



FROM "THE SADNESS OF BEING MAN" TO "THE FREEDOM OF CHILDREN"

the access of belief to man

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INTRODUCTION: "TWO SO UNEQUAL THINGS "

In the Gospel of St. Mark, we read "he who wishes to save his life will lose it, and he who loses it *for my sake and the Gospel* will save it" (8, 35). Accustomed though we are to this sentence, it would be good if, before beginning to read this Booklet, we become aware of its never-ending strangeness.

"To save one's life" seems to be man's duty. Although, on the other hand, it is necessary to recognise that when this becomes an exclusive and absolute attitude of self-affirmation, it leads man to destroy others, to destroy the planet and in the end to destroy himself.

If man adopts the attitude of "losing his life" in order to save it, the attitude does not appear quite correct since man *does not seek to lose himself*, rather he wants to save himself and so he remains being in the first part of the alternative. But if man *really* accepts to lose his life (and he is no masochist), it does not seem that he is going to find there personal experiences of salvation, but rather ones of death, which, in the end, would result in resentment.

It is true that St Mark spoke of losing one's life "for My sake and the Good Tidings" (Gospel). The content of this good news, according to Mark (1,15) is that "the Kingdom of God is near". And this Kingdom consists in the plenitude of man with God. It is not a question here of any type of loss of life, but of a loss of life that occurs in a very specific direction.

The human being has within his reach small experiences in which the loss of himself for a bigger cause turns out to be his salvation. But he does not have within his reach *a full and absolute verification* that the total handing over of this own life will be his salvation. Perhaps even this lack of verification is necessary if this handing over is to be authentic and not just a calculated action.

The paradox depicted then is a **paradox of a bet**. It is besides a frequent paradox with Jesus, who proclaimed that the poor are blessed and so are those who moan not because poverty and mourning are criteria of happiness, but because those people are (and will be) the possessors of the Kingdom of God and of definitive laughter. We are faced again with a paradox and a bet.

The pages that follow try to unfold a little bit this *paradox* and this *bet*.

To this end we will try in the three initial chapters (1-3), to look for different accesses, that are not based on belief but on the human being, in order to show how the paradox or contradiction springs constantly from man himself so much so that it appears to be a constituent feature of man. In each of these chapters we will try to show how the human paradox can have an interpretation proper of believers and can be converted into a *"praxic" bet*. The interpretation can at times be quite schematic and dense, but it will prepare the way for the next three chapters.

Chapters 4 to 6 will try to interpret in a believer's way the human paradox, leading to the supreme contradiction between the Just and the sinner, and towards the praxic bet for liberation from this contradiction in the transcendent harmony of all the paradoxes of man:

"Oh, knot that joins in this way two so unequal things ", as St. Teresa spoke in poetic fashion.

The present Booklet thus can be a simple commentary to the words of Jesus used by us at its opening. This said, let us commence with the different circular routes around man.

HUMAN EXPERIENCES

1. COSMOLOGICAL ACCESS: "CREATION LONGINGLY AWAITS"

From matter to spirit

Reality appears to us as a compact, solid, resistant system endowed with attributes like colour, extension, etc. Science, on the other hand, testifies to reality being in fact a structure or an assembly of structures formed by infinite elementary particles inter-related among themselves and reducible in their original and elementary form to both mass or energy. The world that appears external to us, the matter we believe we are in contact with and which we think we see as continuous, is no more than this dynamic and infinitely complex structure which man also forms part of, but which man gives shape and meaning to through the waves that reach him, and which he transforms first into datum which can be perceived, and later into intelligible content.

Given this situation, one can imagine that the greatest complication in this sort of game of matter arises **when human conscience appears on the scene**. For man, "the external world" does not reduce itself to a mere series of successive stimuli, but is perceived as *a reality*, endowed with consistency and autonomy, capable of being understood and handledⁱ, susceptible of meaning and finality and through these determinations, exposed to the possibility of suffering and happiness. This is so because man in order to be himself carries on needing this reality from which he has emerged and which, though he has transcended, still forms part of his mode of being. Not only that: each human conscience will end up perceiving that it is not alone in this mode of being, but that there are "other consciences" too that achieve this same centralising job of organising and giving meaning, and that these other consciences it *must* respect, that is to say: it must *exclude* them as a last resort from its work of integration, abstaining from reducing other consciences to mere parts of a world in which *I am* the centre. It must behave this way, because among other reasons, other consciences have helped to shape one's own humanising activity.

This capacity, not only of organising but also of giving meaning, radically distinguishes the human conscience from the animal pre-conscience. Emerging from matter, man has transcended matter without abandoning it. One can understand from what has been said how important are the intuitions that propose defining matter as "swollen spirit" (K. Rahner), denying the total contradiction between matter and spirit. The Bible too appears blatantly intuitive when it says that God put man at the head of things "so that he could give them names" (Gen. 2,19). Give names is equivalent more or less to giving reality, that is to say: to organise and give meaning.

The history of matter and its structure, together with the material constitution of man, has raised infinite questions, and infinite surprises too. But we must go ahead.

1.1 Associative parenthesis

I would like to add, although it may appear a strange digression, that the Buddhist experience of illumination, seems to confirm- in a way that is not scientific as yet - this characteristic of reality that we have just put forward. Buddha perceived with lucidity up to what point the world that surrounds man - that which is the object of his perceptions and deliberations - is only appearance and deceit (*maya*). To make ourselves understood, it is like saying that this reality that conditions man so much is not more than the mere "virtual reality" of a screen. And, consequently, the whole plot of history is a mere repetition (*samsara*) of these structuring processes that we have tried to recall. Buddhist illumination can be branded as unilateral (or spiritualist), but it is not false (and the same Buddhist notion of compassion can also serve to complete its one-sidedness). Nirvana is not a sort of disappearance but a supreme form of consciousness that frees man from the lie of considering himself *separate and distinct* from the rest: a lie that is precisely what chains manⁱⁱ.

Give whatever value you like to this parenthesis; we must now return to man.

1.2 Spirit in the world

Because of his intrinsic belonging to this material universe, man is a strange and very deep unity of two dimensions, of which one totally transcends the other: spirit and the world. Probably, human reflection has not succeeded in expressing this marvellous unity without falling into reductionisms which deny realityⁱⁱⁱ. In man there is nothing that is *only* corporal or *only* spiritual: everything is "corporal-and-spiritual" at the same time, psycho-organic, although it could have different emphases towards one side or the other.

For this reason the influence of the psyche on the corporal is so real: placebos, for example, are half the medicine, and doctors today desist from regarding them as simple ignorance of the patient. And for the same reason the influence of the corporal on the psyche is very real: Pharmo-psychiatry is currently one of the most promising fields of current medicine. Man can *treat* his body *well* in a non-material, mental way (e.g. by avoiding tensions and peace-lacking situations that adversely affect the functioning of his organism). And he can treat his spirit well in a corporal way (e.g. with spells of deep rest that resolve - or at least limit - many problems of the soul).

