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## Some Current Questions in Eschatology\*

### INTRODUCTION

#### THE PERPLEXITY OF MANY TODAY IN THE FACE OF DEATH AND EXISTENCE AFTER DEATH

1. Without the affirmation of Christ's resurrection Christian faith is in vain (cf. 1 Cor 15:14). Since there is indeed an intimate relationship between the fact of Christ's resurrection and our hope of our own future resurrection (cf. 1 Cor 15:12), the Risen Christ also constitutes the foundation of our hope, which opens itself up to horizons far beyond the limits of this earthly life. For "if our hopes in Christ are limited to this life only, we are the most pitiable of men" (1 Cor 15:19). Yet without this hope it would be impossible to lead a Christian life.

This intimate bond between the firm hope of future life and the possibility of responding to the demands of Christian life was clearly recognized in the Church from its inception. For then it was recalled that the Apostles obtained glory through their suffering;<sup>1</sup> moreover, those who were led to martyrdom discovered strength in the hope of reaching Christ through their own death and in the hope of their own future resurrection.<sup>2</sup>

Right down to our own days saints, motivated by this hope or supporting themselves by it, have either given up their lives in martyrdom or devoted their lives to the service of Christ and their brothers and sisters. When other Christians look upon the witness that these saints offer, they too become stronger in their pilgrimage to Christ. This hope raises the hearts of Christians to heavenly things, without keeping them from fulfilling their duties in this age, because "the hope [. . .] of a new earth ought not weaken, but rather should increase in us the concern to bring this earth to its perfection."<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, the contemporary world is in many ways an enemy of Christian hope. For the contemporary world is strongly influenced by secularism, "which consists in an autonomous vision of humanity and of the world, a vision that prescind[s] from the dimension of mystery, neglecting or even denying this dimension. This immanentism is a diminution of the total picture of man."<sup>4</sup> Secularism constitutes, as it were, the atmosphere in which very many Christians of our day live. It is with great difficulty that they shake this off. Because of this, it is not surprising that even among some Christians perplexities about eschatological hope arise. It is not rare that they look apprehensively toward their future death; they are tormented not only "by pain and the gradual dissolution of the

body but also, and even more so, by the fear of total annihilation."<sup>5</sup> In every period of history Christians have been exposed to temptations of doubt. But in our days the anxieties of many Christians seem to indicate a weakening of hope.

Since "faith is the confident assurance concerning what we hope for, and conviction about things we do not see" (Heb 11:1), it will be fitting to have constantly before our eyes the truths of Catholic faith regarding our own future lot. We will try to make a kind of synthesis, emphasizing above all those aspects that may more directly respond to contemporary anxieties. Faith will support hope.

But before we embark on this task, the principal elements that cause the present perplexities ought to be described. It must first be noted that in our day the faith of Christians is not only shaken by influences which must be regarded as external to the Church. For today there can be detected the existence of a certain "theological darkness." For there are some novel interpretations of dogmas, interpretations which are perceived by the faithful as calling into doubt the very divinity of Christ or the reality of his resurrection. From these interpretations the faithful receive no support for their faith, but rather an occasion for doubting many other truths of faith. The image of Christ which they deduce from such reinterpretations cannot safeguard their hope. In the field of eschatology itself we ought to keep in mind "theological controversies everywhere publicly disputed, whose precise subject and significance the greater part of the faithful cannot understand. In fact, it is to be noted that the existence of the soul has been made the subject of debate, as well as the meaning of life after death; in the same way, questions have been raised about what happens between the death of the Christian and the universal resurrection. The faithful are perturbed by all these questions, since they are no longer able to recognize the idiom to which they are accustomed and the concepts already familiar to them."<sup>6</sup> Such theological doubts often exert a significant influence on catechesis and preaching; for they either come to the surface in the teaching of doctrine, or lead to a silence about the last things.

The phenomenon of secularism goes hand in hand with the widespread opinion, which the media foster, that people, like all other things existing in space and time, are no more than matter and are utterly dissolved in death. Moreover, contemporary culture, which unfolds in this historical context, seeks by every means to cast into oblivion death and those questions that are inevitably linked with it. From another side hope is shattered by a pessimism regarding the goodness of human nature itself, a pessimism arising from the increase in distress and affliction. After the immense cruelty shown by people of our century in the Second World War, it was everywhere hoped that humanity, taught by this terrible experience, would establish a better order of liberty and justice. But bitter deception soon followed: "for everywhere today there is an increase in

famine, oppression, injustice and war, torture and terrorism, and other forms of violence of every kind."<sup>7</sup> In the rich nations many are attracted "to the idolatry of material commodities (the so-called 'consumerism')",<sup>8</sup> and neglect all their neighbours. It is easy to imagine that people today, enslaved to such a degree to the senses and to greed and the exclusive pursuit of worldly goods, are destined to no superior end.

