goal of self-transcendence is always man, or rather, the super-man: "I teach you the superman. Man must be overcome". In order to fully realize himself man must break the chains that a culture based on logic, metaphysics and religion has laid on his hands and feet: it must do away with logic, metaphysics, morals and religion, but especially must get rid with the idea of God. The message that Zarathustra carries to mankind is this: "God is dead".

This interpretation of self-transcendence has the merit to show that the deep dynamism that drives man to overcome all the goals he has already reached is no alienation from oneself. The purpose of self-transcendence is to recover oneself by gaining a higher stage of reality, by realizing more fully and completely one's own possibilities.

The weak point of this interpretation of self-transcendence is that it does not show how the achievement of the process of full self-realization is possible as long as such enterprise is left to man himself. The experience proves that a great deal of our efforts are vain: we do not succeed in reaching either the knowledge, or the power, or the pleasure or the being we would like to get. But, if it is so, doesn't self-transcendence become a meaningless effort? Some contemporary supporters of the egocentric thesis are of this opinion. But the largest majority of the philosophers refuse this solution as absolutely unsatisfactory, since it does not provide any answer for a very serious problem, and they propound either the philanthropic or the theocentric solutions.

Marx, Engels, Comte and their disciples believe that self-transcendence aims at overcoming the confines of egoism and individualism and drives man towards the creation of a new type of society released from individual miseries and social injustices and capable of securing well-being, justice,

freedom and happiness for everybody. According to the neo-marxist, Roger Garaudy, self-transcendence is "the consciousness of the incompleteness of man, the dimension of the infinite (. . .) Man is not simply what he is: he is also that which he is not yet, everything that he is still lacking. In the language of Christianity one might say that he is that which transcends him, namely, potentially, all his future, since the future is the only transcendence recognized by humanism (. . .) It is a matter of excluding both the transcendence from below (that of things accomplished and known in a positive way) and the transcendence from above (that of an absolute Good, of a God of a revelation)" (R. Garaudy, "Matérialisme et transcendence", in *L'homme chrétien et l'homme marxiste*, Paris 1964, pp. 24-25).

Another neo-marxist, Ernst Bloch, in his *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* has accurately analyzed all the main sides of human self-transcendence. Man is always ahead of himself, projected towards the future, the realm of his possibilities, of the "noch-nicht". From the Noch-Nicht arises hope, that basic feeling that sustains self-transcendence in his continuous movement. According to Bloch, man's self-transcendence is merely historical, not metaphysical. For him "Transcendence does not exist at all". Human self-transcendence is without Transcendence".

For sure, there is a positive element in this interpretation of self-transcendence: it is the recognition that the movement of overcoming oneself includes a social dimension: it is man as a social being and not merely as an individual being who transcends himself. Unsatisfactory on the contrary is the attempt to force self-transcendence within the boundary of human history, since human history cannot give an adequate support to the principle of hope for which they try to make room. In fact it is obvious that even in the case that one day the effort of self-transcendence will result in the construction of a class-less society, where everybody will be free and happy, this will not provide any solution for the aspiration of personal realization that is intrinsic in the very movement of self-transcendence.

The third solution of the problem of self-transcendence, already theorized by Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, and later on by St Augustine and St Thomas, in our century has been carefully systematized by Blondel, Rahner, Teilhard de Chardin, De Finance, Lonergan, De Lubac, Moltmann, Pannenberg and others. According to these philosophers the goal of self-transcendence is God himself; the moving forward of man is not a wandering in the darkness, but a march towards the holy land, where God dwells, and where man will find his final abode and the full realization of his being. "Feciste nos Domine ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te", is the best formula for this understanding of self-

transcendence.

Such is also the way of John Paul II conceives self-transcendence both philosophically and theologically. However in the **Redemptor Hominis** quite naturally, he treats the subject from theological and pastoral stand-points. In his encyclical his main concern is to proclaim in the more convincing and intelligible way the Christian truth on man. His exposition however is corroborated with philosophical considerations of great interest.

As we have seen the encyclical contains an extensive and deep phenomenological analysis, where the Pope carefully studies the situations, the aspirations and the problems of mankind, today. It is not mere a **descriptive** but also an **inquisitive** analysis. In accordance with Husserl's teachings, Pope John Paul II explores the phenomena in order to find the essential meanings of reality(of the lived reality). He studies the human phenomena in order to discover the meaning that is hidden into it.

By reading attentively into the phenomenon of self-transcendence that is associated with every thought, desire and action of man, he always finds a theocentric orientation: "Though the routes may be different, there is but a single goal to which is directed the deepest aspiration of the human spirit as expressed in its quest for God and also in its quest, through its tending towards God, for the full dimension of its humanity, or in other words for the full meaning of human life" (R.H., n. 11).

These considerations on the theocentric meaning of self-transcendence are very important for anthropology: even if they do not fully unveil the mystery of man, they already suggest a positive solution of the problem, by inserting it in the larger mystery of God, the loving father of mankind. They are important considerations also for theology, since they provide it with that rational basis without which it cannot do its work. For it is in the very nature of theology to establish a dialogue between faith and reason; but in order that this may take place it is not sufficient that God be willing to talk to man; an analogous attitude is necessary in man: his mind must be open and receptive with regard to faith; it must be willing to hear the Word of God. Self-transcendence, understood theocentrically, is the sign of such an attitude, of such a direction of the spirit.

With this anthropological prolegomenon the Christian answer to the problem of man becomes meaningful, especially if it is presented with that calor and warm style of which John Paul II is a master, particularly in the **Redemptor Hominis**.

3. The Christian answer to the problem of man

Who is man?

We have seen the main answers that human wisdom has been able to work out for this huge question. The answer more satisfactory has seemed to be that sets the final solution of the problem of man in God himself. To this one arrives by examining the phenomenon of self-transcendence: by surpassing oneself, and everything that he is able to conceive and achieve, man points directly to God. Reason, however is unable to find out the real meaning of this answer.

The full meaning of the theocentric direction that is impressed in everything man thinks or achieves, wishes and creates, becomes clear only through Christ's revelation. The meaning is that man does not only tend towards God as his final goal, but he himself becomes, entitatively, God. He does not become God by means of his powers and initiative, but because of God's gracious will and gift. This however is a gift that moves along the same line, marked by self-transcendence and in conformity with the deepest aspirations of the human soul.

Therefore, Jesus Christ is the bright, definitive answer to the problem of man. That which he has been is also what man is called to become. Christ is the prototype of mankind. The substantial encounter between humanity and divinity has taken place in him, through the personal incarnation of the Son of God, is the model of the encounter that God intends to realize with every human being.

This marvellous and rationally unconceivable truth that crowns, beyond every expectation, philosophical anthropology and natural humanism, by transforming them into a supernatural anthropology and a 'divine' humanism, is the beautiful message that in the **Redemptor Hominis** announces once again to mankind at the turn of the century, in a moment of darkness and anxiety.

Right at the beginning of his solemn document the Pope declares: "Through the Incarnation God gave human life the dimension that he intended man to have from his first beginning; he has granted that dimension definitively — in the way that is peculiar to him alone, in keeping with his eternal love and mercy, with the full freedom of God — and he granted it also with the bounty that enables us, in considering the original sin and the whole history of the sins of humanity, and in considering the errors of the human intellect, will and heart, to repeat with amazement the words of the Sacred Liturgy: 'O happy fault... which gained us so great a Redeemer!'" (n. 1).

Incarnation, then, is the crowning, the perfect and total realization

of that remarkable design that God has conceived from the beginning for mankind. It is necessary to keep always in mind this mystery if one wants to perceive the whole truth of man; since, only by knowing the perfect man, Jesus Christ, one understands the "common" man, who has been created after "his image and likeness".

With regard to this subject the Pope quotes very aptly the teaching of Vatican II: "The truth is that only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a type of him who was to come (Rom 5, 15), Christ the Lord, Christ the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling. He who is the 'image of the invisible God' (Col. 1, 15), is himself the perfect man who has restored in the children of Adam the likeness to God which had been disfigured ever since the first sin. Human nature, by the very fact that it was assumed, not absorbed, in him, has been raised in us also to a dignity beyond compare. For, by his Incarnation, he, the son of God, in a certain way united himself with each man" (*Gaudium et Spes* 22)

Of his own the Pope adds some considerations that bring out the same truth very nicely: Christ the Redeemer fully reveals man to himself. "In the mystery of the Redemption man becomes newly 'expressed' and, in a way, is newly created. He is newly created! 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3, 28). The man who wishes to understand himself thoroughly — and not just in accordance with immediate, partial, very often superficial, and even illusory standards and measures of his being — he must with his unrest, uncertainty and even his weakness and sinfulness, with his life and death, draw near to Christ. He must, so to speak, enter into him with all his own self, he must 'appropriate' and assimilate the whole of the reality of the Incarnation and Redemption in order to find himself." (R.H., n. 10)

In this way, Jesus Christ becomes the "fundamental and essential response" to the question "Who is man?". That movement of self-transcendence that as we have seen sets to the human reason such problems that it can hardly solve, is finally clarified from Christ himself: "Our spirit is set in one direction, the only direction for our intellect, will and heart is towards Christ our Redeemer, towards Christ the Redeemer of man" (n. 7).

Therefore, in order to know who man truly is one must go to Christ (though he may previously pay a visit to Aristotle, Plato, Descartes, Hegel, Marx, Freud, Heidegger etc): "He, the Son of the living God, speaks to people also as Man; it is his life that speaks, his humanity, his fidelity

to the truth, his all embracing love" (n. 7). Hence, "the man who wishes to understand himself thoroughly (...) must draw near to Christ (...). He must 'appropriate' and assimilate the whole of the reality of the Incarnation and Redemption in order to find himself" (n. 10)

But what does Christ, this full, perfect, integral man, reveal to us common human beings?