1.3 The credibility of what we experience

Christian faith should not deny any of these elements, but should add something that changes their context and transforms them. The external world could effectively be unlike how we perceive it with our senses and could be considered as an appearance or "a nothingness"; but a nothingness *en route towards* (or better: called to be) Something. If the universe has been capable of organising itself up to the point of transcending itself, producing human consciousness and giving it the capacity that we have described of facing the world *as a reality*, it is because in its origins it possessed a creative energy that has

permitted transcending it. And it possessed this energy not by chance but because of a Creative and Communicative Will. This "virtual" reality is then like a prayer of being *real* reality; time is offered the possibility of desisting from being a mere circular return of the same; and is given the chance of being a construction of something: **history**.

All this may appear very paradoxical. But the aim of this chapter is precisely to demonstrate that this contradiction is centred paradigmatically on man, in whom *responsibility* appears as something that is not reducible to mere matter, and as a necessity to reply to the whole process which has led up to him and which is now in some way in his hands. To live humanly is, in short, **to do something with oneself**, or to make oneself. Because man is never simply a being who "does things" but in doing things, makes himself.

One understands then that in Christianity, man is called *creature* on the one hand (because he appears as a total effect of that mysterious Creative Will about which we have already spoken); but on the other hand, he is also called *Transparency of God* ("image of God"), because he appears as the effect and the goal of that Communicating Will. The first denomination man shares with the whole dynamic structure from which he has sprung and which he is himself. The second is for Christianity exclusive of man, although in its definitive realisation, it should include in some way all that we call the world of man^{iv}. For this reason one should not confuse the duality between creatureness and image of God that believers acknowledge with the other synthesis that we have commented before between the world and spirit (or, with the habitual language: between body and soul). Man is both creature and image of God *not only in his material dimension but also in his spiritual dimension*.

In conclusion: This is the supreme greatness of matter. But it also constitutes the supreme difficulty of being man, a theme we must now penetrate deeper.

"A second after the *big-bang*, if the speed of expansion were less, even if it were a hundred thousand billionth part less, the universe would have collapsed again before it could ever have acquired its present size" (...)

"Why is the universe as we see it? The reply is simple: If it had been different, we would not be here" (...)

"The initial state of the universe must have been chosen with tremendous care. It would be very difficult to explain why the universe should have begun precisely in this way, except, if we consider it as the act of a god who wanted to create beings like us". (Stephen HAWKINGS, *Historia del tiempo*)

2. PHILOSOPHIC ACCESS: **"THE DISPROPORTION" (P. Ricoeur)**

The best and most synthetic definitions of man that philosophy has given are usually "dual" (let's recall just one example, that of the famous "rational animal" of Aristotle, that goes perfectly well with what has been said in the previous chapter regarding corporality and spirituality).

2.1 Various paradoxes

Carrying on in this line of duality, a famous expression of E. Kant speaks of the "unsociable sociality" of man^v. The paradox we had set out before through other ways strikingly reappears here. But the formula of Kant is by no way the only one, as we shall now see.

We could also speak of the human being as a "slavish freedom" (not merely limited but enslaved.). We allude here to things that can be checked daily by any conscious person: never perhaps have men been more manageable and less in control of themselves as in this era when freedom is idolatrised most. Times abound when men believe they are using their freedom, but in point of fact are deprived of it.

We can also define man as an "irrational rationality": all individuals are endowed with reason, but rarely do we use it to *reason out* since more often than not we prefer using it to *rationalise*. That is to say: not to find the truth of things but to justify interests and to conceal the lie that our interests have set us in.

Paul Ricoeur, thinking in the same direction, considers the notion of "disproportion" as that which "satisfies best an ontology of human reality". Although it does not appear as an explicitly dual category, it is clear that it is implicitly so, since disproportion implies non-conformity between the two members. This is perceived in the following definition with which the author ends his reflection: "man is the 'joy of himself' in the sadness of the finite"^{vi}.

Without the ethical nuance that the first previously mentioned three formulas have, I would like to speak of man as a "universalised particularity". Therein lies the root of the previously mentioned contradictions, especially that of the formula of Kant. A person is a particularity, an unrepeatable individuality that cannot be crushed; the community, communion and universality, however, belong to the very essence of the person. The human being very often distorts this impossible harmony, universalising its particularity (with forms of domination, imposition or negation of everything different), or individualises its sociality, forgetting whatever is not himself^{vii}. Language, it appears to me, has some anonymous strokes of genius as when it characterises this type of individualist or egocentric people as lacking "*amiability*".

The human paradox is also expressed in a radical way in the definition of man as a "symbolical animal".

In the measure in which symbolism indicates the capacity to detect things and transcend them way beyond themselves (they serving as a vehicle) - including the

possibility of transcending them up to Ultimateness of everything "beyond" - it is clear that the symbolical capacity totally transcends animality since for animality things *are only stimuli* that are reacted to mechanically or almost mechanically.

A striking example of this is to be found in human sexuality which differs profoundly from animal sexuality - though physically so identical - for this capacity that the human being has of endowing it with symbolism, and of behaving in ways ranging from contempt to tenderness^{viii}. The same occurs with human sociality that, on account of its possibilities of interpersonal communion, is essentially distinct and transcends the anonymity of the run-of-the-mill^{ix}; but it does not abandon collectivity either since man is no monad^x (or "an island" to use a less technical word).

The symbolical capacity of man transcends animality but the important thing is that it transcends it *without abandoning it or doing without it*. Rather it incorporates animality in its new ontological level. Before this almost elementary verification, does not the human being seem an impossible project?

2.2 An approach to the root of the paradox

According to Christian tradition, it is the adjective in *slavish* freedom, *unsociable* sociability, *irrational* rationality that is generically called "sin" since it falsifies or contradicts the fundamental determinations of the human being. We will talk about this in Chapter 5. For the moment suffice it to note that sin is always an adjectival trait, and that the substantival trait of man (at least in respect of his vocation) lies in sociability, freedom and reason. Let us note too that the propensity toward sin stems from two other paradoxes that have been dealt with in this chapter (universal-particularity and symbolical-animality) and they appear to refer to the contradiction between creatureness and the image of God, that we have already come across in the previous chapter, and which we will comment again in chapter 4.

Classical theology describes this paradoxical sum of determinations (creatureness and Image of God) as the "elevation of man to the supernatural order". The supernatural term is simply terrible since it appears to suggest the idea of a superstructure alien to man. The term elevation appears to be more suitable since it could suggest the idea of a *transfer*: the emigrant that has recently left his small fatherland for a bigger and more developed country has a feeling of ignorance or anguish (notwithstanding this, he still wants to remain in the new place) - this could be a parable of the human condition. We will comment later how man is a **tremendously unstable**, not simply a "limited" being. And sinfulness should not be likened without further ado to limitation but rather to what appeared to us before as an "impossible project".

Christian tradition also maintains that by the strength of God (and only by it) can man go socialising his sociality and freeing his freedom etc. Christianity calls this Grace: a special presence of the Spirit of God and the restructuring of the person that this Presence produces in the human spirit. This strength is offered to all, even to unbelievers and those who are outside the Church; and acts more often than not in an anonymous way. We will have to deal on this more in detail in our last chapter.