Thus many are in doubt about whether death leads to annihilation or to a new life. Even among those who think that there is another life after death, not a few imagine it to be a new life on earth through reincarnation, so that the earthly course of our life is thought not to be only one. Religious indifferentism raises doubts about the foundation of hope in eternal life: namely, about whether it consists in the promise of God given through Jesus Christ or is to be based on some other saviour to be hoped for. "Theological obscurity" favours this indifferentism, since by raising doubts about the true image of Christ it makes it difficult for some Christians to hope in him.

2. There is silence about eschatology today for other reasons, of which we single out one: that is, the rebirth of the tendency to establish an innerworldly eschatology. This tendency is well known in the history of theology, and beginning with the Middle Ages it constituted what came to be called "the spiritual heritage of Joachim de Fiore."<sup>9</sup>

This tendency is found in some theologians of liberation, who so insist on the importance of establishing the kingdom of God as something within our own history on earth that the salvation which transcends history seems to become of rather secondary interest. Certainly, these theologians do not deny in any way the truth of realities beyond human life and history. But since the kingdom of God is located in a society without divisions, "the third age" in which "the eternal Gospel" (Rev 14:6-7) and the kingdom of the Spirit are to flourish is introduced in a new and secularized form.<sup>10</sup>

In this way a certain kind of "eschaton" is brought within historical time. This "eschaton" is not presented as the ultimate absolute, but as a relative absolute. Nonetheless, Christian praxis is directed so exclusively to the establishment of this eschaton that the Gospel is read reductively, so that whatever pertains to the eschatological realities absolutely considered is in great part passed over in silence. In this way, in a theological system of this sort, "one places oneself within the perspective of a temporal messianism, which is one of the most radical of the expressions of secularisation of the Kingdom of God and of its absorption into the immanence of human history."<sup>11</sup>

Theological hope loses its full strength when it is replaced by a political dynamism. This happens when a political dimension becomes the "principal and exclusive dimension, leading to a reductionist reading of Scripture."<sup>12</sup> It must be noted that a way of proposing eschatology that introduces a reductionist reading of the Gospel cannot be admitted, even

if there are taken from the Marxist system none of those elements which could hardly be reconciled with Christianity.

It is well known that classical Marxism considered religion as the "opium" of the people; for religion, "by arousing the hope of people in a future and illusory life, deterred them from building up the earthly city."<sup>13</sup> This accusation is entirely without objective basis. It is rather materialism that deprives people of true motives for building up the world. For why would one struggle, if there is nothing for us to await after this earthly life? "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (Is 22:13). On the contrary, it is certain that "through eschatological hope the importance of earthly duties is not diminished; rather the fulfilment of those duties is supported by new motives."<sup>14</sup>

Nonetheless, we cannot deny that there have been Christians, and not a few, choosing a pietistic way and giving themselves over too much to thought about the future life, abandoning their social responsibilities. This way of proceeding must be rejected. On the other hand, it is not right to devise a merely "temporal" version of Christianity by forgetting about the future world, either in one's personal life or in the exercise of pastoral duties. The notion of an "overall" liberation proposed by the Magisterium of the Church<sup>15</sup> preserves, at one and the same time, the balance and the riches of the diverse elements of the gospel message.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, this notion teaches us the true attitude of Christianity and the right mode of pastoral action, inasmuch as it indicates the false and pointless oppositions between spiritual mission and service (*diaconia*) for the world that must be put aside and superseded.<sup>17</sup> Finally, this notion is the true expression of love for one's brothers and sisters since it seeks to free them completely from every kind of slavery and, first of all, from the slavery to one's own heart. If Christians are concerned with liberating others in all respects, they will in no way be closed in on themselves.

3. The Christian response to the perplexities of people today, as indeed people of every age, has the Risen Christ as its foundation and is contained in the hope of the glorious future resurrection of all who are Christ's,<sup>18</sup> a resurrection which is made in the image of the resurrection of Christ himself: "just as we have borne the likeness of the man from earth, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven" (1 Cor 15:49), that is, of the Risen Christ himself. Our own resurrection will be an ecclesial event in connection with the second coming of the Lord when the number of the brethren will be fully made up (cf. Rev 6:11). In the meanwhile there is, immediately after death, a communion of the blessed with the Risen Christ, which, if necessary, presupposes an eschatological purification. The communion with the Risen Christ prior to our final resurrection implies a definitive anthropological concept and a vision of death that are specifically Christian. The "sharing of all that is good"<sup>19</sup> that exists among the members of the Church is made intelligible in and through the Risen Lord, who is the Head of all. Christ is the end and goal

of our existence; to him we must direct ourselves with the help of his grace in this short life on earth. The serious nature of this journey can be gathered from the infinite greatness of him toward whom we go. We long for Christ - and there is no other earthly being like to him - as the supreme fulfilment of all our desires.

## THE CHRISTIAN HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION

### 1. The Resurrection of Christ and Our Resurrection

1.1. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "I handed on to you first of all what I myself received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures; that he was buried and, in accordance with the Scriptures, rose on the third day" (1 Cor 15:3-4). Indeed, not only did Christ really rise, but he is "the resurrection and the life" (Jn 11:25) and also the hope of our resurrection. For this reason Christians today, as in former times, when they recite the Nicene-Constantinople Creed, in the very formula "of the immortal tradition of God's holy Church"<sup>20</sup> in which they profess their faith in Jesus Christ, who "rose on the third day according to the Scriptures", add the following: "We look forward to the resurrection of the dead."<sup>21</sup> In this profession of faith we hear the testimonies of the New Testament: "the dead who are in Christ will rise" (1 Thess 4:16).