John Paul II answers categorically that "in Christ and through Christ man has acquired full awareness of his dignity, of the heights to which he is raised, of the surpassing worth of his own humanity, and of the meaning of his existence" (n. 11). In particular, "the Redemption that took place through the Cross has definitively restored his dignity to man and given back meaning to his life in the world, a meaning that was lost to a considerable extent because of sin" (n. 10). Through his Incarnation and Redemption Christ reveals to man that whereof he feels greater need, love: "Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own. This, as has already been said, is why Christ the Redeemer fully reveals man to himself" (n. 10). With his life, his teaching, his example Christ reveals to man the meaning and the value of freedom. Historians recognize that freedom is a discovery and a conquest of Christianity: before Christianity freedom was not a right of every human being but a privilege of few, based on power, riches or race. Christ is the one "who brings man freedom based on truth, frees man from what curtails, diminishes and, as it were, breaks off this freedom at its root, in man's soul, his heart and his conscience. What a stupendous confirmation of this has been given and is still given by those who, thanks to Christ and in Christ, have reached true freedom and have manifested it even in situations of external constraint!" (n. 12).

The Pope amazed by the splendor of man's dignity and value such as they appear through the mystery of Christ, declares: "Christ, the Redeemer of the world, is the one who penetrated in a unique unrepeatable way into the mystery of man and entered his heart" (n. 8).

Everyone who rightly understands the mysteries of Incarnation and Redemption may join the Pope in asserting that with Christ authentic humanism not only does not suffer any menomation, but on the contrary it reaches its culmination, beyond all that human reason can expect or foresee. Christ accomplishes authentic humanism in three directions: **gnoseological** in as much as it helps human reason to conquer the fullness of truth; **ethically** in so far as it strengthens human will and it makes it capable of acting in harmony with the dignity and nobility of the human person; finally, **ontically**, in as much as it changes the very

same being of man, by endowing it with a divine dimension.

Humanism with a divine dimension, revealed and accomplished by Christ, is also the task of the Church. The latter is because of her mission and vocation necessarily "humanist". The Church is never against man but for man. Her main concern is to help man to become aware of that divine dimension which God is planning for him.

Naturally, the secularists who have been repeating for centuries that the Church is dishuman, obscurantist, contrary to reason and freedom, will find these statements absurd. And yet they are profoundly true. Besides by the teaching of Christ they are corroborated also by the evidence of history. This testifies that no other human institution has contributed as much as the Church for the human promotion.

At the end of the second millennium, when the threat of a second middle ages becomes from day to day a very terrible possibility, the Church assumes again her "anthropological", humanist vocation. John Paul II wishes that this will be the main mark of his pontificate. Extremely human in his person, he gives a human touch to everything he does, says or writes. A humanist programme is clearly outlined in the *Redemptio hominis*. Here are some wonderful paragraphs of that programme:

"The Church's fundamental function in every age and particularly in ours is to direct man's gaze, to point the awareness and experience of the whole of humanity towards the mystery of God, to help all men to be familiar with the profundity of the Redemption taking place in Christ Jesus" (n. 10). "The Church wishes to serve this single end: that each person may be able to find Christ, in order that Christ may walk with each person the path of life, with the power of the truth about man and the world that is contained in the mystery of the Incarnation and the Redemption and with the power of the love that is radiated by that truth (...). Out of regard for Christ and in view of the mystery that constitutes the Church's own life, the Church cannot remain insensible to whatever serves man's true welfare, any more than she can remain indifferent to what threatens it" (n.13). "Inspired by eschatological faith, the Church considers an essential, unbreakable united element of her mission this solicitude for man, for his humanity, for the future of man on earth and therefore also for the course set for the whole of development and progress. She finds the principle of this solicitude in Jesus Christ himself, as the Gospels witness. This is why she wishes to make it grow continually through her relationship with Christ, reading man's situation in the modern world in accordance with the most important signs of our time" (15).

This task is so important and essential for the Church that John Paul II does not hesitate to qualify it as the way, as the "primary and

fundamental way, the way traced out by Christ himself", "the primary route that the Church must travel in fulfilling her mission", "the way that leads invariably through the mystery of the Incarnation and the Redemption" (n.14).

The "anthropological" humanistic vocation of the Church implies many different tasks, that the Pope explains, very accurately, in the second part of the encyclical. First of all the Church should get a better acquaintance with the present situation of mankind; she should get a deeper knowledge of man, "not of the abstract man, but of the real concrete, historical man" man in his present situation, with his concerns, fears, problems, anxieties. Secondly, she must take side, critically, with man, in defence of the rights and the values of man, against the systems, the ideologies, the structures which may hinder or destroy them; she must fight against all the manipulations of man so frequently caused by science, technology, culture, propaganda etc. Finally, following the example of Christ, takes for herself the responsibility of defending man's cause before all the tribunals of this world. "Seeking to see man as it were with 'the eyes of Christ himself', the Church becomes more and more aware that she is the guardian of a great treasure, which she may not waste but must continually increase (...) This treasure of humanity enriched by the inexpressible mystery of divine filiation and by the grace of 'adoption as sons in the Only Son of God, through whom we call God 'Abba, Father'" (n. 18)

Christ and the Church are the most valiant advocates of man and of true humanism, the humanism with a divine dimension. John Paul II as vicar of Christ on earth and as head of the universal Church, has officially assumed this duty as the first and most serious engagement of his pontificate.

It is customary for the popes, at the beginning of their service to the Church to let know their program with a brief formula or motto. I think that for John Paul II the appropriate motto is: **Defensor Hominis**. Actually, in these frightful times, no philosopher, no lawyer no chief of government has been a better and more persuasive advocate of man than John Paul II.

This lecture was delivered by Professor Mondin during an Academy held annually in honour of St. Thomas Aquinas.

Such an activity was held jointly by the Faculty of Theology, Malta and the Theological Students' Association, on February, 6, 1980.

VATICAN II AND PUEBLA ON CHURCH AND POLITICS

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The Conference of the Latin American bishops, held in Puebla between January 27th and February 13th, 1979, has been described as a major 'event'.¹ This is to bring out that something really significant and so, worth noting, has happened on that occasion. Vatican II has also been generally described in similar terms. Indeed, there is a striking similarity between the two. Vatican II and Puebla represent a Church trying to discover itself; to learn about its weaknesses and potentialities and to find out in which direction it has to move in order to establish the right relationship with the world.

But there are differences which make a comparison between the two quite an interesting and an intellectually useful exercise. As a Council representing the whole Church, Vatican II takes cognisance of the **general features** of the socio-political situation in various countries. Nevertheless, the Council speaks through representatives of local Churches who cannot possibly "feel" deep enough each other's concrete problems and life-situations. It adopts on several subjects a rather general viewpoint or a viewpoint derived from the particular experience of the Church in Europe after the war.² Hence, what it says sometimes lacks that lively interest in studying specific problems and in suggesting, at least provisional, solutions; it sounds more like a treatise than a truly prophetic voice which people outside European culture can recognize as a word addressed specifically to them.

LATIN AMERICAN THEOLOGIANS ON VATICAN II

In recent years several Latin American theologians have pointed out

1. *Puebla: Comunione e Partecipazione*, edit. and introd. by Piersandro Vanzan and trans. by Alfredo Marranzini, Roma, 1979, pp. vii-x.
2. This criticism of Vatican II is a fairly recent one. It has been generally assumed that the relatively strong representation of Churches from almost all over the world, possibly with the exception of the Eastern part, reflect the actual experience of the Church in all countries. But it is well known that it was European theologians, divided into those from Northern Europe and those from the Roman Curia and usually called the "majority" and the "minority" group respectively, who were the real protagonists of Vatican II. Cf. Roger Aubert *et al.*, *The Church in a Secularized Society*, Vol. V of *The Christian Centuries*, trans. by Janet Sondheimer, London, 1978, p. 629.

the difficulty in applying the teaching of Vatican II to the Church in Latin America. They think that the Council does not always focus on problems which are actually the problems of the Latin American Church. This conviction has led theologians and bishops in Latin America to seek new ways of thinking and to discover a praxis which is more relevant and fitting to the ecclesial Latin American context.

Gustavo Gutierrez has been among the first to see that the Church in Latin America has to confront its own special problems from an angle which is foreign to Vatican II. Comparing Vatican II with Medellín, he writes:

"Vatican II speaks of the underdevelopment of peoples, of the developed countries and what they can and should do about this underdevelopment; Medellín tries to deal with the problem from the standpoint of the poor countries, characterizing them as subjected to a new kind of colonialism. Vatican II talks about a Church in the world and describes the relationship in a way which tends to neutralize the conflicts; Medellín demonstrates that the world in which the Latin American Church ought to be present is in full revolution. Vatican II sketches a general outline for Church renewal; Medellín provides guidelines for a transformation of the Church in terms of its presence on a continent of misery and injustice."³

There has been in Latin America during the past decade an ever growing consciousness about the need for the development of a native theology having its own distinctive perspective, and for the local Church to work out a more or less original course of action. Speaking in Buenos Aires in 1968, Enrique Dussel, another quite prominent Latin American theologian, recalls how a conversation he has earlier had with a German theologian reveals the contrast between Latin American and European theology: the former is preoccupied with the problem of human liberation, while the latter is discussing the question of papal infallibility, a question which has been triggered at the time in Europe by Hans Kung.⁴ Like Gutierrez, Dussel believes that: "Vatican II itself was a reflection of postwar Euro-

3. Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, trans. and edit. by Caridad Inda and John Eagleson, London, 1974, p. 134.

4. Cf. Enrique Dussel, *History and the Theology of Liberation*, trans. by John Drury. New York, 1976, p. 30.

pean neocapitalism".⁵ Latin American feeling of dissatisfaction with the general perspective of Vatican II is evident also in a very recent publication by Hector Borrat:

"For its European protagonists", he writes, "Vatican II coincides with an epoch of prosperity. The cold war ends, *détente* starts, the Common Market prospers.

