

SERVITE FATHERS
ASSUMPTION CHURCH
23 WEST ILLINOIS STREET
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60610

Catholic Church 16 Congregation
pro doctrina fidei.
Declaration on human
development 0.2 ADJSSE

INTERNATIONAL
THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION

DECLARATION ON
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
AND CHRISTIAN SALVATION



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2016

**DECLARATION ON
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
AND
CHRISTIAN SALVATION**

INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION

September 1977

**SERVITE FATHERS
ASSUMPTION CHURCH
323 WEST ILLINOIS STREET
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60610**

1977
Publications Office
UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE
1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005

The Committee on Doctrine of the NCCB is pleased to offer in English translation the theses of the International Theological Commission on liberation theology. The translation has been made from the French text and has been kept as literal as possible. It is the sincere hope of the Committee that this translation will assist further reflection on these issues.

September 1977

The International Theological Commission whose members are appointed by the Pope to serve for five years was established as an adjunct to the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1969. It was established to provide the Holy See and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith with the consultative and advisory services of theologians, scriptural and liturgical experts representative of various schools of thought. The President of the Commission is the Prefect of the Congregation, Cardinal Seper. In 1972 Msgr. Philippe Delhaye was appointed executive secretary.

MEMBERS

Rev. Barnabas Ahern, C.P.
Rev. Juan Alfaro, S.J.
Rev. Catalino Arevalo, S.J.
Rev. Hans Urs von Balthasar
Rev. Walter Burghardt, S.J.
Rev. Carlo Caffarra
Rev. Raniero Cantalamessa, O.F.M.
Rev. Yves Congar, O.P.
Rev. Edouard Dhanis, S.J.
Rev. Wilhelm Ernst
Rev. Olegario González D. de Cardedal
Rev. Edouard Hamel, S.J.
Monsignor Boguslaw Inlender
Rev. Bonaventura Kloppenburg, O.F.M.
Rev. Marie Joseph Le Guillou, O.P.
Rev. Karl Lehmann
Rev. Joseph F. Lescrauwaet, M.S.C.
Rev. John Mahoney, S.J.
Rev. Gustave Martelet, S.J.
Rev. Jorge Medina Estévez
Rev. Vincent Mulago
Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Archbishop of Munich
Rev. Georges Saber, Maronite Monk
Rev. Heinz Schürmann
Rev. Otto P. Semmelroth, S.J.
Rev. Anton Strlè
Rev. Jean-Marie Tillard, O.P.
Rev. Cipriano Vagaggini, O.S.B.
Rev. Jan Walgrave, O.P.

INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION

DECLARATION ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND CHRISTIAN SALVATION*

Introduction

The problem of the relationship between human development and Christian salvation has assumed great importance everywhere. This has been the case most especially since the end of the Second Vatican Council, during which the Church paid particular attention to issues concerning the transformation of the world from the standpoint of Christian responsibility. In Latin America and elsewhere various theologies of liberation have attracted more and more attention. In its annual session, from October 4 to October 9, 1976, the International Theological Commission considered these problems. But instead of focusing on various studies or recent trends, the Commission concentrated on the fundamental issues of the relationship between humanization and Christian salvation. In this way it put into effect the already remote plan of pursuing research in the light of *Gaudium et Spes*.

The following pages are to be considered a summary of the principal conclusions reached. This sort of final report is aware of the difficulties inherent in the problems studied and of the current state of theological discussion. The theological tendencies involved are diverse, and liable to many changes; they are continually being refined. In addition, they are closely linked to economic and social conditions and to the political situation in the world as a whole and in its distinct regions. We must not, finally, neglect the controversies with which these studies deal. They were stirred up on different sides by fear of seeing these theological investigations translated into fixed political positions and by fear of damaging the Church's unity. In any case the International Theological Commission hopes to contribute to the debate, with a view to a critical examination of the opportunities and dangers implicit in the tendencies under discussion.

K. LEHMANN

President of the Subcommittee

* The French translation of the original Latin text has been approved by the members of the I.T.C. *in forma specifica* [as authentic].

Text

1. *Conditions of poverty and injustice as the starting-point for a theological movement.*

The Second Vatican Council reminded the Church of the perpetual obligation to "scrutinize the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the Gospel."¹ The implementation of this recommendation has been particularly stressed in documents issued by the second General Conference of Bishops of Latin America held in 1968 in Medellin, Colombia, that the Church hears the cry of the poor and makes itself the interpreter of their distress. The concerns inspired in the Church throughout the whole world by the challenges of oppression and hunger are seen not only in Papal Encyclicals such as "Mater et Magistra," "Pacem in Terris," "Populorum Progressio" and "Octogesima Adveniens," but also in declarations by the Synod of Bishops in Rome in 1971 (*Justice in the World*) and in 1974. Pope Paul VI again showed the duty incumbent on the Church in this area in his Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelization in the Modern World" on December 8, 1975.²