"Christ is now raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor 15:20). This manner of speaking implies that the fact of Christ's resurrection is not an end in itself, but must be extended at some time to those who are Christ's. Since our future resurrection is "the extension of the very Resurrection of Christ to humankind",<sup>22</sup> it is well understood that the resurrection of the Lord is the model of our own resurrection. Christ's resurrection is also the cause of our future resurrection: for "Death came through a man; hence the resurrection of the dead comes through a man also" (1 Cor 15:21). Through birth in baptism in the Church and in the Holy Spirit we rise sacramentally in the Risen Christ (cf. Col 2:12). The resurrection of those who are Christ's must be considered as the culmination of the mystery already begun in baptism. For this reason, the resurrection is presented as the supreme communion with Christ and with the brethren and also as the highest object of faith: "and thenceforth we shall be with the Lord unceasingly" (1 Thess 4:17; "we shall be" in the plural!). Therefore the final glorious resurrection will be the most perfect communion, even bodily, between those, now risen, who are Christ's, and the glorious Lord. From all this it is evident that the resurrection of the Lord is, as it were, the "space" of our future glorious resurrection and that our own future resurrection must be interpreted as a corporate and an ecclesial event.

Because of this article of faith, Christians of the present day, when they affirm this resurrection of the dead, are subject to ridicule, just as Paul

was at the Areopagus (cf. Acts 17:32). The actual state of affairs with regard to this matter is no different from that which Origen described in his time: "Is not the mystery of the resurrection subjected to mockery in the mouth of the unbelievers, because they do not understand it?"<sup>23</sup>

This opposition and such ridicule did not succeed in making Christians of the first centuries desist from professing faith in the resurrection, nor did it succeed in making the earliest theologians desist from expounding it. All the Symbols of the faith, as the one already cited, reach their culminating point in this nodal point of the resurrection. The resurrection of the dead is "the most frequent single theme of pre-Constantinian theology; there is scarcely any early Christian writing that does not speak of the resurrection."<sup>24</sup> Nor ought contemporary opposition deter us today.

The profession of the resurrection was made in a realistic way even from Patristic times. The formula "the resurrection of the *flesh*" seems to have entered into the old Roman Creed, and after it into many others, so that a spiritualised interpretation of the resurrection might be avoided, an interpretation which was attractive to some Christians under the influence of the Gnostics.<sup>25</sup> In the 11th Council of Toledo (675) the doctrine was set forth in a fully reflective way: the view is rejected that the resurrection takes place "in flesh without substance or any other kind of flesh;" faith refers to a resurrection in "the very same flesh in which we live, in which we subsist, and in which we move;" this confession is made on the analogy of "the example of our Head", that is, in the light of the resurrection of Christ.<sup>26</sup> This last allusion to the Risen Christ shows that realism must be maintained in such a way that it does not exclude the transformation of the bodies of those living on earth into glorified bodies. But an ethereal body, which would be a new kind of creation, would not correspond to the reality of the resurrection of Christ and consequently would pertain to the realm of fables. The Fathers of this Synod presupposed that concept of the resurrection of Christ which alone is coherent with the biblical affirmations of the empty tomb and of the appearances of the Risen Jesus (the uses of the verb *ôphthê* for expressing the appearances of the Risen Lord should be called to mind as well as and also the appearance narratives, the so-called "scenes of recognition"); moreover, that resurrection keeps in tension the real identity of the body (the body that had been fastened to the cross) and the glorious transformation of that same body. The Risen Jesus not only invited his disciples to touch him, because "a ghost does not have flesh and bones as I do", but also showed to them his hands and his feet, that they might have proof that "it is really I" (Lk 24:39; 'oti egô eimi autós); in his resurrection, however, he did not return to the conditions of an earthly and mortal life. Holding fast in this way to a realism with regard to the future resurrection of the dead, we should in no way forget that our own true flesh will be conformed to the body of the glory of Christ (cf. Phil 3:21).

This body which is now shaped by the soul (*psyche*) will be shaped in the glorious resurrection by the spirit (*pneuma*) (cf. 1 Cor 15:44).

1.2. It is a novelty in the history of this dogma (novel at least since the overcoming of the tendency which appeared in the second century under Gnostic influence) that this realistic presentation should be subjected to criticism by some theologians in our day. To them the traditional representation of the resurrection seems too crude. In particular (they believe) that the too physical descriptions of the resurrection event raise a difficulty. Because of this at times they seek refuge in a certain kind of spiritualised explanation. And for this they demand a new kind of interpretation of the traditional affirmations about the resurrection.

There should be a correct theological hermeneutic of eschatological affirmations.<sup>27</sup> These cannot be treated as assertions referring merely to the future (which as such have a different logical status than assertions about past and present realities which can for practical purposes be described as provable objects), because, although with respect to us they have *not yet* taken place, they have *already* been realized in Christ.