... On the other side the Latin Americans have little motive for euphoria."⁶

The opinion expressed by the foregoing, so-called, theologians of liberation, should not be taken as a clear and sound proof of the present attitude of the Latin American Christian community toward the teaching of Vatican II. It is important to observe that the Latin American bishops in Puebla refrain from associating themselves, even in a general way, with the theology of liberation. While the Second Document shows a certain openness toward the fruitful elements in the theology of liberation,⁷ the Final Document does not even mention the theology of liberation by name and notes only that theologians perform a very important function in the Church and that theological pluralism can be a healthy phenomenon, although it can also create divisions among the people.⁸

The distance (which does not mean hostility or even a lack of appreciation) between the episcopacy and theology in Latin America makes it even a more interesting exercise to try to see how far the Latin American bishops have gone in establishing a theological and pastoral perspective of their own. In other words, is the Latin American hierarchy merely repeating what it considers to be relevant texts from the Council documents or is it trying to work out a plan of action on its major problems in that continent of "misery and injustice", basing itself on the Gospel, the social teaching of the Church and its own particular experience?

A comparison between the teaching of Vatican II and Puebla on the question of Church and politics may help to give at least a partial answer to the foregoing problem. Besides, such a comparison may be extremely

5. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

6. Hector Borrat, *La Svolta: Chiesa e Politica Tra Medellin e Puebla*, trans. by Gaia Monti, Adelina Bartolomei, F. Gentiloni Silveri and revised by Luigi Bovo. Assisi, 1979, p. 3.

7. *Puebla, Documento Di Lavoro*, reproduced in P. Vanzan and A. Marranzini, *op. cit.*, pp. 207-448: Nos. 2231-2259. Enumeration of paragraphs is that used by Vanzan and Marranzini.

8. *Puebla: Final Document: Evangelization at Present and in the Future of Latin America*. nos. 375-376. Enumeration of paragraphs is that used in the original text. Quotations are from the official English edition, published jointly by St. Paul Publications, Slough and the Catholic Institute for International Relations, London, 1980.

useful for local Churches, with a socio-political background quite different from that of the Church in postwar Europe, to discover alternative ways of looking at and solving, on the practical level, what has been in fact one of their complex problems, namely, the relationship of the Church with the political order.

THE SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Church doctrine and theology can be properly understood and interpreted, only if they are seen in relation to their socio-historical context.

Vatican II presupposes a world in which men in general have become more aware of the fundamental rights of the person and of the need for individuals and nations to come closer to each other and to forge new relationships on the national, regional and international level, on the social as well as on the political plane. Of course, the Council acknowledges that part of mankind is living in poverty and injustice but, here also, it notes a ray of hope, because in the world today many disapprove the negative aspects of the present situation. One gets the impression that Vatican II does actually denounce the abuse of power, political as well as economic, but it does not represent a church which is experiencing directly the life of an oppressed people. This is natural, because the Church of Vatican II is 'partly' present in those countries which have been making progress at the expense of the so-called underdeveloped countries. The Church in developed countries "sees" the injustice but it is not actually "living" in a situation where people are deprived of their right to eat enough and have a decent accomodation, to go to school and learn to express their opinion freely.

Perhaps, the lack of a direct link with concrete situations of misery and injustice has led the Council to open its eyes chiefly to the worthy and noble elements in the contemporary socio-political situation. "The Church further recognizes" the Council says, "that worthy elements are found in today's social movements, especially an evolution toward unity, a process of wholesome socialization and of association in civic and economic values."⁹ This new development in the consciousness of mankind about the fundamental rights of men is creating "a broader spirit of cooperation" and is enabling "all citizens, and not just a privileged few. . . to enjoy personal rights."¹⁰ The Council forms a picture of the world which reflects the dark side of things but, on the whole, it is a picture

9. Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, art. 42. Unless otherwise indicated, the English translation of conciliar texts is from the edition of the Council Documents by Walter M. Abbott and Joseph Gallagher, London, 1967.

10. *ibid.*, art. 73.

which is meant to create in the observer a feeling of general optimism and to make him exclaim: "After all, the world in which we live is not as bad as we may have thought!"

At Puebla, the general feeling of the Church is different. Following the method of analysis adopted first by Pope John XXIII and then, more systematically, by Vatican II, the Conference of Latin American bishops singles out "the successes and failures of recent years."¹¹ Having perhaps a feeling that they are not going to delineate a rosey picture of the situation, the bishops note: "In presenting this reality, we are not trying to dishearten people but rather to stimulate all those who can do something to improve it."¹² In other words, the aim of the Church in Puebla is not simply one of describing but of helping to change a situation that needs to be changed.

The Document of Puebla is marked by a sharp sense of realism. Not satisfied with a merely general denunciation of the state of inhuman poverty in which "millions of Latin Americans live as the most devastating and humiliating kind of scourge,"¹³ the Document tries to go to the root of the problem. In fact, it sees this state of alarming poverty as a product mainly, though not exclusively, of economic, social and political structures, including an international order, which permit the rich to get richer at the expense of the poor who get even poorer. This is a reality which involves not just personal conversion but "profound structural changes".¹⁴

The Document does not mince words, when it describes the specifically political situation. There are, it says, clear abuses of power, like systematic repressions, tortures, exiles, unaccountable disappearances of people, arrest and detention without a fair trial and the over-politicization of labour unions at the top level.¹⁵ Besides, the Latin American bishops say that "recent years have seen a growing deterioration in the socio-political life of our countries."¹⁶

As Vatican II and Puebla presuppose a different kind of socio-political experience they frame the general problem of the Church in the world and, hence, of Church and politics in a different manner.

THE GENERAL PROBLEM

Vatican II sees the problem of the Church's relationship to every

11. *Puebla: Final Document*, n. 15.

12. *ibid.*, n. 16.

13. *ibid.*, n. 29.

14. *ibid.*, n. 30.

15. *ibid.*, nos. 42-46.

16. *ibid.*, n. 507.

sphere of human activity in the context of the modern tendency to divorce faith from daily life. "This split between the faith which many profess", the Council remarks, "deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age."¹⁷ Now the Church in Latin America is also aware of this fundamental problem. But it is experiencing it differently.

The Council confronts the problem of the relevance of faith to human life in the form which this problem has taken in Europe since the Enlightenment. This movement marks the beginning of a progressive emancipation of human activity from the direct influence of every religious authority. Men discover that the physical universe can be understood without the need to have recourse to the principle of final causality and so without the need to bring God into the picture. Men become convinced that they can govern themselves in all spheres of life in accordance with what they believe are purely rational norms, applicable to everybody, irrespective of one's religious convictions. In this way, God and his law become more and more irrelevant and the Church appears increasingly either as an outdated institution or something which is useful only as an agency of social service.¹⁸

Vatican II is preoccupied with the form which the problem of the relationship of faith to human activity has assumed in Europe. Its analysis of human activity takes into account, especially the achievements of men in the field of science and technology.¹⁹ It shows appreciation for these achievements and recognizes that the scientific as well as the other fields of human activity enjoy a legitimate autonomy. God is not man's rival or competitor. He is the ultimate origin of being and value and has created man to be his intelligent and free collaborator in the ongoing work of creation.

When Vatican II discusses the connection of faith to man's problems, the problems that it considers are chiefly those arising in modern European culture. Foremost among them is the problem of the meaningfulness of human life, particularly a life of justice and love, in a world where death is unavoidable, while the threat of war and other social catastrophes remains a constant, distressing experience. Vatican II invites modern man, living in the materially more prosperous part of the world,

17. *Gaudium et Spes*, art. 43.

18. For the impact of the Enlightenment on Christianity see Ernst Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress: A Historical Study of the Relationship of Protestantism to the Modern World*, trans. by W. Montgenmry, Boston, 1958, 2nd printing, 1966, esp. pp. 1-42, and also Troeltsch's *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, 2nd Vol. trans. by Olive Wyon, New York, 1960. See also Johannes B. Metz, *Theology of the World*, trans. by William Glen Doepel, London, 1969, pp. 108ff and *La Fede, Nella Storia e Nella Società*, trans. by Luciano Tosti, Brescia, 1978, pp. 22-53.

19. *Gaudium et Spes*, ch. III.

to see also the dark side of his life, especially death, in the light of the Gospel.²⁰ In so doing man can continue to think and act in a creative manner even in the context of the inescapable limitations of human nature and the radical as well as the pervasive presence of sin in the world.

The Latin American Church in Puebla has also in mind the same problem of the meaning of faith to human experience. But the experience of the Latin American Christian community, as we have seen, is very different from that of the Church in Europe and the other developed countries. Ten years ago Gustavo Gutierrez drew attention to the special form in which the problem of the relationship of faith to human activity was assuming in Latin America:

"The options which Christians in Latin America are taking have brought a fundamental question to the fore: What is the **meaning of the faith** in a life committed to the struggle against injustice and alienation? How do we relate the work of building a just society to the absolute value of the kingdom? For many the participation in the process of liberation causes a wearying, anguished, long and unbearable dichotomy between their life of faith and their revolutionary commitment."²¹

It is interesting to note that the Final Document leaves out completely the long reference which the First Document makes to the problem of the relationship of faith to human activity as it has appeared and developed in Europe since the eighteenth century.²² Without ignoring the influence which strong intellectual movements, like the Enlightenment, has had on Latin American culture, the Church in Puebla apparently feels that its main religious problem is to explain, as clearly and effectively as possible, that faith in God implies necessarily a life of **commitment** to the liberation and promotion of man in all his dimensions.

INTEGRAL LIBERATION AND HUMAN PROMOTION

The commitment to human liberation and promotion involves much more than pious appeals to social and political unity. The Latin American Church believes that only radical solutions can put an end to the oppressive conditions in which the majority of the population is living. And such solutions cannot overlook the fact that conflicts are meant to arise

20. *ibid.*, art. 18, 37-38.

21. G. Gutierrez, *op. cit.*, p. 135. Italics in the original.

22. Cf. *Puebla. Documento Per La Consultazione* reproduced in P. Vanzan and A. Marranzini, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-105, nos. 357-368.

between those who wield power and those who are aspiring to a more human way of life. "We fully recognize", say the Latin American bishops, "the efforts undertaken by many Latin American Christians to explore the particularly conflict-ridden situations of our peoples in terms of the faith and to shed the light of God's Word on them."²³

The Document of Puebla goes much further than Vatican II in describing the relationship of faith to socio-political activity. Vatican II says merely that earthly progress to the extent that it contributes to a qualitatively better social life is of vital concern to the Kingdom of God.²⁴ The Latin American Conference repeats this assertion²⁵ but it explores the problem of the relationship of faith to socio-political activity in a broader and, perhaps even a more precise, theological context.