We must keep these circumstances in mind in order to understand the numerous theological essays published on these issues in recent years. If they assume a scholarly character, they are still not primarily the fruits of theoretical research; they are not offered first of all as a "written" theology. They wish to remain in close touch with the daily life of people victimized by misery and with the task that the Church has to accomplish at this juncture. Their purpose is to make widely understood the cry of the poor, suffering brother, the groans aroused by hunger, sickness, unjust exploitation in a climate of greed, forced exile, oppression. To this must be added the inhuman living conditions of men who own only the clothes they stand up in, spend their nights on the streets, live and die there, without benefit of the most rudimentary medical aid. For a Christian enlightened by the Gospel, these "signs of the times" are a most provoking challenge. They urge him to exert every possible effort in the name of the faith to free his brothers from their inhuman situation. This concern for the wretched and this alliance with the oppressed find especially pregnant expression in the Biblical words justice, liberation, expectation, peace.

This testimony of caring for the poor, which is nurtured by the Gospel of Jesus Christ,³ is as it were a constant spiritual motivation for all the writings of theologians on this subject; theological considerations and political options openly owe their inspiration to this witness. A spiritual experience stimulates the intellectual effort which tends to transform the inspiration of Christian charity into an effective instrument for action by means of human reflection and what is called scientific analysis. The two moments, that of a fundamental spiritual experi-

ence and that of theological and scientific thought, are complementary and form a living unity. Yet we must take care not to confuse them. Consequently, we have no right to criticize negatively the different theological systems involved, if we do not remain attentive to the outcries of the poor and if we do not seek a better way of satisfying them. But on the other hand there is room to ask ourselves if the most commonly accepted theological endeavors as they are actually presented, offer the only path by which to meet adequately the longing for a more human and brotherly world. Indeed every theology which takes concrete effectiveness as its task must eventually welcome changes and corrections which are necessary if these allow it to fulfill its fundamental mission better.

2. A new type of theology: Its difficulties.

a) The theological writings of which we have already spoken arise from oppressive conditions in which men find themselves enslaved to others economically, socially and politically and yearn for liberty. We do not regard this human historical situation as a destiny which cannot be changed; we understand it as a "creative" process which must contribute to more liberty in all areas of life and finally bring into existence "the new man." We see in the alteration of inhuman conditions a pressing desire on God's part: Jesus Christ, who by His redemptive action liberated men from sin in all its forms, gives human brotherhood a new foundation.

This idea, which is the origin of such theological essays, confers on them their special, in some respects new, form. God reveals His mystery through events themselves: the more a Christian enters into concrete situations and their historical evolution, the better he answers the word of God. Thus one grasps better the deep unity connecting the divine history of the salvation worked by Jesus Christ with efforts made on behalf of people's well-being and rights. Without purely and simply identifying profane history with the history of salvation, one perceives nonetheless their mutual relations in terms of unity. It is no longer permissible to push the difference which distinguishes one from another in the direction of a kind of dualism in which human history and salvation would be supposed to be indifferent to each other. On the contrary, human activity receives a new value, properly theological, in history insofar as it fashions a more human society. The coming of a just society is in effect conceived as an anticipation of the coming of the Kingdom of God.⁴ Consequently, one conceives Christian faith above all as an instrument of historical action (*praxis*) which changes and renews the social and political order.

This way of thinking contains many most valuable elements; a Christian must indeed grasp more completely the total unity of his call to

salvation.⁵ Unquestionably faith, understood in its Biblical sense, attains all its fruitfulness and completeness only in actions.⁶ The Second Vatican Council⁶ in its turn recalls that the Holy Spirit is at work in the world's history; even outside the visible Church there are to a certain extent foreshadowings of faith, that is to say truths and standards about God and the general welfare which are accessible to sound reason and constitute as it were the basis of Christian religion.⁷

These elementary data are however subjected in several theological trends, to one-sided interpretations which are open to objection. In this way one may not make of the unity of world history and the history of salvation a conception which would tend to make identical with profane history the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Gospel is a mystery of the supernatural order, and thus a reality which cannot be reduced to any other, a mystery which transcends completely the comprehension of human intelligence.⁸ Nor can one completely erase the border-line between the Church and the world. The world which exists historically is truly the theater in which the divine plan of salvation unfolds, but not in such a way that the power and dynamism of the word of God are limited to the promotion of social and political progress. So it is that the practice of the faith (*praxis fidei*) should not be reduced to the effort to improve human society. This practice of the faith also involves the formation of conscience, the transformation of deep-seated inclinations, the adoration of the true God and of Jesus Christ our Saviour as distinct from all forms of idolatry, as well as the denunciation of injustice. Thus "faith as praxis" must not be understood in such a way that commitment to politics absorbs and directs in totalitarian and "radical" fashion all human activities.

b) Two points must be clarified here:

1. Political debate, which is normally accompanied by confrontation, must not result in losing sight of or discarding the proper objective and fruit of Christian activity, in other words, peace and reconciliation. There can be no question of emphasizing disagreements or of giving ascendancy to violent enterprises.