In order to avoid exaggerations, whether through excessively physical descriptions, or through a spiritualization of the events, certain fundamental guidelines can be indicated.

1.2.1. A theological hermeneutic involves a full acceptance of revealed truths. God has knowledge of the future, which he can reveal also to people as a truth worthy of faith.

1.2.2. This has been made evident in the resurrection of Christ, to which the entire patristic literature refers when it speaks of the resurrection of the dead. That which is a growth in hope among the chosen people has been realized in the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection of Christ accepted through faith also says something definitive about the resurrection of the dead.

1.2.3. A conception based on Scripture and reason of people and of the world must be held, one that is appropriate for appreciating the superior vocation of people and of the world as God's creatures. But even more to be emphasized is the fact that "God is 'the last thing' for the creature. Gained, he is heaven; lost, hell; testing, judgment; purifying, purgatory. He himself is that in which the finite dies and through which it rises again in him and to him. He himself is such that he turns himself to the world, namely, in his Son *Jesus Christ* who is the manifestation of God and therefore also the sum of the 'last things'."<sup>28</sup> Due concern for maintaining realism in the doctrine on the risen body must not forget the primacy of the aspects of communion and society with God in Christ (our communion in the Risen Christ will be complete as such when we have risen bodily). This community and society with God in Christ is the last end of humanity, of the Church, and of the world.<sup>29</sup>

1.2.4. The rejection of an eschatological "docetism" also demands that the communion with God in this last stage will not be merely spiritual.

God, who in his revelation invites us to this final communion, is at the same time the God of this world of creation. This "first creation" will also be in the end assumed into the final glorification. It is in this sense that Vatican Council II declared: "charity and its works will remain, and this whole creation, which God made for man's sake, will be freed from its bondage to decay."<sup>30</sup>

1.2.5. Finally, we must note that in the Creeds there are dogmatic formulas of a very realistic kind referring to the body of the resurrection. The resurrection will take place "in this flesh, in which now we live."<sup>31</sup> Therefore, the body that now lives and that will ultimately rise is one and the same. This faith shines forth clearly in early Christian theology. Thus St. Irenaeus admits the "transfiguration" of the flesh, "because being mortal and corruptible it becomes immortal and incorruptible" in the final resurrection;<sup>32</sup> but this resurrection will take place "in the very same bodies in which they had died: for if (the resurrection were) not in these very same (scil. bodies), neither would those who had died be the same as those who would rise."<sup>33</sup> The Fathers therefore think that personal identity cannot be defended in the absence of bodily identity. The Church has never taught that the very same matter is required for the body to be said to be the same. But the cult of relics, whereby Christians profess that the bodies of the saints "who were living members of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit" must be "raised and glorified" by Christ,<sup>34</sup> shows that the resurrection cannot be explained independently of the body that once lived.

## 2. The Parousia of Christ, Our Resurrection

2.1. A fixed moment of time is attributed in the New Testament to the resurrection of the dead. Paul, after he announced that the resurrection of the dead will take place through Christ and in Christ, added: "but each in proper order: Christ the first fruits and then, at his coming (*en te parousia autou*), all those who belong to him" (1 Cor 15:23). A specific event is designated as the moment of the resurrection of the dead. For by the Greek word *parousia* is signified the future second coming of the Lord in glory, different from his first coming in humility;<sup>35</sup> the manifestation of his glory (cf. Tit. 2:13) and the manifestation of the parousia (cf. 2 Thess 2:8) refer to the same coming. The same event is expressed in the Gospel according to John (6:54) by the words "on the last day" (cf. also Jn 6:39-40). The same connection of events is given vivid expression in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, 4:16-17, and is affirmed by a great tradition of the Fathers: "at his coming all men will rise."<sup>36</sup>

A new theory of "the resurrection at the moment of death" is opposed to this affirmation. In the most widely diffused form of this theory, the explanation given appears to pose a grave threat to the realism of the resurrection, since the resurrection is affirmed without any relationship

to the body that once lived and is now dead. Concerning "the resurrection in death", the theologians who propose it want to suppress the existence after death of a "separated soul", which they consider to be, as it were, a remnant of Platonism. The fear of Platonism that motivates the theologians espousing resurrection in death is quite understandable; Platonism would be a most serious deviation from Christian faith, since for Christian faith the body is not a prison from which the soul is to be liberated. But precisely for this reason, it is not at all clear that these theologians, in fleeing Platonism, affirm the final or resurrection bodiliness in a way which shows that bodiliness truly involves "this flesh in which now we live."<sup>37</sup> The older formulas of faith spoke with quite another force about the raising up of the very same body that is now alive.

The conceptual separation between a body and a corpse, or the introduction into the notion of body of two diverse concepts (a difference is expressed in German by the words "Leib" and "Körper", while in many other languages it cannot be expressed) are scarcely understood outside academic circles. Pastoral experience shows us that the Christian people are greatly perplexed when they hear sermons affirming that the dead person has already risen while his corpse is still buried. It is to be feared that such sermons have a negative influence on the Christian faithful, and foster today doctrinal confusion. In this secularized world in which the faithful are beguiled by the materialistic philosophy of absolute death, it would be a very serious matter to increase their perplexities.