The concept of **integral liberation**, first elucidated by the Medellín Conference, remains a key concept in Puebla.²⁶

In his famous encyclical, **Populorum Progressio**, Paul VI speaks about integral development. Progress is human in so far as it is a change from "less human situations to more human ones".²⁷ It is integral, if it embraces the whole man and all men. The Medellín Conference substitutes the term **liberation** for **development**, because the former describes better the Latin American situation which is not simply one of underdevelopment but oppression. The peoples of Latin America cannot be seen as being on the way to development, as if their problem were just that of not having changed their economy to the new methods of production and marketing developed in the industrialized countries. They cannot move to a life which is really worthy of man by trying to imitate the developed countries. The latter should not be taken as their models, because they are, in fact, their oppressors. So no authentic economic and social progress is possible in Latin America, until this continent manages to free itself from the neocolonial situation in which it is being kept. Medellín uses the term **liberation**, precisely to underline the need of the Latin American people to break away from all that which is keeping it in a state of dependance and denying it the right to realize itself in freedom.²⁸

The concept of liberation has had from the very beginning a socio-political connotation. Its use in a theological and pastoral context has given rise to a certain measure of ambiguity, as it has tended to reduce the content of Christian faith to one dimension and to distort the meaning of sin and grace by divesting them of their specifically theological (i.e.

23. Puebla, *Final Document*, n. 470.

24. *Gaudium et Spes*, art. 31.

25. Puebla, *Final Document*, n. 475.

26. *ibid.*, 480.

27. Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, n. 20; Puebla, *Final Document*, n. 16.

28. On this point see especially G. Gutierrez, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-99; 101-131.

transcendent) character. This danger seems to have increased considerably during the decade following Medellín. In fact, the Puebla Document notes the varying conceptions and applications of liberation. "Though they share common traits," it says, "they contain points of view that can hardly be brought together satisfactorily."²⁹

Christian liberation involves liberation **from** all the forms of bondage which find their source in individual and collective egotism and liberation **to** an increasingly deeper life of communion with God and other human beings — a life which reaches its culmination in the world to come.

Puebla develops the emphasis of Medellín by relating the concept of liberation to that of human promotion, especially to the two values of **communion** and **participation** which have been recently gaining even greater prominence not only in ecclesial but also in civic life. This is how the Latin American Episcopal Conference describes the concept of human promotion:

"Human promotion entails activities that help to arouse human awareness in every dimension and to make human beings the active protagonists of their own human and Christian development. It educates people in living together, it gives impetus to organisation, it fosters Christian sharing of goods, and it is an effective aid to communion and participation."³⁰

Within this general perspective, the proper freedom and competence of the laity in the work of evangelization and especially human promotion, already recognised by Vatican II,³¹ are given foremost importance: "Clearly, then, it is the whole Christian community," says Puebla, "in communion with its legitimate pastors and guided by them, that is the responsible subject of evangelization, liberation and human promotion"³². Evangelization, liberation and human promotion are related in so far as they presuppose the inalienable right of all men to participate actively and directly in their own personal and social development. Puebla recalls that "the aim of liberative evangelization... is to transform human beings into active subjects of their own individual and communitarian development."³³

There are therefore two main points that have to be kept in mind in order to understand and evaluate correctly what the Latin American Episcopal Conference in Puebla says about politics. The first is the awareness

29. Puebla, *Final Document*, n. 481.

30. Puebla, *Final Document*, n. 477.

31. Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, ch. IV and *Apostolicam actuositatem*.

32. Puebla, *Final Document*, n. 474.

33. *ibid.* n. 484.

of the Latin American Church that there is a growing deterioration in the socio-political life of the vast majority of the population. The second is the emphasis of the Latin American Church on the right of human beings to participate in a real way in their own individual and collective development.

CHURCH AND POLITICS

Although there are, as we have seen, certain notable differences between Vatican II and Puebla, they share substantially a common perspective on the problem of the relationship of the Church to politics.

Vatican II as well as Puebla recognize the proper autonomy of the temporal order, including governments, political parties, labour unions, and other groups in the social and political arena.

Similarly, they both recall that the Church has a religious purpose which, of course, does not mean that it has absolutely no rôle to play in the socio-political sphere.³⁴

According to Vatican II and Puebla, the rôle of the Church in the temporal order takes two distinct forms. The hierarchy and the laity, though they both form an essential part of the Church, have their own specific functions. This difference in function reflects itself in the way in which the Church makes itself actively present in the world.

INDEPENDENCE FROM POLITICS BUT SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE

Vatican II and Puebla do not define the function of the hierarchy vis-à-vis politics merely in a negative manner by insisting that the hierarchy, including those in the religious life, should maintain a certain independence from politics. This renunciation of one's right to take a direct and active part in the political life of one's country is presented in a positive light, that is, as a necessary condition for the Church to be really a sign of union and reconciliation among men.³⁵

Vatican II speaks of the independence of the hierarchy from "political systems";³⁶ Puebla speaks of independence from "party politics" — a notion which it explains clearly enough in this way:

"... the concrete performance of this fundamental political task is normally carried out by groups of citizens. They resolve to pursue and exercise political power in order to solve economic,

34. Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, arts. 36, 42; Puebla, *Final Document*, n. 519.

35. Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, art. 42; Puebla, *Final Document*, nos. 526-7.

36. *Gaudium et Spes*, art. 42.

political and social problems in accordance with their own criteria or ideology. Here then we can talk about party politics."³⁷

The involvement of the hierarchical Church in party politics makes the Church lose its meaning as a sign of unity among men and as a sign of the transcendence of human life. This latter point is evident in the teaching of Vatican II and perhaps even more so in the Document of Puebla. As they are called to be "men dedicated to the Absolute", priests and deacons (and *a fortiori* bishops) by their active militancy or leadership on behalf of a political party may easily give the impression that a particular ideology has something absolute about it. The absolutization of any ideology, Puebla insists, is wrong, because in politics (as well as in other fields of human activity) it is possible to have a variety of concrete options and no individual or group has the right to enforce his political vision as the only one desirable and possible.³⁸

The problem arising in connection with the position of Vatican II and Puebla is this: Does not this lack of direct involvement, on the part of the hierarchical Church in the political order, lead to the absence of the Church from the place where concrete decisions are taken and specific programmes are worked out for the transformation of human life? This would be true, were the ministers of the Church not renouncing to a human right for a higher good, as it has already been explained, and were they not being in any way "interested in" and "committed to" a personal and social life based on justice, love and truth.

Vatican II speaks in a rather general way about the Church's (i.e. the hierarchy) concern with the socio-political development of the people. The Church, it says, "contributes to the wider application of justice and charity between nations" by showing and fostering, under the guidance of the Gospel, respect for political freedom and responsibility of the citizens.³⁹

Puebla specifies the task of the hierarchy with respect to politics somewhat further. The Church helps to foster the values that should inspire politics, understood in a broad sense, as an activity seeking the common good on both the national and international plane, spelling out the fundamental values of every community and defining the ethics and means of social relationships.⁴⁰ The Church can foster these values only if it demonstrates, as Puebla says, solidarity with lay people who are directly res-

37. Puebla, *Final Document*, n. 523.

38. Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, art. 76; Puebla, *Final Document*, nos. 523, 527.

39. *Gaudium et Spes*, art. 76.

40. Puebla, *Final Document*, n. 521.

possible for concrete political decisions and courses of action.

CRITICAL FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH

Puebla helps us to interpret correctly the independence which, according to Vatican II, the Church has to keep from politics. It is an independence accompanied by a continued sense of the Church's solidarity with lay people.

This solidarity is shown by helping lay people to form a critical attitude toward political ideologies. Puebla moves further than Vatican II in its critical analysis of existing political ideologies. It addresses itself to the three main ideologies current in the Latin American continent; capitalist liberalism, Marxist collectivism (both of which were already treated by Medellín) and the doctrine of National Security.⁴¹

The critical analysis of ideologies is a task which the Church in Latin America has assumed with courage and a sense of respect toward the people's right to be aware of the oppressive conditions in which they are living. The development of a **critical consciousness**, to use a key term in the philosophy of education elaborated by the well-known Brazilian intellectual, Paulo Freire,⁴² is an essential factor in the process of liberation,⁴³ because human beings tend to adapt themselves relatively easily even to situations which are not worthy of their dignity.

The Latin American Church both in Medellín and Puebla refuses to succumb to the illusion that the only possible options for the proper development of Latin America are either liberal capitalism or Marxism. "We must denounce the fact that Latin America finds itself caught between these two options and remains dependent on one or the other of the centres of power that control its economy."⁴⁴

Puebla tries to go beyond the dilemma of having to propose a choice between two false political systems by pointing to the basic norm that should guide the political life of the country. Quoting from the opening address of Pope John Paul II, it declares that the Church chooses "to maintain its freedom with regard to the opposing systems in order to opt solely for the human being".⁴⁵ Guided by "the truth about human beings," Christians should try "to get beyond the hard and fast either or and to

41. *ibid.*, nos. 535-561.

42. Cf. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. by Myra Bergmann Ramos, Penguin Books, London, 1972; *Education for Critical Consciousness*, London, 1974.

43. Gustavo Gutierrez, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-2; 114-7.

44. Puebla, *Final Document*, n. 550; Puebla refers to Medellín's *Document on Justice*, n. 10.

45. Puebla, *Final Document*, n. 551.

help build a new civilization that is just, fraternal, and open to the transcendent."⁴⁶

Puebla discusses in the same context also the problem of violence.⁴⁷ In line with Vatican II and the whole Christian tradition, it rejects the use of violence.

"Our responsibility as Christians," it asserts, "is to use all possible means to promote the implementation of non-violent tactics in the effort to re-establish justice in economic and socio-political relations."⁴⁸

This does not mean that the Christian posture should be one of resignation to the established order. In fact, it is significant to note that in the section on violence the Document of Puebla, like Vatican III, recommends strongly the use of non-violent tactics to change unjust social structures, without discussing and so, without rejecting, the use of force in certain circumstances.