2. It must always be well understood that, for a Christian, "politics" is not that absolute value which gives life its ultimate meaning. It is not an absolute in the Christian "eon"; let it be regarded as a tool made for service. Forgetfulness of this principle burdens human liberty with the danger inherent in movements which favor the coming of dictatorial powers. On the other hand, if theology is indeed partially aimed at practice, its preeminent function consists in seeking understanding of the word of God. Whatever subject it deals with, it must be able to detach itself from concrete conditions which almost always involve pressures and constraints of all kinds. The principles of Catholic doctrine

in matters of faith and morals offer men light which allows them to judge what is to be done with a view to eternal salvation without risking the loss of liberty for the children of God. Thus special care must be taken not to reach a one-sided vision of Christianity which would affect Christology, ecclesiology, the very notion of salvation and of Christian existence as well as the proper task of theology.

c) The prophetic denunciations made against injustice, the appeals which invite people to make common cause with the poor relate to very complicated situations which have arisen in a given historical context, determined by certain social and political conditions: the prophetic judgment to be brought to bear on current situations cannot itself take shape without the methodical application of definite criteria. That is why the various theological essays on liberation introduce theories arising from the social sciences; they examine objectively the meaning of "the cry of the poor." Theology, as far as it is concerned, cannot deduce concrete norms of political action from its own principles; consequently the theologian is not enabled by his own lights to cut short fundamental debates on social issues. Theological essays directed to the building of a more human society must take into account, when they introduce sociological theories, the risks inherent in these borrowings. In each case the degree of certainty of these theories must be borne in mind. Often indeed they are merely guesswork. It is not uncommon for them to contain ideological elements, explicitly or implicitly, founded themselves on philosophical presuppositions which are questionable or on an erroneous anthropological conception. This is the case for example in a significant part of analyses inspired by Marxism and Leninism. If one resorts to this type of theory and analysis, one must be aware that they do not enhance their reliability by being introduced by theology into the substance of its expositions. Theology must rather recognize the pluralism of scholarly interpretations of social reality and remember that it is not necessarily bound to any particular concrete sociological analysis.

3. *Aspects of Biblical theology.*

Since the essays of which we speak often appeal to Holy Scripture, it is appropriate to study what the Old and New Testaments say about the relationship which correlates human good and human rights with salvation. It is clear that only a partial study is possible here. We must also avoid the anachronism of introducing today's concepts into the Bible.

a) *The Old Testament.*

Nowadays to determine the relationship between divine salvation and human development people almost always take account of the story of

Exodus. Indeed the going out from Egypt⁹ is really the first event of salvation in the Old Testament: it is a liberation which sets free from foreign domination and slavery. But all the same, the Old Testament does not limit "liberation" to bringing the people out of Egypt and bringing them home from exile. This liberation is intimately related to the Covenant worship celebrated on Mount Sinai;¹⁰ without this final resolution it loses its specific meaning. The psalms too, when they speak of misery and suffering, of salvation and thanksgiving, resort to prayers which mention religious salvation and "liberation."¹¹ Distress is not simply being identified with a social condition of misery, but more with hostility, injustice, sin, and what it leads to: the threat of death and the void it represents. What is felt to be needed in individual cases is of lesser importance; what matters is the experience by which one expects salvation and healing only from God. Thus we cannot speak of this kind of salvation, as regards human rights and well-being, without at the same time taking into account the theological understanding according to which it is God, not man, who changes things. Besides, throughout the whole time of the exodus, in the desert, God provided above all for the spiritual liberation and purification of His people.

An impressive example of an effort inspired by divine revelation to try to improve the conditions of human existence is represented by the entreaties of the prophets concerning social conditions, such as we find principally in the prophet Amos.¹² Later prophets take up and develop this theme introduced by Amos, for example, in cursing great land holders.¹³ Hosea forcefully reproaches his contemporaries for their lack of identity with the poor;¹⁴ Isaiah identifies in a special way widows and orphans as deserving protection.¹⁵ He utters this threat: God will take away from Jerusalem "the strong and the powerful," that is to say the privileged classes of society.¹⁶ He deplores the amassing of possessions in the hands of a few¹⁷ and, more generally, the oppression by which the poor are the victims of the rich.¹⁸ But at the same time he makes no attempt to stir up revolt against the oppressors, even if a similar idea can be found in some Old Testament writings.¹⁹ The prospect of imminent disaster inhibits one from making plans for a more just society.²⁰ In the prophets' minds the cures for social evils can come in many different ways. But one sees in these prophets, rather than an optimism that some believe based on a theology of history, a scepticism which asks if man is really capable of changing the world. It is clear that they posit as a prerequisite an attitude which is that of inner conversion and of justice. "Cease to do evil! Learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow."²¹ Moreover, God must grant men the chance to bring about more justice in social relationships: in the long run God alone can provide effectively for human rights and genuine well-being, especially for the oppressed.²² God works out salvation beyond the good or bad interventions of men.