Moreover, the parousia in the New Testament is a specific event concluding history. Violence is done to the texts of the New Testament if one seeks to explain the parousia as a permanent event that is nothing other than the encounter of an individual with the Lord in his own death.

2.2. "On the last day" (Jn 6:54), when people will rise gloriously, they will reach complete communion with the Risen Christ. This is evident, from the fact that then the communion of people with Christ will be in accord with the full existential reality of both. Moreover, with history at an end, the resurrection of all his fellow servants and brothers and sisters will complete the mystical body of Christ (cf. Rev 6:11). Thus Origen said: "There is only one body that is said to rise in judgment."<sup>38</sup> Rightly, therefore, did the eleventh Council of Toledo profess that the glorious resurrection of the dead would be not only on the model of Christ but also on "the model of *our Head*."<sup>39</sup>

This community aspect of the final resurrection seems to be dissolved in the theory of resurrection in death, since the latter kind of resurrection would be purely individual. For this reason, some theologians exist who favour the theory of resurrection in death seek a solution in a so-called *atemporalism*: they say that after death time can in no way exist, and hold that the deaths of people are successive (viewed from the perspective of

this world); whereas the resurrection of those people in the life after death, in which there would be no temporal distinctions, is (they think) simultaneous. But this attempted atemporalism, according to which successive individual deaths would coincide with a simultaneous collective resurrection, implies recourse to a philosophy of time quite foreign to biblical thought. The New Testament's way of speaking about the souls of the martyrs does not seem to remove them either from all reality of succession or from all perception of succession (cf. Rev 6:9-11). Similarly, if time should have no meaning after death, not even in some way merely analogous with its terrestrial meaning, it would be difficult to understand why Paul used formulas referring to the future (*anastesontai*) in speaking about their resurrection, when responding to the Thessalonians who were asking about the fate of the dead (cf. 1 Thess 4:13-18). Moreover, a radical denial of any meaning for time in those resurrections, deemed both simultaneous and taking place in the moment of death, does not seem to take sufficiently into account the truly corporeal nature of the resurrection; for a true body cannot be said to exist devoid of all notion of temporality. Even the souls of the blessed, since they are in communion with the Christ who has been raised in a bodily way, cannot be thought of without any connection with time.

### 3. Communion With Christ Immediately After Death According to the New Testament

3.1. The early Christians, whether they thought that the parousia was imminent or considered it to be quite remote, soon learned through experience that some of them would be taken away by death before the parousia. Paul comforted those who were anxious about the fate of those who had died (cf. 1 Thess 4:13), reminding them of the teaching concerning the future resurrection of the dead: "those who have died in Christ will rise first" (1 Thess 4:16). This datum of faith left other questions open, which were bound to be soon raised. In what state, for example, will such departed be found in the meantime? It was not necessary to devise an altogether new response to this question, since elements for resolving it had long been present in the whole biblical tradition. The people of Israel from the very first stages of their history as it is known to us thought that something of mortal human beings subsisted after death. This thought was already evident in the most ancient representation of what was called *sheol*.

3.2. The ancient Jewish concept of *sheol* was quite imperfect in the first stage of its evolution. It was thought to exist under earth in contrast to heaven. Hence the expression, "to descend into the nether world (*sheol*)" (Gen 37:35; Ps 55:16, etc.). Those who dwell there are called the *refaim*. This Hebrew word lacks a singular, something which seems to indicate that those in *sheol* were not considered to have an individual life. They

do not praise God and are separated from him. All, like an anonymous mass, have the same fate. Understood in this way, the survival after death which was attributed to them did not include the idea of retribution.

3.3. Simultaneously with this representation, there began to appear the Israelite belief that the omnipotence of God could bring someone back from *sheol* (1 Sam 2:6; Amos 9:2 etc.). Through this faith the idea of a resurrection of the dead was prepared, the idea expressed in Dan 12:2 and Is 26:19, and at the time of Jesus widely prevalent among the Jews, with the notable exception of the Sadducees (cf. Mk 12:18).

Faith in the resurrection introduced an evolution in the way of conceiving of *sheol*. *Sheol* was no longer conceived as the common domicile of the dead, but was divided as it were into two floors or levels, of which one was destined for the just and the other for the wicked. The dead remain there up to the last judgment, in which a definitive sentence will be pronounced; but already in these different "floors" they receive a due retribution. This way of conceiving matters appears in *Henoch aethiopicus* 22<sup>49</sup> and is presupposed in Lk 16:19-31.

3.4. A certain intermediate state of this kind is affirmed in the New Testament insofar as an immediate survival after death is taught as a theme quite different from that of the resurrection, — a resurrection which, in the New Testament is certainly never posited in connection with death. It must also be added that the affirmation of this survival underscores, as a cardinal idea, communion with Christ.