For the moment it is sufficient to say, by way of closing this second chapter, that the contradiction Grace-sin is perhaps the most radical and serious way of defining the human paradox. It gave rise in theological tradition to a well-known characterisation of

man as "just and sinful at the same time" (*simul justus et peccator*). True human dualism is not dualism between matter and spirit, or between the person and community, but the contradiction between goodness and evil, between Grace and sin. But in this dualism that is so radical, contradiction has *to be dissolved* by the victory of one of the two extremes: it cannot *be resolved* by the synthesis between the two, as was the case in some other proposed examples.

To sum up: The human being appears as an attempt to achieve an *impossible harmony* between matter and spirit, between person and community, between immanence and transcendence...) and the search of a solution for a *constitutive confrontation* between good and evil). The great enigma of human history and existence lies in whether this solution and harmony are possible.

3. PHENOMENOLOGICAL ACCESS: **"WE GROAN...IN HOPE", (Rom. 8,24).**

3.1. From animal to man

It has been tried on many occasions to enumerate the differences between animal and man: man progresses and invents, the animal in the strict sense doesn't; man is capable of speaking creatively, the animal cannot...

Without trying to be exhaustive nor better, we are going to establish now a triple difference that will permit us another access to the human being.

Man *wants to be happy*, the animal feels no need to be so.

Man finds himself *programmed only in a generic and undetermined way*, the animal in an almost totally determined fashion.

Man has consciousness of the limit (not mere direct experience of it but the understanding of it as a limit).

That man wishes to be happy indicates obviously that *he isn't*. He is a being that is not wholly identified with himself. Assuming the mode of the human constitution we explained in Chapter one, he cannot cease being an incomprehensible and scandalous datum. Why shouldn't man be wholly identified with himself as any other living being?

In the second part of this chapter we will dwell more in detail on this subject, describing the human condition a little bit. Now we will carry on with our comments.

But besides seeking happiness, men seek it in two opposite directions: the human trajectory (both personal as well as global) usually oscillates between extremes as for example modernity and post-modernity, progress and conservatism, freedom and order or Puritanism... These oscillations never cease in human history. Torn between these opposite extremes, man seeks happiness. The oscillations only indicate that he has not found it in either of the previously-mentioned extremes. To put just one global example, let us remember Marx refusing to have a Creator because that would lessen the freedom of man and convert him into a perpetual debtor. And a little later, Sartre (and in the same vein, Dostoievski) proclaimed that full freedom is an unbearable burden, and that man should do all he could to rid himself of it, handing it over to the first person who would offer him security in exchange.

This fact is explainable because unlike an animal, man is only programmed generically: if he needs a room, he will have to learn how to build it, there is nothing written in his instinct as occurs with the birds and the bees. And if he looks for happiness, he will have to learn how to reach it. St. Thomas described this difference with elegance^{xi}. It was on account of this that Zubiri wrote that an animal is *responsive* whilst man is *responsible*.

Finally, unlike animals, man not only feels or trips over limits but he also perceives them *as such*, as something that imprisons him. Animals and men can both dash against a wall. But while the animal will turn and leave by another route, man will perceive the wall

as prohibiting him from going ahead, as dominating him. He will therefore try to knock it down to carry on walking ahead.

This example gives one to understand that if a limit is perceived as a limit *it supposes that it must already have been transcended* in some way. And that is why it is an invitation to transgress it or an invitation (perhaps impossible) to overcome it. Only what still remains clean in us can perceive our dirtiness, only what still remains healthy in us can feel our ill-health. Only what still remains of freedom in us can perceive that we are slaves. What finds itself totally identified with its limit, no longer perceives it. One can easily understand then up to what point this paradox between the reality of the limit and the overcoming of it is a source of pain and a source of possibilities for man.

Where does this paradox rise from? It appears to lie in the superior dimensions of man. Love, knowledge and the experience of feeling, freedom, creative action and plenitude of life, claim for absoluteness and unlimitedness that are not possible in the dimension we know. Man has no other way out than to limit absoluteness and unlimitedness and to live with the knowledge (unbearable) of this limit that leaves him wounded; or hurl himself on an unbridled race towards his unlimitedness that will be the end of them (his absoluteness and unlimitedness) as well as of him.

It is on account of this that the human being harbours deep down in his being a question like this: is it possible to **receive gratuitously** the absoluteness that these dimensions claim and which one seeks erroneously by trying to transgress concrete limitations?^{xiii} This question has a lot to do with the religious dimension (or the search) of man. If there was a positive reply to it, it would merit with capital letters the name of Health: because it would mean the healing of that constitutive wound that man seems to be.

And this dilemma becomes more acute by what we are going to put forward in the following section, through a simple analysis of the human condition. There we will take up again the first of the differences which distinguish man from the animal and which we had announced earlier: man wishes to be happy, indicating thereby that he isn't so.

3.2. The human condition

It can be said in a few words that the existence of the human being is an existence that is *threatened though affected* by a series of "sacraments" or signs of a much fuller life.

a)The fundamental threat of the human being is dying...

This dying takes place in a series of anticipated deaths that keep appearing in the lifetime of man: sickness, old age and the last definitive dying.

Behind his self-satisfied or defiant mask, man is accustomed to live with a secret fear of those threats. For this reason he is a sophism that eludes the problem with the affirmation that death is not a threat because before it, one is alive and after it, one no longer suffers anything. So death, according to this reasoning, practically does not exist.

Putting aside the fact that the greatest threat of death is not the disappearance but the loss of dear ones, one must say that this Epicurean argument is like saying that one does not fear the extraction of a grinder because when the grinder ceases to exist, pain is no longer felt. However, what man fears is not *the absence* of the grinder but *the extraction* and the process that leads to it. Again the threat of man is not death but *dying*. And dying

is a traumatic act of struggle and progressive defeat. The word agony signifies precisely struggle, and again language turns out surprisingly lucid on this point. Dying is not, therefore, placidly falling asleep and not waking up. It is losing oneself through pain, limitation and deterioration. Death is like an "extraction of life" that (unlike the grinder) is slow and without anaesthesia.

Precisely on account of this the great temptation of man before the threat of existence will be to anaesthetise this secret fear, or to deceive it with immediate things, with pastimes or with bragging instead of *integrating* this threat. A similar reaction will end up falsifying the identity of the person. But it is understood that the Bible affirms that latent fear of death makes of evil a slave during the whole of man's life (Heb. 2,15).

b)...but human life is full of countless promises

And, nevertheless, it would be profoundly unilateral to be satisfied with only the previous description. Human life is not only deeply affected by a threat, but it is also full of countless dazzling promises, irresistible and overpowering. Although the symbolic capacity of the human animal can act before them in a projective way, magnifying them and hoping from them much more than what they contain, it is undeniable that these promises exist and crowd the firmament of human living like constellations or bright stars.

They exist especially in the field of human relations. In love, in sexuality, in friendship, in maternity, in shared convictions: "there is no more beautiful thing than to see a united town", or two authentic lovers, or two unconditional friends, or some Picasso-styled motherhood...