In that way the prophets recognize the existence of something like a "perverse system." To their minds it is not permissible to reduce everything to the point where evil would be simply the sign and effect of unjust social structures, and where the elimination of abuses could result simply from the abolition of existing forms of property ownership. We must still keep in mind the personal element which, according to the Old Testament, determines the process of "liberation." This is illustrated and confirmed above all by the principle of individual responsibility.²³

In several important parts of the Old Testament we find hints of a new society which is no longer organized like those of the time.²⁴ Several psalms speak explicitly of God as the liberator of the oppressed and the defender of the poor.²⁵ When He delivers the people of Israel from oppression, God requires of them that they should outlaw any means of oppressing others.²⁶ The Kingdom of God which must eventually come, will wipe out all domination of man by man. In the Old Testament, over a long period of time, this hope is not sufficiently distinct from concrete history and does not relate to the realities that transcend it. Even in our own time, many ideologies of "secularized" salvation expect the realization of these divine promises only within the limits of history and human action. Nevertheless, as we have seen, these ideas are rejected by the Old Testament. It must be stressed that in the apocalyptic passages at the end of the Old Testament, the hope in a future life beyond present existence and the theology of history proclaim with extraordinary insistence the experience of human weakness and the omnipotence of God.

b) *The New Testament.*

The New Testament incorporates very important elements of the Old²⁷ or presupposes them.²⁸ The Sermon on the Mount²⁹ shows best of all that the requirements of the Old Testament concerning conversion and renewal of the human heart are strengthened, and can be made real in the New Covenant through the power of the Holy Spirit. Nonetheless the idea remains in many minds—as has been noticed on many occasions—that the New Testament is less concerned with social realities or the collective life of men. The undreamed-of novelty of the Christian message may have diminished at first the interest paid to questions concerning duties in the life of the world. The transcendent importance of the personal love of God incarnate for His new people seemed such that problems caused by temporal existence were no longer pre-eminent. People were waiting so impatiently for the Kingdom of God! In the light of the mystery of the suffering and risen Lord, human needs were perceived as less pressing. Besides, the political situation of the Roman Empire diverted Christians from deliberately paying much atten-

tion to the world. But we do not need to stress the fact that Christ's Good News and the New Testament's ethics contributed many guiding standards and models of conduct which were of a type to inspire "social criticism." It suffices to recall the command of love for one's neighbor and one's enemy,³⁰ the warnings and threats addressed to the rich and the prosperous,³¹ the obligation to care for the poor and the sick,³² and the command to all, without distinction, to help others,³³ the warning to any man trying to dominate another³⁴ all these commands having as their theme the universal brotherhood of men.³⁵ The New Testament also shows us the faithful willing to accept "institutional" forms of Christian charity, for example, the collection organized for Jerusalem,³⁶ the institution of the ministering of the "diaconate," charitable aid.³⁷ Obviously, at least at the beginning, these "institutional forms of charity did not go beyond the framework or the level of the Christian community and were not yet very developed.

In the area of liberation, the New Testament presents another important element for consideration. Indeed, we must examine with particular care the sense in which this liberation is understood. What St. Paul says for example on the new liberty is closely associated with the message on justification; thus liberation as such is not a theme distinct from others. The salvific work of Jesus Christ opened the depths of the human heart; consequently, it is easy to be mistaken about what authentically constitutes the denial of liberty and the true slavery of man. With extreme perceptiveness the announcement of justification shows that man is subjected to evil powers. There could be no authentic and complete liberty without the intervention first of the liberation,³⁸ which sets free from death and corruption ("sax"), from the power of sin as well as from the law (without forgetting, from the "elements of the world"). "It is this liberty that Christ's liberation guarantees us."³⁹ Now, the liberation which frees us from these powers brings a new liberty which enables us to act, in the spirit of Jesus Christ, in charity and at the service of our brothers.⁴⁰ Certainly this is an anticipation of what God, when He judges all human history, will perfect as the gift He grants the righteous. The justice of God, through the Spirit and its power, grants us a liberating action in which we are capable of doing good and which reaches its peak of perfection in charity. Consequently, when the New Testament speaks of "liberation bringing freedom"⁴¹ which is grace, moral incentive and eschatological promise, these elements find their place in the message of justification, and as a result find there only their foundation, receive only there their strength and authority. Only by considering things from this more profound point of view, can we understand and release the dynamism that Christians find in the New Testament for liberating action. The light which shines from the New Testament itself shows that there is no real change in society

without a reconciliation of man with God and with other men. Human life can only take on a better shape, at once sufficient and unwavering, if men become "new creatures" through conversion and justice. Human rights, human welfare and human liberation are not found at the level of "having" but fundamentally at the deeper level of "being," and there follow from this important consequences for the reform of all conditions of human existence.