Puebla does, of course, condemn explicitly terrorist and guerrilla violence, even when the purpose of such violence is liberation from injustice. This moral judgement, it seems, is based on the Church's consideration that terrorism and guerrilla warfare do not qualify as proportionate means to reach even a good end, because the evil they engender in the process is too serious to be tolerated.

Even more open is Puebla's condemnation of what Medellín and itself call "institutionalized injustice". This refers to social, political and economic systems and structures which privilege some and oppress others and perpetuate a state of dependence of the weaker on the stronger. They usually involve the persecution of dissidents by various means ranging from physical and psychological torture to exclusion from public life. Puebla condemns outrightly such a state of affairs, observing that very often it generates counter-violence.

Equally significant is Puebla's awareness that liberation and human promotion require an ongoing conversion of heart and mind, because "even the best structures and the most idealized systems quickly become inhuman, if human inclinations are not improved."⁴⁹ This last point anchors the social doctrine of the Church firmly in the Gospel tradition and differentiates it from the Marxist position which holds that the social problem can be radically and completely solved by changing the economic base and the super-structure of capitalist society.

This bold and unambiguous stand of the Latin American Church

46. *ibid.*, n. 551.

47. Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, art. 78.

48. Puebla, *Final Document*, n. 533.

49. *ibid.*, n. 509.

50. *ibid.*, n. 534.

against the political ideologies of the day would not have been possible had not the Church decided earlier to break its silence and show somehow its disapproval with the *status quo*.

Puebla knows too well that governments, with a totalitarian tendency, often try to use the Church for their own ends. The Church in Latin America is not asking for freedom to exercise its strictly religious functions. It demands the freedom to proclaim the Gospel with all its economic, social, cultural and political implications. If this right is denied or is not fully and properly exercised by the Christian community, the Church risks entering into "a kind of complicity with the established order."⁵¹

Hence, the emphasis which Puebla, following Vatican II, places on the independence of the Church from politics is not intended to remove the Church from the political field and make it concentrate on its specifically religious activities. The reason is rather that such independence is necessary for a **more creative** involvement of the Church in political activity. An independent Church, as far as this is humanly possible, can work more effectively on behalf of unity among people, having different ideologies and on behalf of politics itself by continuously reminding it of its relative and provisional character.

THE CHURCH AND THE SEARCH FOR NEW POLITICAL OPTIONS

Besides criticizing and denouncing false political ideologies, Puebla acknowledges its duty to help the laity to explore new political options which are at the same time in line with the Gospel and adequate to promote a more human mode of life. The hierarchy, in fact is expected to demonstrate its solidarity with lay people in the execution of their political duties "by nurturing their creativity so that they can explore options that are increasingly in line with the common good and the needs of the weakest."⁵²

To me it seems that by acknowledging its responsibility also for the concrete options taken by the people in the socio-political order, the Church in Puebla is again correcting one of the unfortunately more common misinterpretations of the teaching of Vatican II. According to the latter, the laity should act on their own initiative and responsibility in the secular realm and they must not expect the hierarchy to give them specific answers to all their problems. Some seem to think that this position means that the hierarchy should at most give only some very general

51. *ibid.*, n. 558.

52. *ibid.*, n. 525.

principles and leave the laity not only to apply these principles in practice but also to bear the consequences of what they choose to do following a duly enlightened Christian conscience. Puebla does not interpret Vatican II in this rather one-sided and simplistic manner. It wants lay people to take an active and direct part in temporal affairs, because that is their proper vocation. But it does not abdicate its responsibility to help concretely lay people in the transformation of life in the world, by being close to them and, as "an expert in humanity", sharing with them the task of searching continuously for new concrete forms of authentic human living.

THE ROAD AHEAD

The Latin American Episcopal Conference in Puebla remains within the general framework of the Council's doctrine on Church and politics. Yet, it speaks from a different cultural, political and social background and although it confronts, like Vatican II, the problem of the relationship between faith and human experience, it does so in a somewhat different way. The Document of Puebla is important because of the creative interpretation that it gives of the conciliar teaching. In fact, it insists on the need of the hierarchical Church to keep a certain distance from party politics but it tries to bring out as clearly as possible the purpose of all this. The reason is not so much that the function of the Church is purely religious as that the Church can serve as a symbol of unity and reconciliation among men, if it does not associate itself with particular political ideologies.

The independence of the Church from political ideologies is also necessary in order that the Church may be free to criticize such ideologies when they tend to hinder the integral development of man.

The distance of the Church from politics has, therefore, a positive significance. It is intended to give the Church a better opportunity to serve man not merely as a spiritual, but also as a social and political being. Perhaps, because it is conscious enough that a Church trying to keep away from politics may very easily isolate itself from the socio-political reality, the Latin American Church in Puebla insists on its solidarity with the people, above all, with the poor and the oppressed.

The road ahead for the Church in Latin America and elsewhere is precisely that of testing the validity of its ideas about politics on the concrete and practical level. It is only on that level that one sees both the strength and weakness of a particular theory.

AN UNKNOWN AND UNPUBLISHED XVth CENTURY MANUSCRIPT

ANTONIUS OF VERCELLI AND HIS TREATISE ON ETERNAL LIFE

By

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Several years ago, when I was searching for a suitable subject for my Licentiate Dissertation in Theology towards the end of my Theology course at the University of Malta, the idea crossed my mind of examining the list of Manuscripts preserved in the Malta Public Library, with the hope of discovering a title and material that could be both original and worthwhile. My attention was intrigued by Manuscript number XIII which bore the title: "Tractatus de certitudine future vite (sic) beatitudinis atque felicitatis per ven. fratrem Antonium Vercellensem ordinis Minorum" I discussed my discovery with the chief librarian of the time, the late Dom Maurus Inguanez, O.S.B., the paleographer of Montecassino Abbey, who enjoyed an international reputation both in his field of study and for having salvaged most of Montecassino's priceless Manuscripts from the ravages of the Second War. Dom Inguanez encouraged me to start investigating about the author of the treatise and his works. Intensive reading and correspondence with a prominent scholar of the Friars Minor, who had just published a Manuscript work by the same author discovered in Florence, pointed towards the probability that the treatise of Antonius of Vercelli preserved in manuscript form in the showcases of our Public Library was not only never published but also unknown. I started to work in earnest, collecting all the available biographical and bibliographical information about the author and his works and simultaneously transcribing the treatise from the Manuscript, which was not an easy task, not only because the gothic handwriting was minute but especially because almost every other word was abbreviated or contracted. This latter feature entailed continual recourse to dictionaries of

1. Fr. Ottokar Bonmann, O.F.M., "*Memoriale Antonii de Vercellis, ad Laurentium Magnificum de Medicis, Coniuratione Pactiana (a. 1478) effectu frustrata*", in AFH (Archivum Franciscanum Historicum) XLIII (1950), pp. 360-410.

Mediaeval and Renaissance latin abbreviations, while the miniature calligraphy required the use of a large desk lens. It took a few months to transcribe the entire treatise, which I intend to publish at some future date, provided I find a publisher interested in the probably unknown work and my extensive investigations about the treatise and its author. In this short article I shall limit myself to three items, namely: (i) a description of the manuscript; (ii) a brief biographical sketch of the author; (iii) a summary of the contents of the treatise itself.

1. The Manuscript

As already stated, the Manuscript containing Antonius of Vercelli's treatise entitled "Tractatus de certitudine future vite beatitudinis atque felicitatis" bears the number XLIII in the Catalogue of Manuscripts preserved in the Malta Public Library at Valletta. It is made of parchment; measures 121 x 88mm, and contains twenty double pages with twenty-eight lines to every page. It is bound in leather. The writing, which is minute, but very neat, is in Gothic style. Abbreviations and contractions, as already noted, are abundant. This feature, together with the utilization of every available space on each page, may, perhaps, be explained by the scribe's limited supply of parchment.

Fol. 1r. The initial letter R is gilt with real gold and includes a gorgeously coloured miniature, showing a friar minor, who may portend to be the author himself, teaching from a cathedra with a roll unwound before him. The margins of this first page are beautifully adorned with leaves and flowers, illuminated with gold and diverse colours.

The remaining initial letters appearing on fol. 1r. and at the beginning of every chapter; namely, on ff. 4r., 5r., 6r., 6v., 8r., 9r., 9v., 10v., 12r., 12v., 14v., 15v., 16r., 16v., and 17r., are similarly illuminated with real gold and other colours. The predominating colours are red, green and blue.

The dedication, the enunciation of each argument and the names of the authorities or sources quoted in the first few pages (up to f. 4v) are written with minium. It appears, however, that the copyist, finding the quotations too numerous, desisted from changing pen and ink too often and after the first few pages left aside the red fluid and proceeded to transcribe the names of the authorities in black.

The lower half of fol. 4r. is written in double column for the apparent purpose of producing a symmetrical effect by wanting to list the titles of each argument, which are arranged with a consonant ending, successively below one another.

At the end, fol. 19v. and fol. 20v. are blank.

Fol. 20r.: In larger and different handwriting (XVth century italics) there appear the names of two successive possessors of the Manuscript, as follows:

“Di Francesco Nordis canonico
Aquileiense et Utinense: Et
fo del Reverendissimo Signore
mio il Cardinale di San Mar
co Grimano, Patriarcha A
quileiense dignissimo.”

The Manuscript, which is in a very good state of preservation, was repaired and rebound in leather by the late librarian Dom. Maurus Inguanez, O.S.B., in 1950.

After this description of the Manuscript, I now venture, from internal and external evidence, to reconstruct its history. Dom Maurus Inguanez was of the opinion that the highly illuminated copy preserved in our Public Library, might have been the neat ornamented copy presented by the Author, Fr Antonius of Vercelli, to the high-ranking ecclesiastic to whom the treatise was dedicated. This was Cardinal Bishop John Carvajal, towards whom the Author, being one of the most illustrious and best-known members of his religious Order of the Observant Friars Minor, may have had some special obligation or whom, as Fr Ottokar Bonmann surmises, Fr Antonius may have intended to render more favourable or less hostile towards the process of canonization of John Capistran, who had aided the Cardinal considerably in gathering together a very large Christian army which was successful in raising the siege of Belgrade in a memorable battle against the Ottoman conquerors of Eastern Europe in July 1456. ³

2. From a personal letter received from Fr. Ottokar Bonmann, from Quaracchi, Florence and dated 22.1.1953.
3. Cf. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. III (Special Edition), p. 394, under CARVAJAL (CARVAGIAL) JUAN CARDINAL.
Cf. also *Enciclopedia Italiana*, Treves, Treccani, Tumminelli (1933ff) IX, 254. Another connection of Cardinal Carvajal with the Observant Friars Minor in Hungary is recorded by Wadding, *Annales Minorum*, ad an. 1457, n. 40 (XIII, 46).