There also exists in the field of beauty: some times extracted by man from his shapeless surroundings (as Praxiteles drew Venus from a shapeless mass of marble or Mozart a symphony from a discontinuous flow of waves). At other times scattered all over creation, without any special objective, uselessly, *gratuitously* and only "if somebody may chance to find it" like the waterfalls of Igazu. The profound harmony between man and his surroundings that these experiences provide is like the announcement of an absolute and definitive Plenitude.

One understands therefore that even in this case the great temptation of the human being is to try to seize those promises that seem to protect him from all his constitutive threats, and to draw from them once and for all their juice, all their wealth, all that they have to offer him: "hand yourself over immediately; don't send me today any more messengers" (John of the Cross). It is like the temptation of the impatient lover who ardently desires the fusion and definitive possession of the loved one. But, by wishing to seize the promise, without leaving it to be only a sacrament ("messenger"), one kills it as in the children's story of the goose with the golden eggs. The experience of pleasure is easily confused with the experience of plenitude and can end up converting itself in a new form of impoverishment or dependence^{xiii}.

To grow up into a man is to learn to live between these two extremes, **with hope before the threat and without exigency before promise**. Perhaps it is necessary to add that if God reveals himself to man, it is not to receive from him a "cult" that He in no way needs, but to help him to live in this crossroads, relativising the threat and ratifying the promise: "do not be afraid, little flock, because your Father is pleased to give you His Kingdom" (Luke 12, 32).

In respect of the body, animals are provided with special defence mechanisms (shells, feathers, horns or claws...) whereas man is provided with hands to enable him to get the thousand things he needs. It is because animals have a reduced field of action, and for their small possibilities, what nature gives them is quite sufficient. On the contrary, man has many possibilities of action, which are extended to many diverse things, for which anticipated prefabricated instruments would not be sufficient.

With respect to the perception of reality, animals by natural instinct are endowed with a way of seeing (as the sheep perceives the wolf is its enemy, and other similar examples). Man, on the other hand, man is endowed only with universal principles which enable him to acquire what he needs.

As far as appetite is concerned, the same thing occurs: other things are endowed with a *determined* tendency (like that of weight which has to fall, and in animals, what is convenient to them naturally). Man, on the contrary, is endowed with only a *general* appetite for his ultimate end: such that by nature he desires complete goodness. But what does this complete goodness consist in (in virtue? in science? in pleasure? in other things?) this nature does not tell him"

(St. Thomas Aquinas, De Veritate, q. 22 to 7,c)

A BELIEVER'S INTERPRETATION

4. THE BASIS OF HUMAN CONTRADICTION: "YOUR CREATOR IS CONVERTED INTO YOUR HUSBAND" (Is. 54,5)

4.1. Divine Creature

In the conclusions of the three previous chapters, we have been seeing how the paradoxes that characterise man could have a believer's interpretation. In fact: Christian theology usually recapitulates all these contradictions affirming that man is a *divine project*. The project of a **creature** established in the unattainable dimension of **Divinity**.

The first Christian theologians talked of man as an "Uncreated created person", explaining that God could not do this so to say "all of a sudden" since to do this He needed the collaboration of time and history. God could not all of a sudden make a "divine creature" because Divinity can only be "the cause of Himself", and this is not possible where there isn't - at least - freedom that accepts it (which is the lowest degree of creation of oneself). This is the meaning of history: so that the creature "is able to achieve" all that his divine spark implies, or (as formulated by St. Ireneus in another way) that "what is mortal may bring to full development immortality".

The Bible expresses the same thing more simply characterising man as *slime* and *image of God* (cf. Gen 2 and Gen 1): man is a creature like all the rest of beings, but God creates him alone (and decides to create him after a sort of solemn deliberation) "to Our image and likeness" (cf. Gen 1, 26.27). If the formula of creature and Image is more *static* the later concept of Alliance (that comes to replace it) marks better the *planning* characteristic of this characterisation. On the other hand, as we saw in chapter 2, it seems more questionable the subsequent expression of "elevation to the supernatural order".

Now one must add to what has been previously said that this divine dimension of man *is a free gift* and so man cannot dispose of it as he wishes, trying to interpret it and achieve it at will. Man has to respect that divine Image that resides in him, he has to be responsible for it, work in accordance with it and receive gratuitously its full achievement. The Bible situates the radical sin of the human being in failing to proceed in this way, in trying to achieve this Image in his way and on his own. Man is effectively an "image and likeness of God" (Gen. 1,26), but he tries "to be like God" (Gen. 3,5). Precisely behaving in this way he destroys his divine image, because this desire to affirm himself as God is contrary to the way God reveals Himself in the Bible^{xiv}.

Just as we had said before with other examples, being the "image of God" while transcending creatureness *neither abandons nor denies it*. Man has to learn to live as a creature accepting his finitude. And this means: accepting the goodness of things but acknowledging that this goodness is limited; exercising the freedom that he certainly possesses but realising at the same time that it is neither infinite nor absolute (as preached

by economic neoliberalism); on the contrary, it is a freedom that is received and conditioned; man feels effectively that he is the lord and end of creation, but with a responsible dominion since creation is not his victim but his younger brother.

What is asked of man is not a "perfect" installation in finitude (Tierno Galván) but an *obedient* installation in finitude, and an *open* installation: an installation that tries to lead finitude towards that Utopia that has its nest in man and which maintains an open disposition to receiving gratuitously the full Transcendence of finitude. Let him look for the Beyond that we call God, not by "divinising" things but by transcending them - transcending them according to the pattern so often proposed, that is: not abandoning things but transcending *with them*; loving God *in* things, and loving things *in* God (that now means "according to God"); loving Him in all things, and all things in Him, according to His holy and divine Will, as St. Ignatius used to write.

4.2. Human instability

When Christianity interprets human contradiction in this vein, it is conscious not only of the greatness of this interpretation, but also of the vertigo and the upset that it produces: to be a man seems to imply de-installation. And the temptation of man is not only to be like God but also to renounce the human adventure and to remain enclosed in his dimension as creature. Sin is not only wishing to be Prometheus but also resigning oneself to being simply Narcissus. Sin is not only progressing inhumanly (as so often is the case with man up to now) but also renouncing all dynamism in order to maintain his small tranquil security.

Whether a divine project or an impossible project, the human being is for all that has been explained an extremely unstable being. And *in this instability* (not in his mere limitation as a creature) *lies the root of his sin* that we will now explain. Because the last word of the Christian vision of man does not limit itself to this paradox of creaturehood and Image, but also (as we have already announced) makes this paradox more acute through the dialectic of Sin and Grace. In man there does not exist only the limitation of his finitude but also the destruction and the deterioration of evil and of guilt that tarnish his divine image, converting it into a broken compass. Although there dwells in man the benevolent look of God who does not repent of the gifts He makes and who lavishes Grace where sin abounds.

These are the two points that remain to be explained to conclude the believer's access to man.