4. *Systematic and theological considerations.*

a) *God as liberator and the liberating action of man.*

We have already noticed that the statements of the Old Testament on the subject of liberation could not be completely valid in the new era inaugurated by the New Testament. The Revelation which we have received from Christ divides the uninterrupted course of the history of salvation into the time of promise and the time of fulfillment. But what unifies the two Testaments is the certainty that God alone, supreme Lord and sovereignly free, is the source of the good of man; He alone liberates in the true sense of the word. Obviously, to understand this statement of faith it is necessary to admit that human needs are not reduced merely to economic and material difficulties; it is necessary to grasp the fuller understanding of human situation as one threatened by total destruction. All the same this firm assertion that God alone truly liberates must not be taken as analogous to myth (as if it were a question of a "deus ex machina"); reliance on a myth of this kind tends to encourage inertia, and immobility among those in distress. Authentic faith does not allow toleration or complicity with inhuman conditions of existence. God does not intervene in the uproar of a revolution, but His grace fortifies the spirit and the heart, so that men purify their consciences and, guided by living faith, work to build a more just world. To this end man must be *entirely* freed from *all* evil powers. That is why conversion that is authentic and efficacious ("metanoia") and the renewal of charity towards God and neighbor bring real liberation. But complete liberation, according to the Christian faith, is not achieved in the course of earthly events, in other words, in history. History leads indeed to the "new land" and to the "city of God"; as a result, until this achievement, all liberating action is colored by a transitory character and subject to a final verdict on the Day of Judgment.⁴²

The implications of our remarks are not limited to the need for a spiritual reform or to spiritual assistance for the individual person. There is a kind of "injustice cloaked in institutional form"; as long as this prevails, the situation itself demands the advancement of justice and of reform. Men today no longer believe that social structures represent fixed structures existing as if "willed by God," or that they result from certain anonymous laws of evolution. A Christian is always to remember

that social institutions have resulted from social conscience itself and that they are morally responsible. No doubt we can ask if it is legitimate to speak of "institutional sin" or "sinful structures," given that the Biblical term sin means primarily a deliberate, personal decision of human liberty. But there is no doubt that, through the force of sin, contempt and injustice can be incorporated into social and political structures. That is why, as we have already indicated, the effort for reform must also tackle unjust situations and structures. This involves a new awareness because formerly it was possible not to recognize as clearly as today the responsibilities entailed. From this standpoint, justice means fundamental recognition of the equal dignity of all men, the development and protection of essential human rights⁴³ and guaranteed equity in sharing the principal means of existence.⁴⁴

b) *How to define the concrete relationship between human development and salvation accomplished by God.*

Reflection on the relationship between salvation effected by God and the liberating action of man shows the necessity of defining more exactly the relations between human development and this salvation, between the building of the world and eschatological fulfillment. As it follows from previous considerations, one must above all have a correct idea of the relations between human activity and Christian hope. We must avoid separating them so totally that on the one hand there is only the earthly life and on the other, the future life, radically different from it. But we must equally avoid an "evolutionary optimism" which totally identifies God's domination with human activity to build a developing world.

The pastoral Constitution "Gaudium et Spes" distinguishes between the building of the Kingdom of God and human progress, between the work of divinization and the work of humanization, between the order of divine grace and that of human activity,⁴⁵ even if there is evidently a question of what relates these two orders. Service of men on earth "prepares the matter of the Kingdom of heaven."⁴⁶ In the Kingdom of God we shall find the excellent fruit of our activity, but purified of all stain, burnished, transfigured, in such a way that not only charity⁴⁷ but also its achievement remain.⁴⁸ Eschatological hope must also be expressed through the structures of secular life.⁴⁹ That is why the Council does not speak only of the transient character of this world but also of its transformation.⁵⁰ The terrestrial city and the heavenly city must interpenetrate each other under the guidance of faith, respecting their difference as well as their harmonious union.⁵¹ These teachings are summarized in the Decree "Apostolicam Actuositatem" on the apostolate of the laity: "Christ's redemptive work, while of itself directed toward the salvation of men, involves also the renewal of the whole

temporal order. Hence, the mission of the Church is not only to bring to men the message and grace of Christ, but also to permeate and improve the whole range of the temporal with the spirit of the Gospel . . . These orders (the spiritual and temporal orders), although distinct, are so connected in the one plan of God that He Himself intends in Christ to appropriate the whole universe into a new creation, initially here on earth, fully on the last day.”⁵²

These texts invite us to consider the struggles for justice as well as participation in the transformation of the world “as a constitutive element of the proclamation of the faith.”⁵³ This very expression of “constitutive element” (*ratio constitutiva*) is still controversial; it seems to require a more exact interpretation according to which, limiting ourselves to the strict meaning of the words, it refers to an integral but nonessential part.⁵⁴ In a general way the texts of Vatican II are generally explained as suggesting rather a harmony between the human effort to build the world and eschatological salvation in reply to an exaggerated dichotomy. Today, while maintaining firmly the affirmation of unity between the two terms, it is more appropriate to distinguish more clearly and more rigorously what differentiates them. The very resistance which human situations offer to positive change towards what is good, the power of sin, some ambivalent results of human progress,⁵⁵ teach us to recognize more plainly, even within the unity of the history of salvation, a permanent difference between the Kingdom of God and human development, as we find in the mystery of the Cross, without which no genuinely saving action takes place.⁵⁶ When one stresses this difference—without forgetting on the other hand the tie that unites the two terms—one does not introduce any kind of “dualism” as some people have claimed. On the contrary, this more complete vision helps to accomplish with more patience, constancy and confidence, the duty to promote what is good and just; it prevents the disillusionment which could emerge if efforts showed no result.