From the fact that the author is called by the rubricist in the dedication "Ven. Fratrem", it cannot be inferred that the manuscript was copied after the Author's death (1483), for the title "Ven. Frater" was frequently interchanged with the title "Reverendissimus Frater" and attributed to renowned Churchmen in dedications, letters, title-pages, etc.

If the opinion expressed by Dom M. Inguanez is correct, it may have been possible that the manuscript was presented to Cardinal Carvajal by the Author personally, for we know that the presentation took place on January 30th 1467⁴ and that Antonius of Vercelli was staying in Rome at the time, delivering a series of lenten sermons in the Church of Aracoeli from the 25th January to the 5th April of the same year⁵. At this time, Cardinal Carvajal was also staying in Rome, having retired from the foreign service of the Vatican after the termination of his last apostolic legation to Venice in 1466⁶.

Some years after Cardinal Carvajal's death (1469), the Manuscript was owned by Cardinal Dominicus de Grimanis, or Grimano as he is called by Canon Francesco Nordis⁷. It is not difficult to explain how it came to be possessed by Cardinal Grimano. This Cardinal-diplomat is known to have been a great humanist and magnificent patron of the Arts and, gifted with a rare taste for books and manuscripts, had succeeded in collecting a rich and well-equipped library⁸, of which our Manuscript formed part. Cardinal Grimano's library was bequeathed after his death in 1523 to the Church of S. Antonio di Castello, and was later unfortunately destroyed by fire⁹.

How our Manuscript escaped the fate of its companions is uncertain. It may either have been donated or lent by the Venetian Cardinal in his lifetime or rescued from the fire. It is certain that not long afterwards it was in the possession of a certain Canon of Aquileia and Udine, Francesco Nordis, who may have been Cardinal Grimano's Secretary or Chancellor, since he calls the latter "Reverendissimo Signore mio".

It cannot be established with certainty how long the manuscript remained in Canon Nordis's possession and how it became the property of the Order of St John of Jerusalem. The most likely explanation is that the manuscript in some way or another found its way among the literary

4. Cf. Manuscript, fol. lv, rubrical dedication.

5. O. Bonmann, *op. cit.*, in AFH, XLIII., 372.

6. Cf. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, loc. cit.

7. Cf. Manuscript, fol. 20r (already reproduced).

Cardinal Dominicus de Grimanis had been Protonotarius Apostolicus and later Patriarch of Aquileia. After serving as Secretary to Pope Alexander VI, he was by the latter created Cardinal with the title of St Mark on the 20th September 1493. He died on the 27th August, 1523. Cf. Eubel, *Hier. Cath. Med. Aevi*, II, 22.

8. Cf. *Enciclopedia Italiana*, XVII, 971.

9. *Ibidem*.

patrimony of some distinguished member of the Order of St John of Jerusalem, such as Cardinal Luis Manuel Fernandez Portocarrero, who died in 1709, leaving "a very respectable library", after whose death it passed, together with other belongings, by way of "spoglio" or statutory inheritance, into the hands of the Order. In this way, I think, this fine Manuscript copy of Fr Antonius of Vercelli's treatise "**De Certitudine Future Vite Beatitudinis Atque Felicitatis**" came to form part of the small collection of mediaeval and Renaissance Manuscripts of the Malta Public Library.

2. The Author

It should be noted at the outset that the life of the Author, Fr Antonius of Vercelli, has not yet been thoroughly investigated. On the one hand, ancient bibliographers have handed down to us brief and not always indisputable information about him, while on the other hand, the archives of the many cities and towns in Italy in which he is known to have sojourned have not yet been fully explored. All sources, both ancient and modern, agree in describing Antonius of Vercelli as an Observant Friar Minor. This is attested by the author himself, who, in a letter to Lorenzo dei Medici, dated 6th March, 1478, signs himself as: "fr. Anthonius de Vercellis, Ordinjs Minorum de observantia professor indignus"¹⁰.

Fr Antonius flourished in the latter half of the XVth century, but, since we have no information about his early years, we cannot determine with certainty the time and place of his origin. According to Fr M. Sevesi¹¹, he was elected Vicar of the Province of the Observants of Milan in the year 1467. If he was then middle-aged, we may place his birth in the first decades of the XVth century and, since he was commonly known as "Antonius de Vercellis" we may suppose that he was born in Vercelli. The Martyrology of the Friars Minor of his Milanese Province describes him as "e nobilissima gente Balochia progenitus"¹², whence he was also called Antonius Balochus or Balocchus, Balotto, Valotto. Others, however, like G. Cave¹³, thinking that 'Balochus' denotes not his family name but the place of his origin, namely, a village in the diocese of Vercelli, prefer to call him Antonius de Balochio or de Baloccho. Another bibliographer, Rossotus, evasively calls him "Antonius Balochus seu de Balochio, com-

10. Cf. AFH X, 592.

11. *IVicari ed i Ministri Provinciali etc.*, in *La Verna* X (1912-13), 252.

12. Cf. A. Schaefer, *De Fr Ant. de Vercellis O.F.M. Eiusque Quadragesimali "De Aeternis Fructibus Sp. Sancti"*, in AFH XXXVI (1943), 254 n. 2.

13. *Script. Eccles. Hist. Lit.*, II, 195.

muniter nuncupatus Antonius de Vercellis"¹⁴.

Fr Antonius received his education when the Renaissance was at the pitch in Italy and when the Order of the Observant Friars Minor was in a flourishing state. From the Humanists he acquired a liking for classical latin writers and apparently a deep admiration for Cicero and Seneca, both of whom were then acclaimed among the great philosophers of antiquity. He owes it to his natural piety and strong religious persuasion that he assimilated only the sane and sound influence of that class of humanists that "strove to give a classic form to the Christian civilization in existence" and shunned the evil influences of the other class that "sought to pluck it up by the roots and to plant the old heathen culture in its place."¹⁵ From his learned Franciscan professors Antonius obtained a sound and comprehensive knowledge of the sacred sciences as well as an attraction for scholastic philosophy, when the works of the great Schoolmen were being frowned upon and discarded as "out and dry treatises" by the idolatrous devotees of the "Litterae Humaniores"¹⁶.

Early writers and bibliographers hail Antonius of Vercelli as a learned man. Wadding calls him "vir doctus"¹⁷, "doctrina clarissimus"¹⁸, and enumerates him among the "viri docti in coetu Observantium" who flourished in the latter half of the XVth century¹⁹. His learning is also attested by M. de Turre, who refers to him by the title of "doctor insignis"²⁰ and by Fr. M. Sevesi, who styles him as "doctor clarissimus"²¹. The historian De Gregory attributes to Fr Antonius the title of "celeber theologiae professor"²². The only discordant voice in this respect is that of the modern franciscan writer Fr O. Bonmann, who, basing his judgement on one of the author's works, namely that edited by him, disagrees with the annalists of his Religious Order, who, echoing one another, have counted Antonius of Vercelli among their learned brethren, and states that in Fr Antonius "nota 'eruditionis' obiective vix defendenda est. . . De humanismo nonnisi aliquas formalitates, quae mature dignoscuntur, ostendit neque proprie excultum se exhibet"²³. It may well be that to his contemporaries, living in an era, one of whose outstanding traits was the decline of speculative learning, evinced by the passing away of the brilliant teaching of the great minds that had enlightened the close of the

14. *Syllabus Scriptorum Pedemontii* etc., 61.

15. Rev. George Stebbing, *The Story of the Catholic Church* (4th edit.), 417.

16. *Ibidem*.

17. *Script. Ordin. Min.* (1906), 24.

18. *Ann. Min.* ad an. 1449, n. 29.

19. *Ibidem*, ad an. 1483, n. 351.

20. *Annalium Ordinis Minorum Supplem.*, 470.

21. *Martyrologium* etc., 92.

22. *Istoria della Vercellese Letteratura ed Arte*, I, 437.

23. O. Bonmann, O.F.M., *op. cit.*, 386.

Middle Ages and by a general and manifest lack of originality²⁴, Antonius of Vercelli appeared greater than he actually was in the field of learning²⁵.

Fr Antonius was a good and pious man²⁶, leading a simple and religious life and deeply imbued with a sense of the religious and apostolic vocation that had led him to join the great Franciscan family²⁷. His goodness and piety found their natural expression in his pastoral zeal for the spiritual welfare of the faithful, which accounted for his outstanding success as a preacher. Undoubtedly, he was gifted with no common talents in sacred eloquence and it was in this respect rather than in the literary field that he excelled. He was summoned to preach in great cities at the request of heads of states and cardinals months in advance and not infrequently the common people, moved by his sermons, implored him to return to their cities to expound to them the word of God. Cities vied with one another to secure Fr Antonius for the pulpit of their cathedral churches and in cases of dire spiritual need it was the Pope himself who assigned Fr Antonius the destination of his preaching mission. It appears that he was also distinguished with the title of "Apostolic Preacher" — a title bestowed on the more renowned preachers of his time²⁸. The editor of one of his works, Fr Ludovicus Brognolo, O.F.M., describes Antonius of Vercelli as "praedicator gratissimus"²⁹. For the Annalist Marianus of Florence he was a "doctus et egregius praedicator"³⁰ and Wadding who calls him "fructuosus valde praedicator"³¹ and "praedicator apostolicus per universam Italiam celeberrimus"³², includes him among the chief members of the Observant Family, who were "omnes vita et doctrina clarissimi, . . . celeberrimi per universam Italiam concionatores"³³. Cave speaks of Antonius of Vercelli as of a "praedicator tota Italia celeberrimus." He is hailed by more recent writers as "famosissimus praedicator"³⁴, "prédicateur célèbre"³⁵, "celebre predicatore"³⁶. The zealous preacher was shocked at the moral disorders that were rampant in his turbulent times, when anarchy, injustice and immorality were gnawing deep-

24. Cf. Cayré, *Manual of Patrology and History of Theology*, II, 662.

25. Cf. Bonmann, O.F.M., loc cit.

26. Wadding, *Ann. Min.*, ad an. 1483, n. 351: "vir probus et pius."

27. Cf. Bonmann, op. cit., 386.

28. Cf. *Quadrag. de XII Marabilibus Christianae Fidei Excellentis* f.2r and f.263b, in Hain, *Repertorium Bibliographicum* (1948), vol. II, pt. II, 474, n. 15949. Cf. also *Pról. to Quadrag. de Aeternis Fructibus Sp. Sancti*, in Schaefer, op. cit., 260s.