5. "THE MYSTERY OF EVIL" (2 Thes. 2,7)

SIN AS SLAVERY, ILLNESS AND THE DESTRUCTURING OF MAN

One has to be blind not to recognise that sin exists in the world. But Christian faith teaches that this interested blindness forms part of human sin. The Church itself is warned of its danger of "straining the gnat" (of the condom or the Sunday precept) and "swallowing the camel" of injustice and the lack of mercy (cf. Mt. 23, 23,24). And the theology of liberation has underlined at some moments that the most radical question of human existence is not simply "why is there being instead of nothing" (Heidegger), but why is there so much evil instead of good.

5.1. Definition of sin

The New Testament defines sin as "oppressing truth with injustice" (Rom. 1,18). In this definition the word injustice has a global, all-comprehensive meaning and does not limit itself to just economic injustice, though this is also included here. It concerns all affirmation of oneself that is false and iniquitous (in the sense of lacking equity). False and iniquitous because by it, man affirms himself *at the expense of* others and not *together* with everybody else: at the cost of other human beings who are reduced to objects, and at the expense of the rest of creation that is reduced to the state of victim.

In this way man oppresses the truth of being a creature, affirming himself as God. Either he oppresses the truth of his divine image trying to return to animality and contenting himself with being what someone has termed "a simian with luck". Man divinises himself, considering his desire and avidity as the only omnipotent law of reality (the sin of the impious) or considering his "good works" as a capital that places him over others and authorises him to condemn them (sin of the pious, both sins referred to by St. Paul in Rom. 1, 18-3, 21).

Although this characterisation may be enormously profound, it is, however, too generic to give us an access to all its concrete implications. So it would be useful to cast a look on our world to perceive more closely all the deformations that can arise from this root of false self-affirmation. The attitudes described above come into play mainly when man tackles the subject of the *social fact*, given that although man needs society to survive, he fears that others are a threat to his ambition of absoluteness and primacy. Man is a "respective" being (intrinsically social) and for this reason the way he shapes himself affects *the whole human system* which he belongs to. This gives place to what theology calls "structural sin": social contexts and structures that impede the community and abort human community life. The following examples which we will now consider refer to this situation.

5.2. Examples of the structuring of Evil

The admirable equilibrium of the world of man is seriously threatened to death. Let us consider for a moment the weapon threat, the ecological threat and the threat of hunger and misery.

a) Arms and war are the work of man

The Bible defines God as the One who "puts an end to war up to the confines of the globe: breaks bows, snaps lances, throws shields into the fire" (Psalms 45,10).

Weapons came into being as a legitimate excuse of defence. But more than to defend, they have served up to now to attack, to threaten and to do fabulous business. The manufacture of weapons has turned into something more than an industry: into an enormous race that man no longer knows how nor wishes to hold back, and which threatens to destroy the planet some day.

Recently we have seen images of one of the most miserable towns of the world (Rwanda), whose soldiers though to destroy one another possessed fantastic contingents of combat tanks and sub-machine-guns. The pained generosity of many people were insufficient to alleviate even in a little way the crime of those who made business by arming a country that needs more water and bread than guns. We have seen too during the Bosnian genocide the lack of willingness of those who were arming the aggressors to renounce the advantages that this genocide implied. The "reason of state" (which is another form of partially iniquitous self-affirmation) took precedence over human reason and oppressed the truth with its injustice. If one argues that no other way out was then possible, it could be replied that there was a time when it was possible for things *not to have reached that situation* of no way out. And an element of this lack of way out is made up of this "commercial" detail that Bosnia or Rwanda are *much more* material of news than a true call to our responsibility. As though to the divine question ("what have you done to your brother?": Gen.4, 9,10), we were to reply like Cain: "I am not my brother's keeper"; I am only the curious person of my brother.

Recently too we have been exposed to the logical alarm that has risen from the news about the smuggling of plutonium. Experts in the matter assure us that it is only the tip of the iceberg that we are seeing, that the traffic of nuclear material can no longer be controlled and to have access to the black market of plutonium, all that is required is to dispose of sufficient money. Twenty thousand million pesetas, the price of one kilo of plutonium, can easily be made available though they are not available for other things. And they explain sufficiently this lack of control because the market is a god that does everything well, and nothing is above the market. The threats of destruction of the planet remain alive even if it were not through a war between East and West. And let us not forget that over large periods of time, the statistical possibilities although small could end up being fulfilled.

The threat is serious because those who possess destructive nuclear energy do not appear in any way disposed to renounce it; they are only disposed to impede (with what right?) others from having access to what they already possess. And it does not seem that all who lack this energy are going to content themselves with common sense to renounce it while others "enjoy" it.

Does this solution have hope of success? We do not know, but it is evident that it should not have been reached. And if reached, it has not been by error but by the sinful desire of dominion and greatness.

b)The ecological cancer

To speak of ecological cancer that affects the earth is unfortunately no exaggeration either. Human history could also end because of man destroying the ecosystem. Acid rain, the ozone layer, the heating of the earth... have now turned clichés. This threat is the fruit of human avidity that tries to treat creation not as a sister in creatureness but as an object of its unlimited dominion. Expressive of this avidity is the timid reaction which humanity adopts to face this ecological problem today. Postponing or doing small symbolical acts that do not entail renouncing anything significant, or trying to hold back for ecological reasons the development of very poor countries while multinationals of rich countries continue shearing the Amazon... It is said that the radical attitudes that the problem requires are impossible. At any rate, the really impossible thing is that the rich renounce their advantages and share the privileges they have snatched away from the poor.

AIDS is also an ecological catastrophe. It is *evidently* no punishment from God, but neither is it a natural calamity. It is the work of man that has divinised himself erroneously, trying with his unlimited avidity to be the only law of reality. This should be recognised, although we have said this not with the idea of blaming anybody but only to make an appeal to responsibility (and not simply to fear). Because one cannot demand of society that it investigate and resolve the problem, when our attitude is that of willingness to maintain the conducts that create it.

c)The topic of hunger and misery

This problem has turned not only a cliché but a cliché that has turned sour. *Official* voices acknowledge that the difference between rich and poor countries, far from diminishing as predicted, is increasing at alarming rates^{xv}. Take small countries (Honduras for example) one child less-than-a-year-old dies every hour. May we comment here that this problem is aggravated since our world practises a systematic elimination of all those who try to finish off with the problem of poverty. The world uses for this purpose "death squadrons", discredit these poverty-combating people as "communists"; there exist clear cases of assassination which have never been "clarified" (as those of Mgr. Romero or Ignacio Ellacuría), millions of dollars spent on training soldiers and torturers and economic blockages on governments that fight for social justice. And in the face of all this, humanity does not seem to have any reply other than a "theology of inevitability" (X. Vitoria) or a few crumbs for the Lazaruses of the world.

And it is *evident* that birth control is necessary on a limited planet. But it is also hypocritical to resort to birth control when one is not disposed to take one single step towards initiating control on weapons (for whose production half the planet's wealth is dedicated^{xvi}). It is *cruel* that rich countries impose on poor countries drastic birth reduction when, contrary to rich countries where a child is always a burden and consumes more than what he contributes, in these poor countries a child (if he survives) is wealth, the only wealth that people quite often have. Finally, it is *cowardly* to accelerate the urgency of birth control when what one really wants to avoid in reality is not hunger but the great threat for the future of rich countries: the unstoppable migratory phenomenon that seems to characterise the next century from some poor, overpopulated and young countries towards other rich, depopulated and old countries. Here we have a new truth oppressed with injustice^{xvii}.