This connective unity and difference which mark the relationship between human development and Christian salvation, in their concrete form, must assuredly be researched and analyzed anew; such work unquestionably forms one of the principal tasks of theology today. The fundamental character of this unity cannot however be surpassed, rooted as it is, we may say, in the very center of reality. *On the one hand*, concrete history is to a certain extent the place where the world is so transformed that it is very close to the very mystery of God. That is the reason why charity and its fruit “remain.” Such is the final reason for the possibility of an element which links the good and the right with salvation, even if there is not complete union, because the eschatological conclusion is coming to “abolish” and “do away with” concrete history. *On the other hand*, the Kingdom of God “guides” his-

tory and absolutely surpasses all possibilities of earthly accomplishment; from then on it is as it were the action of God. That implies a complete separation from this world, whatever perfection one recognizes therein. In the history of each individual this discontinuity is experienced as death, but as a "transformation" it affects all history, as a "passing away" of the world. Such a "dialectic," expressed in these two irreducible principles, has no solution; it neither can nor must be removed from the pilgrim state of life. Eschatological fulfillment, which is still the object of expectation is the reason why the relationship between the Kingdom of God and history cannot be described either monistically or dualistically; as a result definition of this relationship, by its very nature, can only be left unresolved. Moreover, the relation of the proclamation of eschatological salvation with the building of the future in historical time cannot be decided univocally, as following one point of view, that is to say in paying attention only to harmony or to difference. This perhaps is the way to explain the saying recorded by St. Luke: "You cannot tell by careful watching when the reign of God will come. Neither is it a matter of reporting that it is 'here' or 'there.' The reign of God is already in your midst."⁵⁷ The *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* indicates another consequence of this fundamental relationship between history and salvation: "We do not know either the moment of the consummation of the earth and of humanity, nor the way the universe will be transformed."⁵⁸

Such is assuredly the formal answer to our problem, which the principal facts of Revelation support as well. But in the concrete development of this relation one can see different ways in which the same relationship is translated into facts and which give rise to particular forms different one from another. To choose correctly the ways to apply this solution to the course of history and, for example, in the areas belonging respectively to the old, the new and the third world, it will be necessary to proceed in a different fashion. What is valid for European and North American countries, which are the most advanced in industrial development stimulated by profit, is not equally valid in continents and areas whose populations are in large part victims of want. All the same, to whatever degree this diversity may be the case, it is not permissible to detract from the fundamental relationship recognized above between human development and Christian salvation. Where that is concerned we have available criteria free of any ambiguity. For example, one compromises the fundamental relationship we have recalled above, if one stresses action for social and political liberation to such an extent as to push into the background the worship of God, prayer, the Eucharist or other sacraments, individual morality, the problem of the last things (death and eternal life), the harsh struggle against the powers of darkness.⁵⁹ But, on the other hand, in situations of sin and

injustice, it is necessary to proclaim and practice the truths of faith we have just stated. In this way one does justice to the Kingdom of God and invalidates the objection often made that the Church covers over human misery, that it lulls the poor in their distressed state. The bringing of authentic comfort and the nourishment of a falsely consoling hope, which is limited to deadening the sense of suffering, are two completely different things.

c) *The relationship between human development and salvation in the Church's mission.*

In insisting on the importance of what the Church represents for the world, one underlines at the same time that the community of the Church is always placed in concrete conditions in which certain political options have already been chosen. The Church can hardly form a community of a special kind apart from all others; it can never forget that it lives constantly in the sort of arena where candidates compete for power, where power is exercised in this or that concrete way, where ideologies relating to it prevail. Because of its origin, its supernatural character, its religious mission, and its eschatological hope, the Church "is not bound exclusively and indissolubly to any race or nation, nor to any particular way of life or to any customary pattern of living, ancient or recent." ⁶⁰ It cannot be confused with any social system nor associated with any by a necessary and irrevocable title. If it must take care not to be compromised in intrigues by those who seek power, neither must it adopt a purely "neutralist" and "indifferent" attitude nor barricade itself in an utterly "apolitical" silence. Of course, nowadays, in several parts of the world, the possibilities for action are so closely limited that it is often invited to witness to its faith in other forms, which are none the less prophetic, for example, suffering after the pattern of our Lord and silence imposed by force. It is not permissible for the Church to use, as political forces do, certain wiles and maneuvers, but it should estimate carefully the political impact of its initiatives and omissions. It may happen that the Church will incur guilt if it does not denounce the situation of the poor, the oppressed, the victims of injustice, and to a much greater degree if it conceals such a state of things and refrains from dealing with them. Thus it is necessary for the Church, after the example of the prophets of the Old Testament, to purify its conscience to undertake in the light of faith the criticism of social situations. It is one with the poor. This term must be understood in all its meanings, including for example men marred by spiritual, psychological or material poverty. The real assistance to be guaranteed to these "poor" has been, of course, since antiquity, one of the principal tasks of the Church and its members. But today this concern has become the most striking witness to living faith, and, for many men outside the Church, an inestimable criterion of its credibility.