29. Cf. Hain, l.c.

30. *Compend. Chronic. Frat. Min.*, in AFH IV (1911), 326.

31. *Ann. Min.*, ad an. 1483, n. 351.

32. *Scriptores Ordinis Minorum*, 24.

33. *Ann. Min.* ad an. 1449, n. 29.

34. Hurter, *Nomenclator Literarius* etc. (1899), IV, 899; (1906) II, 1075.

35. M. Bihl, *Antoine de Balocco in Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie Ecclésiastique* (DHGE) III, 760.

36. L. Berra, *Antonio da Vercelli*, in *Enciclopedia Cattolica* (EC), I, 1558.

ly at the roots of faith. He strove strenuously with all the force of his eloquence and persuasion for the spiritual restoration of the people in the cause of faith and religion.

Fr Antonius was also an indefatigable peace-maker and made ample use of his persuasive talent as well as of his special skill in this respect in order to restore peace to strife-ridden cities, as he succeeded in achieving at Orvieto, Parma and Florence when these towns were torn by serious internal commotions. He spared no efforts in his task of pacification, often availing himself of sermons, mediation and supplications to avoid strife and blood-shedding. Meek though he was, Fr Antonius of Vercelli, animated by principles of equity and social justice, stood out as a strenuous champion of the weak and the defenceless, whose cause he fearlessly pleaded and whose rights he eloquently defended. Among his other social activities in aid of the needy mention is made of the so-called "Monti di Pieta'", one of which he is known to have founded at Orvieto and among the chief promoters of which his name figures prominently.³⁷

Fr Antonius's virtues and good works were not doomed to sudden oblivion after his death, which occurred most probably on the 22nd September 1483³⁸, for he seems to have gone to his humble grave in Orvieto with the fame of holiness. The faithful people of Orvieto resorted to his tomb with prayers and soon a tradition originated that miracles had been wrought by his intercession. This tradition has been registered by the annalists Marianus of Florence³⁹ and Wadding, who concludes his entry about Antonius of Vercelli with the words: "Multa patravit miracula, quibus testificandis appensae sunt tabellae, et lampades accensae ad eius sepulcrum"⁴⁰. It should be noted, however, in accordance with a remark by Fr Bonmann, that this tradition of holiness cannot yet be positively proved⁴¹.

As a fitting conclusion to this brief sketch of the life of Antonius of Vercelli, we find no better words than those with which Fr Ottokar Bonmann has drawn a fairly accurate picture of our author. "Antonius" writes Fr Bonmann, "aparet natura admodum simplex ac religiosus, proprio sensu quocque vocationis suae apostolicae praeditus, et hae res fuisse videntur, quae vulgus et auditores imprimis commovebant. Quaestiones vitae et radicae difficultatum proquam ei sunt de natura morali. . . Fortasse indolem affectivam, certe autem (indole oratoria praeditus) vim specialem habebat suggestionis, quia alioquin effectus, quos reapse cons-

37. Wadding, *Ann. Min.*, ad an. 1483, n. 351.

38. Cf. Sharalea, *Suppl. ad Script. Trium Ord. S. Franc.*, I, 74.

39. *Compend. Chronic. Frat. Min.*, AFH IV, 326: "Antonius de Bellocho Vercellensis. . . miraculis fulsit."

40. *Ann. Min.*, ad an. 1483, n. 351.

41. *Op. cit.* 386.

picimus, difficile declarantur. At populum ergo magis nutrire quam erudire sciebat et vix erat, qui Magnificum illum Laurentium profundius commoveret"⁴².

3. THE TREATISE

A. DEDICATION

The treatise "De Certitudine Future Vite Beatitudinis Atque Felicitatis", written by Fr Antonius of Vercelli, O.F.M., and completed on the 30th Januray, 1467, is dedicated to John, Bishop of Porto, Cardinal of St Angelo and Apostolic Legate⁴³, "recreationis vestrae causa, ut labor vester maximus, quem ab initio usque huc pro sanctissima Christi fide catholicae ecclesia libentissime suffertis, aliquah gaudio refrigeretur".

B. SCOPE

As he tells us in the prologue, the author sets out to investigate the cause (for every effect postulates a specific cause) of widespread corruption, even among Christians. He demonstrates by Scriptural and patristic authority, by reason, the argument from which he calls "ratio incognitionis", and by means of a moral illustration that such a cause was no other than the general unbelief in a future life and in future happiness, in other words, the denial of the immortality and eternal destiny of the soul.

The author admits that this pernicious error or heresy can be sufficiently refuted by "pure, simple and sincere faith" but "ad maiorem roborationem firmioremque humani intellectus credibilitatem et certitudinem", he proposes to illustrate this fundamental truth of Christian religion by fifteen "very strong and natural arguments for, as Aristotle says, it is not enough to affirm truth but it is necessary to assign its cause."

42. Ibidem.

43. Ioannes Carvajal, to whom the treatise is dedicated, was created Cardinal-deacon of St Angelo by Pope Eugene IV on the 16th Dec., 1446, having previously been Auditor of the Camera Apostolica, and was appointed Cardinal-bishop of Porto after his return from a six-year mission in Hungary in 1461. He died on the 6th Dec., 1469. Cf. Eubel C., *Hierarchia Cath. Med. Aevi*, ed. 2a, Monasterii (1914), II, 9; and *Cath. Encycl.*, Spec. Ed., III, 393. The first complete biography: *Un Espanol al servicio de la Santa Sede, Don Juan de Carvajal. Cardenal de Sant'Angelo, Legado en Alemania y Hungria 1399?-1469*, by Lino Gomez Canedo, O.F.M., was published in Madrid by the Instituto Jeronimo Zurita, in 1947. The mentioned dates confirm the date of composition of the treatise.

The author's expressed scope is apparently philosophical and apologetical. In actual fact, however, the ethical and pragmatic nature of some of the arguments as well as the oratorical device used in certain places in preference to the strict and direct philosophical character betray the author's predominantly pastoral purpose in the composition of his treatise.

C. THE ARGUMENTS

1. The 1st Argument (Argumentum Processionis)

Man is composed of a double substance; namely, material, i.e. the flesh, and formal, i.e. the soul.

The flesh, generated as it is from the corruptible substance of the parents, is also corruptible, for a corruptible cause produces a corruptible effect.

The soul, on the contrary, which is independent of the corruptible body and is immediately created and infused into the body of God, follows the nature of its cause, which is everlasting and immortal.

Being immortal, the soul will, after the corruption of the body, either enjoy eternal bliss or suffer eternal misery, according as it did good or evil during its earthly existence.

2. The 2nd Argument (Argumentum Operationis)

There are two ways of knowing a thing: (i) by its form and essence; (ii) by its effects and external operation. The soul, being spiritual, cannot be known or seen either before or after its separation from the body by its form and essence but it can be known both before and after its separation from the body by its operation: before death, by the movement of the body, which it animates, and, after death, by the miracles it produces. The soul's operation after death is illustrated by stories of miracles produced by deceased saints. Hence, since every act and every operation presupposes an existent cause, it follows that souls operating after death must exist and are therefore immortal and if one or more souls are immortal, all other souls are immortal, because all species are equally predicted of their individuals.

3. The 3rd Argument (Argumentum Participationis)

There are three kinds of substance in creatures; namely, (i) purely corporal substance (e.g. the elements, the heavenly bodies), (ii) purely incorporeal or spiritual substance (angels) and (iii) partly corporal and

partly spiritual substance (man).

Both purely corporal and purely spiritual substances are incorruptible or immortal.

Hence, since a medium naturally participates of the nature of its extremes, it follows that man — the medium between purely corporal and purely spiritual substances — is immortal.

The human soul, which participates of the angelic nature, is incorruptible; the human body, though it corrupts, will rise again in the Last Judgement to share the soul's destiny.

4. The 4th Argument (*Argumentum Appetitionis*)

Everything that moves is moved by another. The soul is certainly moved by a natural appetite and desire to will eternal happiness and, since an infinite process of movers and moved is impossible, it must be concluded that this motion of the soul towards beatitude comes ultimately from the Immobile Prime Mover or God.

Hence, if eternal beatitude does not exist, it follows either that such a divine motion of the soul is idle and vain or that God founds our natural appetite on a false and impossible object, which consequences are inadmissible. Therefore, it must be concluded that eternal beatitude is an existent reality. Finally, in solving three objections, the author aptly distinguishes:

(i) between natural appetite, innate in pure nature, which cannot be frustrated, and appetite deriving from corrupted nature (e.g. the appetite of luxury) which can be frustrated.

(ii) between the appetite of the deliberative will (e.g. the appetite of flying) which may be frustrated, and the natural appetite, which cannot be frustrated.

(iii) between frustration of natural appetite 'per accidens' (e.g. the appetite of beatitude in the damned) and frustration of natural appetite 'per se' which is impossible.

5. The 5th Argument (*Argumentum Justificationis*)

Every perfection existing in secondary causes exists in a more perfect degree in the primary cause.

Hence, the virtue of justice, which exists in rational creatures, must exist in an infinitely higher degree in God, who for the rigour of justice willed that His Son, nobler than the whole of creation, be crucified.

Hence, since God is infinitely just, He cannot leave unrewarded those pious men and women who, for His sake, suffer without remuneration in this life, and similarly, He cannot leave unpunished those evil men and

women who offend Him with impunity in this life.