5.3. The mortal element of sin

All these examples only try to spotlight the truly *mortal* character of sin. They have been chosen not to find fault but precisely because the author of this booklet is very conscious of the almost total impossibility of finding a way out for them and the temptation of resorting then to what is called "escapes in a forward direction". And he knows too that before this situation, voices have arisen affirming that "with the future in view, *all* paternity is irresponsible". Since these threats are irreversible, and are always tackled from the stance of *impotence* by many people of good will (at times even by people endowed with political power), vis-à-vis the *impunity* of the so-called "extra-parliamentary political powers" of the world (multinationals, money mafias, etc.). Perhaps one would have to begin replying that what is truly irresponsible is to ignore this situation and to try to live one's life on the margin of it.

This said, it should be added that when talking about sin one is not *blaming* and that to show its works is not equivalent to blaming but to making an appeal to responsibility^{xviii}. Although forgetting at times, Christian tradition teaches that about sin one can only speak *confessing it*, recognising one's own fault, proclaiming with the Psalmist "against You alone I sinned" (which is precisely the way of sinning *against all Your work*).

The Christian knows too that all that has been said in this chapter only has meaning and validity *if one accepts the meaning given to reality by the fact that God exists*. A meaning that can be accepted even though one does not affirm the existence of God. What is more: it is the acceptance of this meaning, and not the mere conceptual acceptance of the existence of God that converts man into an initially just person. If he does not accept this transforming meaning of the fact that God exists, all the threats that have been described are converted into mere eventualities, equally trivial as the opposite possibilities, and could concern one's own good living as little as the conflagration of Rome could concern Nero.

The unbeliever could at least put a gigantic question-mark before this concept of "progressism" that is used so much to collect votes in times of political elections. If progress is the truth and task of man, "progressism" constitutes the perversion and sin of that truth. As T.Adorno once wrote, up to now it cannot be said that there has been in history a line linking the savage to the solidarity-minded man, but there does exist a line that goes directly from the sling up to the nuclear bomb. Herein lies the perversion of progress.

Neither does man know what could occur to the world or what future awaits it. Perhaps other worlds have already failed, perhaps God could try again, perhaps this same creation could produce (or has already produced) other living beings better than us, about whom we will never know because not even the very speed of light has the time to cover all the immensity of space...^{xix}. In the sort of spatial-temporal infinitude that surrounds us, the frustration of this world would be only a minute astro-physical mishap. Men could add it would be precisely *our* mishap. And Christians profess that that mishap would signify a true offence and the sorrow of God, and a frustration of His loving plan to establish a creative dialogue with *free* creatures. Who knows if our only hope could be rooted therein.

6. REGENERATED TO A LIVE HOPE FOR THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST" (1 Pe 1,3): GRACE

6.1. The Gift of the Spirit

One of the greatest and most dangerous one-sidednesses of historic Christianity has been to reduce the "gift" of Jesus to His "expiatory" death: we are indebted to Him for paying for our sins (and in more renovated theologies to His Resurrection which includes us all).

In contrast, the New Testament makes it clear that the gift of Jesus is "the Spirit of the Father" (Jn 15,26). Pentecost is in Christianity as important as Golgotha and inseparable from it. Yet nevertheless, Western theology has not really known what to do with the Holy Spirit^{xx}. But without the Spirit there is no possible access to the God of Jesus: we have access to *Abba* **through** the Son and **in** the Spirit, as the Greek Fathers would say.

It becomes necessary then to recover this Gift of God Whom St. Augustine defined as "the Spirit is God *in the form of gift*". The New Testament is very realistic when thinking about this Gift and speaks boldly of the Spirit "poured" over us or "living" in our hearts. Analogical though this physical language may be, it is fundamental not to forget this *presence* of the Spirit of God in man in our explanation since in that presence does Grace consist. And without it, Grace would be reduced to a type of "supernatural pill" that adds extra value to our actions (here are seen the dangers, noted earlier, of the language of the supernatural).

The first theology explained besides, that that presence of the Spirit produced a whole re-structuring of the human psyche. Alluding to earlier definitions, the Love of God in us is capable of socialising our sociability, freeing our freedom and universalising our reason. Another still briefer designation of all this restructuring of the psyche by Grace could be the Augustinian formula of "taste for Goodness": the capacity of savouring and relishing goodness with the consolation that derives from it and the strength that this consolation provides. For this reason the Prayer to the Holy Spirit asks "to relish the goodness *in the Spirit*, and enjoy the consolation that it provides"^{xxi}. Maybe we could express it this way: what the Spirit gives to man is "the relish for God".

When writing "taste for Goodness" we were referring to the same goodness of God, to the capacity to love this same Love that *is* God, and that is different from the love with which humans love. Although the human reality is much more complex, I would dare describe this re-structuring by paraphrasing the saying "if you want something badly enough, you'll put up with anything": if goodness is what you badly want, goodness will not be found difficult. But this not finding it difficult is what turns out inaccessible to man by his own efforts: goodness is not easy for us, it costs us effort and sacrifice and these leave man repressed and resentful, or with airs of being superior to the rest. This is the drama of all men who try to be "good". Only the Gift of God which is the Spirit can pull us out of this drama.

6.2. Grace as history or vital process

The early Fathers affirmed: "Grace does not destroy (= respects) nature". Perhaps today when the concept of nature is suspect, it could be said that Grace does not destroy "the dynamic structure" that is man. Neither does it act instead of it but through it. The importance of this observation lies in our comprehending that Grace acts in man as a process, as a history. However many variants this process may take, according to each person and each group of people, theological tradition dared to typify a triple phase, that today could be reformulated as: dignification, liberation from oneself and liberation for others. Let us examine this for a moment.

a) Dignification

-The first point by the early Fathers was called "justification, they taking as a premise the fact that man is a being that always lives obsessed by the thought of his worth, and so always trying to "justify himself". The good news of Christianity affirms that man will find this worth neither in the obsession of having achieved all that his greed impels him to (riches, power etc.), nor in the obsession with his morality and good works. Both are blind alleys. When man decides to accept the unconditional love of God revealed in the way of Jesus and converted into gift by the Spirit, he will be freed from the obsession with the thought of his own worth: *man's worth does not lie in what he is or does, but because God has dignified him by loving him*. This is what "justifies" his existence.

b) Liberation from oneself

And this justification will be the source of all man's good actions. Because from justification arises true liberation from the ego (even in its moral sense): a discovery of the lie of the ego in its dimension of uniqueness and supremacy. This liberation from the ego is achieved by a **hope-imbued and loving trust**: believing in Love, opening out to the hope of what love promises and learning to love on that account. According to the best tradition of the Church, this "trinity" of attitudes (which are in reality just one) is all that the "holy" man does, that is to say: "wholly good as the Heavenly Father" (Mt. 5,48). For this reason tradition called them "theological" virtues. They suppose for man *the liberation from morals*: where the moral man only says "I must not", whereas the man under the influence of Grace says simply "I cannot". The word "cannot" does not have merely a moral sense but really a physical one too. For this reason if morals could make men "repressed", Grace turns man free.

c) Liberation for others

What least concerns us is not that this liberation from the ego kills the ego but that it makes it whole, widens it in the identification with others and that it establishes it "in the truth". "The Spirit of God poured into our hearts" makes man profoundly community-minded or, if one prefers, socialist-minded - not giving to this term any party sense - still less in today's Europe! - but rescuing the critical sense and the alternative the Spirit suggests to many of our structures of living together).