Building and reforming the social and political order are of course duties of laymen particularly.⁶¹ But the whole Church—principally represented by the ministries of the Supreme Pontiff, bishops, priests and deacons—has no right to remain silent in cases where human dignity and elementary human rights are trampled on. That being so, the Church as a whole can be expected to speak its mind without delay and forcefully. But in many individual circumstances a Christian is free to make his own choice between various routes to the common objective.⁶² As a result it is impossible to avoid altogether debates between Christians on social and political questions. “The Church asks Christians who appear at first sight to disagree on different choices to try to understand each other’s positions and motivations.”⁶³ Without dissembling personal opinions, each of us will be careful to contribute to the achievement of the common objective by offering recommendations and encouragement. In their different ways of thinking Christians will never forget the axiom of the Second Vatican Council: “What unites the faithful is stronger than what divides them.”⁶⁴

On the other hand, the unity of the Church is seriously endangered if differences between social “classes” are dealt with in the system of “class-struggle.” Where inequalities exist between “classes” it is hardly possible to avoid strife. A Christian distinguishes himself above all by the way in which he seeks to resolve these conflicts; he does not sanction resort to violence against violence but seeks to change the situation by other means such as educating consciences, debating, and supporting non-violent actions.⁶⁵ Nor is a Christian permitted to neglect the principal objective, which is reconciliation. Christians are also to avoid letting disagreements on social or political questions become so significant that Christians who have made different choices no longer celebrate the Eucharist together or exclude each other from the Eucharist. Political choice does not have the right to become so combative that it impairs the universality of the Christian proclamation of salvation. This must be transmitted to all men, including the rich and oppressors. The Church cannot exclude any man from its charity. Thus it must also recall and renew its denial of a nearly-absolute value to politics. A politically exclusive choice, intolerant towards another choice, becomes tyrannical and changes the very nature of politics. The Church has a duty—which it cannot avoid—to oppose dictatorial claims by a State which would seek to regulate by itself and in an exclusive way all dimensions of life. No doubt in such circumstances it is sometimes difficult or impossible for the Church to state its thought publicly. It does not perform its duty any less eminently when, following the example of its Lord, it protests boldly against the abuses in question, when it suffers silently or even suffers all kinds of martyrdom. Authentic Christian liberation, which leads to liberty, cannot be thwarted even in

these extreme situations. Such is our highest consolation, such is the principal reason for our confidence.

Conclusion

Consideration of these issues throws into stark relief the diversity of situations which local Churches encounter within the unity of the Catholic Church. This very diversity on the other hand does not cease to be preoccupying. It is possible that occasionally the burden of social, cultural and political inequalities may become so grave that what forms the unity and center of common faith seems no longer able to overcome the tension and fractures. Exchanges of ideas and studies conducted among the members of the International Theological Commission have made us clearly aware of how different the conditions of different people are. But, in the Church, no one speaks for himself alone. All must hear the cry of their brothers wherever they may be in the world, the cry of all those who suffer unjust treatment, are crushed by suffering, endure poverty and the scourge of hunger. In that we must learn from one another, so as not to apply once more, in a different form, erroneous solutions which have been tried in the history of the Church and human society not without great suffering. How can we forget the example that is represented by a radical overemphasis of the political dimension! In this effort we find ourselves united by the action of the Spirit of Christ. In this respect, the unity and catholicity which the Church brings to the various peoples who form it and to the various types of human civilization are a gift and a call to us. What we have laboriously won should not be risked thoughtlessly. This need is particularly important for all questions raised by the relationship between human development and Christian salvation.