Thus the crucified Jesus promises to the good thief: "I assure you (*amen*), this day you will be with me in paradise" (Lk 23:43). Paradise is the Jewish technical term corresponding to the expression "Gan Eden." But it is affirmed, without being further described; the fundamental idea is that Jesus wishes to receive the good thief into communion with him immediately after death. The same hope is evidenced by Stephen in his stoning; in the words, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at God's right hand" (Acts 7:56), along with his final prayer, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59), he affirms that he hopes to be immediately received by Jesus into communion with him.

In Jn 14: 1-3, Jesus speaks to his disciples of the many mansions which are in his Father's house. "I am indeed going to prepare a place for you, and then I shall come back to take you with me, that where I am you also may be" (v. 3). It can hardly be doubted that these words refer to the time of the death of the disciples and not to the parousia, which in the Gospel according to John passes to a secondary level (although not in the First Epistle of John). Again, the idea of communion with Christ is central. He is not only "the way (but) the truth and the life" (Jn 14:6). The similarity between the words *monai* (mansions) and *menein* (to remain) is also to be noted. Jesus, referring to earthly life, exhorts us: "Abide in me, as I do in you" (Jn 15:4), "Abide in my love" (v. 9). Already on earth, "Anyone who loves me will be true to my word, and my Father will love him; we

will come to him and make our dwelling place (our mansion; *monên*) with him" (Jn 14:23). This "mansion", which is communion, becomes more intense after death.

3.5. Paul merits special attention. The principal passage in Paul regarding this intermediate state is Phil 1:21-24: "For, to me, 'life' means Christ; hence dying is so much gain. If, on the other hand, I am to go on living in the flesh, that means productive toil for me – and I do not know which to prefer. I am strongly attracted by both: I long to be freed from this life and to be with Christ, for that is the far better thing; yet it is more urgent that I remain alive for your sakes." In v. 21 "life" (*to zen*) is the subject and "Christ" is the predicate. Thus the idea of communion with Christ is always emphasized, a life which, begun on earth, is declared to be the unique object of hope in the state after death: "to be with Christ" (v. 23). The communion after death is more intense and for that reason the state after death is desirable.

Paul does not proceed from a perspective of contempt for earthly life; he finally decides to remain "in the flesh" (cf. v. 25). Paul naturally does not desire death (cf. 2 Cor 5:2-4). To lose one's body is painful. It is customary to contrast the attitudes of Socrates and of Jesus before death. Socrates considers death to be the liberation of the soul from the prison or tomb (*sema*) of the body (*soma*); Jesus, who hands himself over for the sins of the world (cf. Jn 10:15), in the garden of Gethsemani trembles at the prospect of his approaching death (cf. Mk 14:33). Nor is Paul's attitude unlike that of Jesus. The state after death is desirable only because in the New Testament (the exception is Lk 16:19-31, where another and totally different context is present) it always implies union with Christ.

It would be quite false to affirm that in Paul there is an evolution from a faith in the resurrection to a faith in immortality. Both coexisted in him from the beginning. In the same epistle to the Philippians in which he explained the reason why an intermediate state can be hoped for, he speaks with great joy of the expectation of the parousia of the Lord, "who will give a new form to this lowly body of ours and remake it according to the pattern of his glorified body" (Phil 3:21). Therefore an intermediate state is conceived of as transitory, something acceptable because of the union with Christ that it implies, but in such a way that the resurrection of the body always remains as the supreme hope: "This corruptible body must be clothed with incorruptibility, this mortal body with immortality" (1 Cor 15:53).

#### 4. The Reality of the Resurrection in the Context of Theology Today

4.1. One can easily grasp from this twofold doctrinal line of reasoning in the New Testament that the whole Christian tradition, without any important exceptions, has, up to our own day, conceived of the object of

eschatological hope as embracing two phases. Between the death of people and the consummation of the world, it believes that a conscious element of people subsists which it calls by the name of "soul" (*psyche*), a term used also by Holy Scripture (cf. Wis 3:1; Mt 10:28); this element is already in that phase the subject of retribution. At the parousia of the Lord which will take place at the end of history, there is to be expected the blessed resurrection of those "who are Christ's" (1 Cor 15:23). From that moment, the eternal glorification of the whole person who has now been raised begins. The survival of a conscious soul prior to the resurrection safeguards the continuity and identity of subsistence between the person who lived and the person who will rise, inasmuch as in virtue of such a survival the concrete individual never totally ceases to exist.

4.2. As exceptions in the face of this tradition must be remembered certain Christians of the second century who, under the influence of the Gnostics, were opposed to the "salvation of the flesh", calling the resurrection the mere survival of a soul endowed with a kind of corporeity.<sup>41</sup> Another exception is the *thnêtopsycheism* of Tatian and some Arabian heretics, who thought that human beings died so totally that not even their souls survived. The final resurrection was conceived as a new creation of the dead person from nothing.<sup>42</sup>

After these there are, for all practical purposes, no exceptions on this theme almost up to our own days. Nor does Martin Luther constitute an exception, since he admitted the twofold eschatological phase. For him death is "the separation of the soul from the body;"<sup>43</sup> he himself held that souls survive between death and the final resurrection, although he expressed doubts about the way of conceiving the state in which souls are found between death and the resurrection: for at times he admitted that perhaps the saints in heaven pray for us,<sup>44</sup> while elsewhere he rather thought that these souls were in a state of sleep.<sup>45</sup> He therefore never denied an intermediate state, although at times he interpreted it in a way divergent from Catholic faith.<sup>46</sup> Lutheran orthodoxy keeps this double phase, abandoning the idea of the sleep of the souls of the departed.