This being so, the summit of all this re-structuring of man by the Spirit of God which is Love, will consist in man succeeding to devote all his capacity of love to the service of the growth of others. An excellent prayer to the Holy Spirit is that which prays: "that I help all those who are in contact with me to grow". Though knowing that in this sinful and conflictive world, growth of the other can be experienced many times as a

diminution of our own growth. But knowing too that it is equally possible to opt for and even feel that the growth of others is also *my own growth*. Agape that is God is made present in this knowledge.

The above is a process that has always been recommended but never concluded. St. Augustine understood that man is incapable of reaching on this earth (or only at very special moments) this Plenitude of love that transcends him; but for this reason he added that at least it is possible to walk towards that direction "loving Love"^{xxii}. What God asks of man is that he love Love and besides (in this way) man will always love God even though he may not know that.

But what is most important for us in this third step is to underline this intrinsically universalistic or "socialising" character of Grace that makes man moved by the Spirit to try to carry this Love not only to those few human beings that are nearest him^{xxiii} but also to *the structures of living together* that affect many or all men. The effort to change structures (at levels that each one is capable of) is the other side of the coin of the effort to change people.

6.3. Belonging or no to oneself

All that has been said before permits us to understand why one of the most beautiful hymns that the Church sings in the mass of Pentecost when portraying the Holy Spirit as the Source of gifts ("dator munerum") makes explicit mention of this characteristic in these two points: "light of hearts and father of the poor". Light because our hearts prefer to turn blind before injustice and the oppression of others. And light that by changing our heart leads it towards those who are the radical love of the Spirit (just as children are so for any mother or father). One now understands why *a radical option for the poor, that carries one to take up their cause and their viewpoint as structuring frames of one's own life, is not for the Christian a type of virtuous super-expensive ornament but an elemental sign of identity*. And if man succeeds in loving *in this way* the poor and not just for reasons of ethical demands or historic strategy, he will perceive that that love is something he most possesses as his own and least possesses at the same time. And so will be fulfilled all that the Bible qualifies as the embrace of mercy and truth, the kiss of justice and peace, what is received most and what is one's most own (Psalm 84,11). Or what we have qualified in our introduction as saving one's life, having lost it for the sake of the Gospel.

And if the best and what is most profoundly ours is what is least ours, it is understood too that the poor is the perfect portrait of what each man is before God. For this reason the conduct of man before the poor is converted for the believer into a silent prayer that he raises to God saying: *treat me as I treat these*. Or: "forgive our offences" as we forgive those who offend us with their presence alone...

6.4. Grace as universal socialisation

Precisely on account of this totalising or community-related character, Grace belongs to all people: Goodness is never "private property" and when man wishes to convert it into this, he destroys it as goodness, since sin is rooted in excluding privatisation. In the Credo we express this affirming that we believe in "the communion of holy things"

(*communio sanctorum*), and the Primitive church drew from this the conclusion that if the Holy Spirit that is the greatest good men possess is possessed in common, we should also try to possess in common all other material goods. Later the Church affirmed that the "primary" right of property was precisely that of *common* property, and that private property could only be *a means* to achieve this common destiny of terrestrial goods. Only in the XIX century, contaminated by environmental capitalism, the Church presented private property as a holy end in itself and not as a means for the achievement of this common destiny. A position that is being corrected in the current century, although in a still insufficient fashion.

6.5. The few for the many

As a result of what has been said before, there belongs to the work of Grace a dialectic between few and many that goes from the Old Testament up to Jesus and which is radically contrary to a so-called "social Darwinism". The few *are for* the many: they can save the many, they can believe, hope and - if the word could be accepted - "merit" for them,

The minorities, therefore, can never be for the Christian Faith "aristocracies" or "elites" or select people that have been able to survive in the struggle of life, because they are the best or strongest. In the Bible and in the economy of Grace, the gift and the election of God are never for the enjoyment of the chosen person but for the good of the totality. This is how "Grace abounds" even in the midst of the abundance of sin (cf. Rom. 5,30).

Perhaps this explains the paradox that occurs very frequently in the life of faith: the desperate complaint to God for allowing Jesus to die and others who die like Him (who belong like Job to the marrow of Biblical faith) that co-exists with giving thanks to God for the way Jesus dies and all those who "complete His passion" in history (cf. Mark 15,39: "truly this man was the Son of God").

6.6. "The Spirit poured out over all flesh" (Acts 2,17)

But, besides this consequence, it is convenient to draw another conclusion of the community-ness of Grace, that is to say, gratuitous as it is, Grace is a gift offered *to all* men and which works for all, whether they be believers or not, whether they are in the Church or not, whether they know God and His Spirit or not. Grace has anonymous forms of acting in men, that only God knows, and which we can at times only suspect. Discretion is one of the most characteristic ways the Spirit acts in this world. Discretion because, according to a happy formula of theology, when a man gives us something we *have* what he has given us, but when God gives us something we *are* what God has given us. The gift of God is so profoundly ours that the Giver seems to disappear. But this does not mean that He does not exist.

It is for this reason that the affirmation is heretical that only Christians can be good, and that unbelievers are necessarily bad or, at least, worse. Faith can be a liberation and good news *for us*, but it does not contribute anything to God. God does not need our faith: He prefers a just atheist^{xxiv} to a false believer. He prefers an atheist about whom it could be said: "I was hungry and you gave me to eat, I was in prison and you visited me" to a

believer who perhaps tried to justify himself before God saying "you ate at our table and you preached in our squares", but to whom God would respond "I do not know you" (cf. Mt. 7, 22,23 and Luke 13, 26,27)^{xxv}.

CONCLUSION

We opened this Booklet with the allusion to the text of Mark that speaks of saving life and losing it. All along our discourse, this text has kept on enriching itself and we can now reformulate it this way: every human being finds himself at the crossroads of "possessing himself" or "receiving himself". The first option seems surer but ends up incapacitating the person to love and so human life is structured around *having*. The second option seems riskier, poses unavoidable questions (receiving myself from whom?) but it makes of human life a conversion to love and it keeps structuring it on *being*. Precisely on account of this, it is possible to wager that at the end of this second option man will end up receiving more being and more self-possession.

This could be the commentary to the text of Mark that this Booklet announced. And this commentary could help us perhaps to understand a very brief definition of man which has appeared in the preceding pages: man is a "divine project". A project that sets out from the lowest of inert matter and which can be defined as the project of fraternity, a project of **the coincidence of love with freedom**. Because freedom is true and makes man a true man only when it is the freedom of love. But love is truly such when it rises from the most radical freedom.