NOTES

- ¹ Gaudium et Spes 4.
- ² Cf. notes 30-38.
- ³ Cf. Luke 4, 18 ff.
- ⁴ People sometimes refer to Gaudium et Spes 39 (A new earth and a new heaven).
- ⁵ Cf. Gaudium et Spes 10, 11, 57, 59, 61; Ad Gentes 8; Populorum Progressio 15-16.
- ⁶ Cf. Gaudium et Spes 22, 26, 38, 41, 57; Dignitatis Humanae 12.
- ⁷ Cf. First Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution "Dei Filius": DS 3005.
- ⁸ Cf. First Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution "Dei Filius": DS 3005.
- ⁹ Cf. Exodus 1-24.
- ¹⁰ Cf. Exodus 24.
- ¹¹ Cf. e.g. Psalm 18.
- ¹² Amos 2, 6f.; 3, 10; 5, 11; 6, 4 ff; 8, 4 ff.
- ¹³ Cf. Isaiah 5, 8 f; Micah 2.
- ¹⁴ Hosea 4, 1 f; 6, 4 & 6; 10, 12.
- ¹⁵ Isaiah 1, 17 & 23; 10, 1 f.
- ¹⁶ Cf. *Ibid.* 3, 1 ff; 1, 21 ff; 10, 1 ff.
- ¹⁷ Cf. *Ibid.* 5, 8.
- ¹⁸ Cf. *Ibid.* 1, 21 ff; 3, 14 ff.
- ¹⁹ Cf. Judges 9, 22 f. and I Kings 12.
- ²⁰ Cf. a beginning in Joel 3, 1 f.
- ²¹ Isaiah 1, 16 f.
- ²² Cf. Isaiah 1, 24 ff; Exodus 3, 7-9; Psalm 103, 6; 72, 12 ff; Deuteronomy 10, 17 ff.
- ²³ Cf. Ezekiel 18; Jeremiah 31, 29 ff.
- ²⁴ Cf. e.g. Isaiah 55, 3-5; Exodus 34; 40-48; Jeremiah 31, 31 ff.
- ²⁵ Cf. Psalm 9; 10; 40; 72; 146; Judith 9, 11.
- ²⁶ Cf. Exodus 22, 10; Leviticus 19, 13 & 18 & 33; Deuteronomy 10, 18; 24, 14; Psalm 82, 2-4.
- ²⁷ Cf. e.g. the book of Isaiah 61, 1 in Luke 4, 16 ff.
- ²⁸ Cf. Mark 12, 29 ff. and Leviticus 19, 18.
- ²⁹ Cf. Matthew 5, 1-7, 29, especially 5, 3-12.
- ³⁰ Cf. Luke 6, 35; Matthew 25, 31-46.
- ³¹ E.g. Luke 6, 24 ff; Matthew 6, 24; I Corinthians 11, 20 ff; Luke 12, 16 ff; James 2, 1 ff; 5, 1 ff.
- ³² Cf. Luke 6, 20; I Corinthians 12, 22 ff.
- ³³ Mark 10, 2; Luke 12, 33.
- ³⁴ Cf. Mark 10, 42-45; Matthew 20, 25-28; Luke 22, 25-27.
- ³⁵ Cf. Matthew 23, 8; 25, 41 ff.
- ³⁶ Cf. II Corinthians 8, 1 ff.
- ³⁷ Cf. I Corinthians 12, 28; 15, 15; Romans 12, 7; 16, 1; Philippians 1, 1; I Timothy 3, 8 & 12.
- ³⁸ Cf. Romans 5-7.
- ³⁹ Galatians 5, 1.
- ⁴⁰ Cf. Galatians 5, 6 & 13.
- ⁴¹ Cf. Galatians 5, 1.
- ⁴² Cf. Matthew 25.
- ⁴³ Cf. "Schema Pontificiae Commissionis a Iustitia et Pace, The Church and Human Rights," Vatican City 1975.
- ⁴⁴ Cf. Populorum Progressio, 21.
- ⁴⁵ Cf. Gaudium et Spes 36, 38, 39, 40, 42, 43, 58; Apostolicam Actuositatem 7.
- ⁴⁶ Cf. Gaudium et Spes 38.

- ⁴⁷ Cf. I Corinthians 13, 8.
- ⁴⁸ Cf. *Gaudium et Spes* 39.
- ⁴⁹ Cf. Cf. *Lumen Gentium* 35.
- ⁵⁰ Cf. *Gaudium et Spes* 38, 39.
- ⁵¹ Cf. *Lumen Gentium* 36.
- ⁵² *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 5; cf. 7.
- ⁵³ Synod of Bishops in 1971. Document on "Justice in the World," introduction. Multilingual Vatican edition, p. 5.
- ⁵⁴ This is the interpretation given by the Synod of 1974.
- ⁵⁵ *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 7.
- ⁵⁶ *Gaudium et Spes* 22, 78.
- ⁵⁷ Luke 17, 20 ff.
- ⁵⁸ *Gaudium et Spes* 39.
- ⁵⁹ *Gaudium et Spes* 13 b.
- ⁶⁰ *Gaudium et Spes* 58; cf. *Lumen Gentium* 9; *Gaudium et Spes* 42.
- ⁶¹ *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 7; *Lumen Gentium* 31, 37; *Gaudium et Spes* 43.
- ⁶² *Gaudium et Spes* 43 develops this viewpoint.
- ⁶³ Paul VI, Apostolic Letter, "Octogesima adveniens," no. 50.
- ⁶⁴ *Gaudium et Spes* 92.
- ⁶⁵ Of course we cannot deal here at greater length with further questions concerning recourse to force or violence.