4.3. During the 20th century for the first time the denial of the twofold phase began to be propagated. The new current of thought appeared among some evangelical theologians and, indeed, in the form of total death (*Ganztod*, like the ancient *thnêtopsycheism*) and of a resurrection at the end of time explained as a creation from nothing. The reasons for which appeal was made were predominantly confessional: before God people can present nothing of their own, neither their works nor the natural immortality of their souls; the seriousness of death could only be maintained if it affected the entire person and not only his/her body; since death is the punishment of sin and the whole person is a sinner, the whole person must be affected by death lest it be understood that the soul, in which the root of sin is found, is liberated from death. Little by little, and as it were programmatically, a new eschatological

schema was proposed: the resurrection *alone*, in place of immortality *and* the resurrection.

This first form of the current of thought presented many difficulties: if the whole person disappears in death, God could create a person entirely equivalent to him/her; but if there is no existential continuity between the two, then that second person cannot be the same as the first. Because of this, new theories were elaborated that affirmed the resurrection *in death*, lest some empty space arise between death and the parousia. But it must be acknowledged that in this a theme is introduced which is unknown to the New Testament, since the New Testament always speaks of the resurrection at the parousia of the Lord, never at the time of man's death.<sup>47</sup> When the new current of thought began to pass over to some Catholic theologians, the Holy See, in a letter sent to all the bishops,<sup>48</sup> considered it to be incompatible with a legitimate theological pluralism.

4.4. All these theories ought to be assessed in the light of a dispassionate consideration of the biblical testimony and of the history of tradition both as to eschatology itself and as to its anthropological presuppositions. But above all it may justly be asked whether a current of thought can be rescued from all the motives that have contributed to its origin. This is particularly important when *de facto* a definite theological line has sprung from non-Catholic confessional principles.

Moreover, we must note the disadvantages for ecumenical dialogue that are caused by this novel conception. Although the new tendency arose among some evangelical theologians, it does not correspond to the great tradition of Lutheran orthodoxy, which even now is prevalent among the faithful of that confession. The persuasion is even stronger among separated Eastern Christians regarding an eschatology of souls that is prior to the resurrection of the dead. All these Christians consider the eschatology of the soul necessary, because they understand the resurrection of the dead in connection with the parousia of Christ.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, if we look beyond the ambit of Christian confessions, we find that the eschatology of the soul is considered an almost universal good by non-Christian religions.

In traditional Christian thought the eschatology of the soul is a state in which, during the course of history, brothers and sisters in Christ are successively united with him and in him. The idea of a family union of souls through death is not foreign to many African religions and offers the opportunity for interreligious dialogue with them. It ought further to be added that in Christianity such a union reaches its culmination at the end of history when people will be led to their full, existential and therefore bodily reality, through the resurrection.

4.5. In the history of this question, another way of arguing for a single phase has more recently been proposed. The objection is raised that the schema of a twofold phase arose from a certain contamination produced by Hellenism. The idea which is the Bible's uniquely is that of resurrec-

tion; on the other hand, the immortality of the soul would stem from Greek philosophy. So, it is proposed that Christian eschatology be purged of every accretion of Hellenism.

It must be confessed that the idea of the resurrection is somewhat recent in Holy Scripture (Dan 12:1-3 is the first undisputed text concerning it). The most ancient concept of the Jews affirmed rather the survival of the shades of people who had lived (*refaim*) in a sort of common house of the dead (*sheol*), which was different from their graves. This way of thinking is sufficiently similar to that whereby Homer spoke of the souls (*psychai*) in the lower world (*Hades*). This parallelism between Hebrew and Greek culture, which is found also in other periods, makes their supposed opposition doubtful. In antiquity the cultural similarities and mutual influences of one culture upon another through the whole of the Mediterranean world were much greater than is often thought, and they do not constitute a phenomenon later than Sacred Scripture and contaminating its message.

Looking at matters from another perspective it cannot be supposed that Hebrew categories alone were the instrument of divine revelation. God has spoken "in many and varied ways" (Heb 1:1). The books of Sacred Scripture in which inspiration is expressed in Greek words and cultural concepts must be considered as enjoying no less authority than those which were written in Hebrew or Aramaic.

Finally, it is not possible to speak of a Hebrew and a Greek mentality as if it were a matter of simple unities. The imperfect eschatological conceptions of the patriarchs were perfected by later revelation. Greek philosophy is not reducible to Platonism or Neoplatonism. It ought not to be forgotten that not a few of the Fathers were in touch not only with middle Platonism but also with Stoicism.<sup>50</sup> For this reason both the history of revelation and tradition and its relationships with Hebrew and Greek culture must be stated with care.