This new brotherhood that the Spirit creates in us, the first Christians took so seriously that they used the expression "Body of Christ" to apply it to the Church with greater realism than to the Eucharist. Since - as St. Augustine writes - just as our body lives off our soul, so too does the Body of Christ live off the Spirit of Christ". To receive Communion was, besides taking communion *with* Christ, was to take communion *among* ourselves.

From this context it can be said simply that precisely because nobody appreciates more the freedom of man than the Christian faith, nobody is more conscious than Christianity of the sickness of this freedom. And precisely because nobody values love more than Christianity (that defines the essence of God with this word), nobody is more conscious of its false dependencies.

The preceding paragraph is not written to give lessons to outsiders, but to add a word to the Church whose mission it is to be the depository of this harmony - impossible but promised - between freedom and love. Unfortunately, the Church has often falsified the first (freedom) trying to impose the good. And falsifying the second (love) taking away freedom from love (perhaps with the good intention of ridding it of false dependencies), and valuing the good done by obligation and not as proceeding from love. If all this is comprehensible on account of the pragmatism that ends up imposing the resistance of time and history, the Church should know too that herein probably is rooted the ultimate reason for its loss of credibility before the world of today.

Consequently, it could be that for Christians this is the moment to recover those two lovable sentences of their own tradition: **liberate freedom**, and **love Love**. And to recover them in the form of a prayer with those verses quoted in our Introduction, which St. Teresa confessed she composed when praying, and that they had left her very "untired":

"Oh Knot you who join in this way - two such unequal things! - I do not know why you untie..."

Both quotations could be a good summary of a Christian anthropology today.

NOTES

ⁱ This is what was valid in the distinction between subject and object, today increasingly questioned by philosophy. Perhaps it could be better expressed in the triple Zubirian formula: to try to understand reality, to take charge of reality, and to carry its load.

ⁱⁱ The only concept of Buddhism which appears radically questionable is precisely the notion of "reincarnation" in fashion today in the West. And what is debatable in this notion is not so much the prefix (*re*) as the noun it is applied to: man is not an *incarnation* (herein lies hidden the "imprisoned" soul of Platonism) but a dynamic structure tending to its own transcendence. The soul does not "come down" nor does it emigrate, but miraculously, surprisingly, though stemming from this structure, it transcends it.

ⁱⁱⁱ As an example of the former, let us recall the pseudo-scientific blunder stating that "thinking is not more than a secretion of the brain, just as urine is not more than a secretion of the kidney". As an example of the latter, let us remember the concept of soul and body as "two different substances".

^{iv} This is what is suggested in Rom. 8,19ss, as by the Biblical expressions of "new heavens and a new earth".

^v *Ideas for a Universal History from the viewpoint of a citizen of the world* (1784).

^{vi} cf. *Finitud y culpabilidad*, Madrid 1979, pp. 212 and 220. The definition of Ricoeur, nevertheless, needs some clarification (which the author provides abundantly throughout his work) to avoid finitude being misunderstood and to explain the reason for this sadness.

^{vii} The tremendous fear man harbours of the difference (which is at the basis of many racisms and xenophobias) stems precisely from the fact that it denies its presumed universality. Regarding this see *Proyecto de hermano*, pg. 98-99.

^{viii} It strikes our attention that the narration of Genesis says expressly that God created "man and woman", whereas it does not say that animals were created male and female, although these too were called to increase and multiply. By this, *human* sexuality is differentiated from the merely genital sexuality of the animal (compare Gen. 1, 21,22,25 and 27).

^{ix} In this sense, the reaction against all collectivism is fully valid and human.

^x In this sense all canonisation of an individualistic "liberalism" as is prevalent in the West is false and inhuman.

^{xi} Cf. *De Veritate*, q. 22, a 7,c. (Text transcribed in p.16 of this Booklet).

^{xii} This is the paradox that we meet for example in love: it is what makes man most and what man needs most, but which is only valid when it is gratuitously given, and not when it is forced or demanded. See *Proyecto de hermano*, 129-143.

^{xiii} Although said in passing, and although said in another context, permit me to quote this delightful observation of Teresa of Jesus: this natural appetite of ours is so desirous of sweet things that it tries all. But it becomes cold very soon because however much it would like to begin lighting the fire to reach this taste, it seems that it only throws water to extinguish it" (*Vida*, ch.15)

^{xiv} This Biblical way of God revealing Himself culminates in the man Jesus, who being the transparency of God, "divested Himself of the divine image and presented Himself in the form of an ordinary man, or better still in that of a slave" (see Phil. 2,6ss. This passage of the letter to the Philippians should be read side by side with the other two sentences of Genesis about Adam, quoted in the text).

^{xv} As a single example see the data of the PNUD Report of 1992, summarised in Booklet 50 of "Cristianismo y Justicia" entitled *El Abismo de la desigualdad*.

^{xvi} The Document of the United Nations for the Cairo Conference begins recognising expressly that there exist *today* on the planet sufficient resources and knowledge to feed the whole present population of the world, with a "socially balanced and ecologically sustainable" development (Paragraph 1.1.).

^{xvii} These concrete analyses refer to a specific moment in history. A wider frame of these analyses is suggested in *Proyecto de hermano*, pg. 257-280 ("Structural sin and critical theory of society")

^{xviii} Let us remember that renunciation of this responsibility is renunciation of the divine image of man, to remain content with his creaturely intranscendence. And this was, as we said, the other form of sin.

^{xix} It is calculated that since the time the universe has been in existence, light has only had the time to cover a tenth part of its distances.

^{xx} Herein lies the hidden tendency to disfigure the profession of faith as though one were to say "I believe in the Father, in the Son and in the Church". This would be one of the greatest cryptic heresies that threatens us today.

^{xxi} In eodem Spiritu recta sapere et de eius semper consolatione gaudere.

^{xxii} St. Augustine takes this expression from the experience of his youth when, oppressed by the attractiveness of sex, he acknowledges that he did not love anybody specifically but "loved to love". Now he repeats the same expression but "curiously" changing the verb which we have translated by "to love".

^{xxiii} And this is very important because here, *in specific people* is where man learns truly to love.

^{xxiv} What would imply that, although being atheist, he would not be *antitheist* or enemy of God and closed to the possibility of Him existing.

^{xxv} In my modest opinion something of this "anonymity" of His Grace God shows (it is only an example) in that marvellous work of His Spirit that is Buddhism: because Buddhism, although not being antitheist, is precisely a-theist. And, nevertheless, its vision of man constitutes *at least* an excellent "preparatio evangelica", for this West, structurally dehumanised by the Golden Calf. For this reason one can only encourage the progressive presence of Buddhism in the West since it could destroy our greed and our acceleration, it could avoid separating us from history and capacitate us to face it. Although it seems very debatable to me that one could be really Buddhist, to put an example, in the midst of structures that have become so prostituted and commercialised as those of football (the case of Roberto Baggio). For this reason the Buddhism of Baggio, so much talked about by journalists recently, is something similar to Romario making the Sign of the Cross after each goal: another superstitious falsification of something very serious.

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