It follows, therefore, that there must be a future life, in which God's attribute of justice will be exercised and manifested.

The author concludes the argument by confirming the Day of Judgment by Scriptural texts from the Old and the New Testaments.

6. The 6th Argument (*Argumentum Proportionis*)

Two are the faculties of the soul; namely, the intellectual faculty, whose object is universal truth, and the volitive faculty, whose object is universal good.

But universal truth and universal good are incorruptible and, since the condition and quality of an object is an indication of the condition and quality of its faculty, it follows that the faculties of the soul, and, consequently, the intellectual soul itself, are incorruptible.

Moreover, since the soul is capacious of universal good, being, as it is, God's image, Divine Wisdom and Omnipotence postulates that the soul's capacity be satisfied. Such satisfaction cannot but be eternal beatitude, which Boethius defines as "status omnium bonorum aggregatione perfectus."

7. The 7th Argument (*Argumentum Praegustationis*)

It is a fact that some men abandon riches and comfort in preference for an austere way of life. Such a change cannot be natural, for nature loves comfort and nature does not act against itself.

It is caused by some divinely bestowed supernatural accident or by supernal grace, which is a mere foretaste and guarantee of eternal bliss.

8. The 8th Argument (*Argumentum Nobilitationis*)

As a preamble to the eighth argument, the author borrows an argument 'ad hominem', with which a certain friar refuted a philosopher, who did not believe in the immortality of the soul: there is no harm, argued the friar, in believing that the soul is immortal, even if it were in reality mortal; on the contrary, it might be most detrimental to deny the immortality of the soul, if in reality the soul is immortal.

The rational soul, continues the author, endowed, as it is, not only with being, like the elements, with life and feeling, like animals, but also with intellect and love, is more in conformity with God than the elements and animals, and hence it is incomparably nobler than they.

The heavens and the heavenly bodies, however, though they are inanimate and, consequently, less noble than the soul of man, to whom they

are ordained as means to an end, are incorruptible and eternal.

Hence, the soul of man — the end and paragon of all inferior creatures and heavenly bodies — must 'a fortiori' be immortal.

9. The 9th Argument (*Argumentum Afflictionis*)

The remorse felt by sinners after perpetrating their crimes postulates a cause. Such cause cannot be the crime itself, which is an object of delight for the sinner. It is the presentiment of future punishment for the crime. Similarly, the joy experienced in the accomplishment of virtuous deeds proceeds from the natural hope of future remuneration.

10. The 10th Argument. (*Argumentum Fortificationis*)

This is an argument 'ad hominem', directed against the heretic, obstinate in his denial of future life.

Keener faculties are simply more apprehensive of their objects than less keen ones.

Thus, certain intellects apprehend truth more clearly than others, not because they are essentially more perfect but in virtue of a more perfect bodily disposition, doctrine and experience and, in certain cases, in virtue of infused supernatural grace. The author compares and contrasts the very keen intellects of St Augustine, St Ambrose, St John the Evangelist and St Paul — all of whom professed their faith in the existence of a future life — with the ignorance of the heretic, who denies such a truth.

Indeed the belief of such great thinkers, corroborated by the assent of so many patriarchs, prophets, apostles, confessors, subtle doctors and theologians, nay, even the majority of pagans and infidels, and, above all, attested by the Son of God himself, constitutes formidable proof of the existence of future life and future happiness.

It is, therefore, not only ignorance but the height of folly to contradict so many witnesses and persist in error.

11. The 11th Argument (*Argumentum Oppositionis*)

The Scriptures are eloquent about the existence of hell. Hence, since the existence of one of two opposites argues the existence of the other, heaven must necessarily exist, and indeed, its existence is likewise testified by Holy Scripture.

To the heretic's common objection: I do not believe in hell for I have never seen it, the author curtly replies that the heretic will be convinced of the existence of hell, when he is dragged thither by devils after death.

12. The 12th Argument (Argumentum Perfectionis)

Since the rational soul, as has been proved in the first argument, is everlasting and immortal, consequently, the substantial and accidental goodness of the souls of those who die in state of grace is likewise eternal. Such souls cannot but be eternally loved and befriended by God; else, God's love and friendship would be imperfect.

And, since the essence of goodness and friendship consists in the communication of goodness, it follows that God communicates goodness, i.e. eternal beatitude, to good souls.

13. The 13th Argument (Argumentum Multiplicationis)

The inconvenience of the non-existence of future happiness would bring in its wake a multiplicity of other inconveniences, of which the author mentions the principal three; namely:

i. the inconvenience of Offence: for, in such a hypothesis, it would be licit to offend God;

ii. the inconvenience of Frustration: for, the Son of God would have become man and suffered in vain;

iii. the inconvenience of Falsehood: for, not only all the virtues but also all the vision and the revelations made by God about eternal beatitude would be false.

14. The 14th Argument (Argumentum Obiectionis)

Every single faculty of the human body has been provided for by God with a diversity of proportionate objects.

It is impossible, therefore, that the human soul, which is the substantial form of, and, consequently, far nobler than, the body, could have been left without its proper and proportionate object.

The object of the soul is God, or the beatific vision, which, like God, is eternal.

Hence, the soul is also eternal and destined to attain its objects.

15. The 15th Argument (Argumentum Susceptionis)

Life is indisputably man's dearest possession on earth. Yet, so many martyrs preferred to sacrifice their lives in order to win eternal bliss, which they would surely not have done, prudent as they were, if the existence of eternal bliss were doubtful, false or uncertain.

Hence for the martyrs future life was the most certain and firm reality.

EPILOGUE

Finally, the author, turning preacher, bursts forth into a paraenetic appeal to unbelievers, heretics, Jews, schismatics, excommunicated Christians and to all who deny the immortality of the soul and the existence of eternal life, to subdue their pride, temerity and arrogance and, abjuring their error, submit to common belief.

He concludes by wishing eternal happiness for Cardinal-bishop Carvajal, for himself and for all the faithful.

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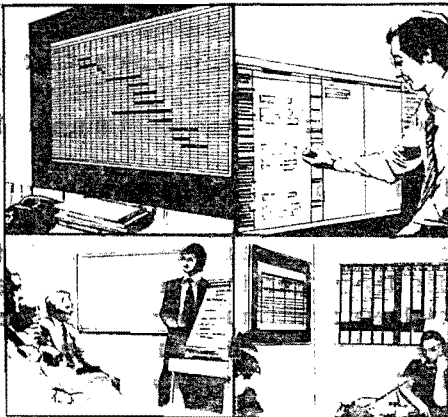
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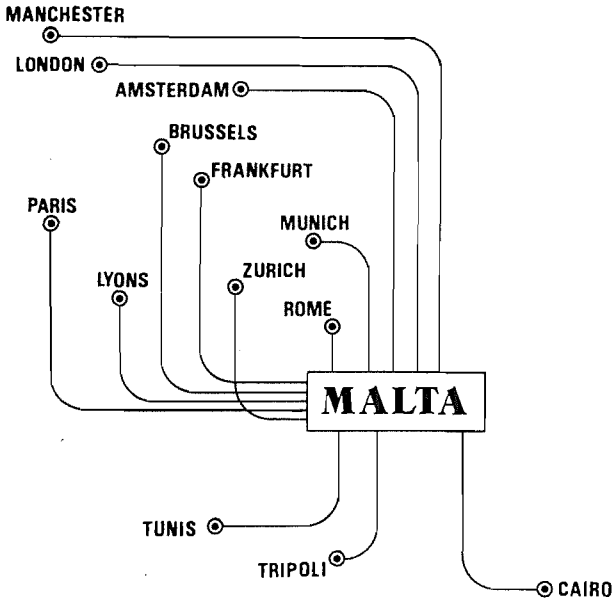
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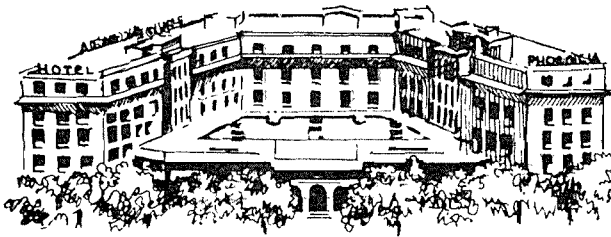


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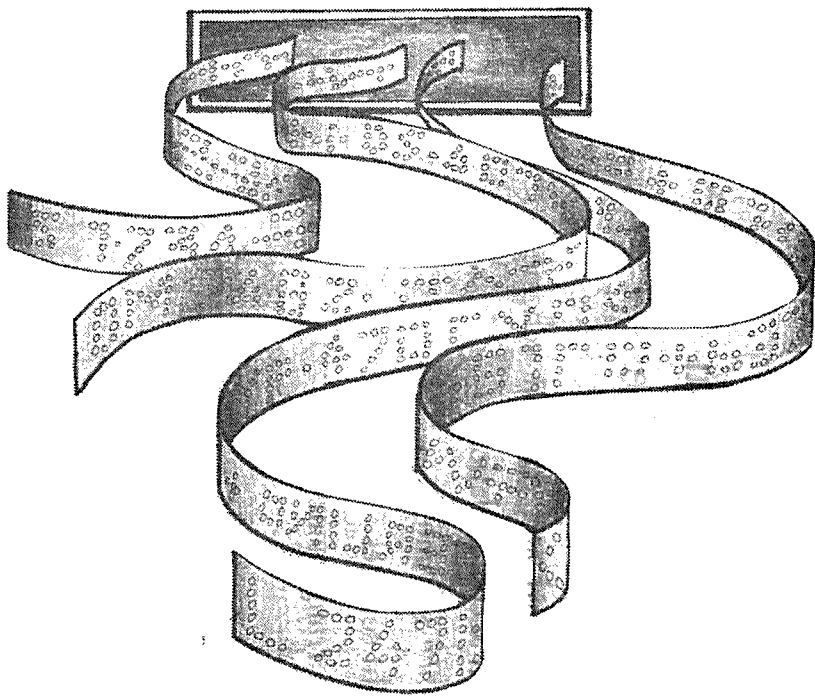
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