## 5. People Called To Resurrection

5.1. The Second Vatican Council teaches: "Man, one in body and soul, through his very bodily condition sums up in himself the elements of the material world in such a way that through him they are brought to their highest perfection and can raise their voice in praise freely given to the Creator. . . . Man is not deceived when he regards himself as superior to bodily things and as more than just a speck of nature or a nameless unit in the city of man. For by his interiority he surpasses the universe of things: he enters into the depths of this interiority when he turns inward to his heart, where God, who searches hearts, awaits for him, and where he himself decides his own destiny in the sight of God. So, in recognizing in himself a spiritual and immortal soul, he is not being deluded by a deceptive construct flowing from merely physical or social conditions,

but on the contrary grasps what is profoundly true in this matter."<sup>51</sup> By these words the Council acknowledged the value of the spontaneous and elemental experience through which people perceive themselves to be superior to all other earthly creatures and indeed capable by knowledge and love of possessing God. The basic difference between people and these other creatures appears in the innate desire for happiness which causes man to reject and abhor the idea of the total destruction of his person; his soul or "the seed of eternity that he bears in himself, which cannot be reduced to matter alone, rebels against death."<sup>52</sup> Because this immortal soul is spiritual, the Church holds that God is its creator for every person.<sup>53</sup>

This anthropology makes possible the already noted eschatology of the twofold phase. Since this Christian anthropology includes a *duality* of elements (the "body-soul" schema) which can be so separated that one of them ("the spiritual and immortal soul") subsists and endures separately, an accusation is sometimes made of a Platonic dualism. The word "dualism" can be understood in many ways. For this reason, when we speak of Christian anthropology, it is better to use the word "duality." From another perspective, since in the Christian tradition the state of the survival of the soul after death is neither definitive nor ontologically supreme, but "intermediate" and transitory and ultimately ordered to the resurrection, Christian anthropology has characteristics proper to itself and quite different from the anthropology of the Platonic philosophers.<sup>54</sup>

5.2. Moreover, Christian anthropology cannot be confused with Platonic dualism inasmuch as in the former, person is not a mere soul such that the body ought to be abhorred as a prison. Christians are not ashamed of their bodies, as Plotinus was.<sup>55</sup> The hope of a resurrection would have seemed absurd to Platonists, because one cannot put one's hope in a return to prison. But this hope of the resurrection is central to the New Testament. In consequence of this hope, early Christian theology considered the separated soul "half a person", and from this deduced that the resurrection ought to follow: "How unfitting it would be for God to raise half a person to salvation."<sup>56</sup> The common mind of the Fathers was well expressed by St. Augustine, when he wrote concerning the separated soul: "there is in it a certain natural appetite for ruling a body: [ . . . ] while there is no underlying body for that appetite to take rest."<sup>57</sup>

5.3. The anthropology of duality is found in Mt 10:28: "Do not fear those who deprive the body of life but cannot destroy the soul. Rather, fear him who can destroy both body and soul in Gehenna." This "logion", understood in the light of the anthropology and eschatology of the period, teaches us that it has been willed by God that the soul survives after earthly death until it is united once more to the body in the resurrection. It is not surprising that these words of the Lord were spoken in the

context of giving a teaching about martyrdom. Biblical history shows that martyrdom for the truth constitutes a privileged moment in which the creation accomplished by God, the future eschatological resurrection, and the promise of life eternal are all illuminated by the light of faith (cf. 2 Mac 7, 9, 11, 14, 22-23, 28 and 36).

In the book of Wisdom too the revelation of the eschatology of souls is placed in a context in which it is said of those who "suffered torment before men" (Wis 3:4), that although "in the view of the foolish they seemed to be dead, and their passing away was thought an affliction" (Wis 3:2), nonetheless "the souls of the just are in the hand of God" (Wis 3:1). This eschatology of souls is joined in the same book with the clear affirmation of the power of God to effect the resurrection of people (cf. Wis 16:13-14).

5.4. In faithfully accepting the words of our Lord in Mt 10,28, "the Church affirms the continuity and subsistence after death of a spiritual element, endowed with consciousness and will, so that the 'human I' subsists, while lacking in the interim the complement of its body."<sup>58</sup> This affirmation is rooted in the characteristic duality of Christian anthropology.

Sometimes, however, certain words of St. Thomas are opposed to this assertion, for he said: "my soul is not I."<sup>59</sup> But the words immediately preceding constitute the context for this statement, and in them he had emphasized that the soul is a part of people. This doctrine is constant in St. Thomas in his *Summa theologiae*: for when it is objected that "the separated soul is an individual substance of a rational nature, but it is not however a person", he replies: "the soul is a part of the human species: and therefore; although it is separated, nevertheless since it retains the nature of unibility, it cannot be called an individual substance, which is hypostasis, or first substance; nor likewise can the hand or any other part of a person. And thus there belongs to it neither the definition nor the name of person."<sup>60</sup> In this sense, that is, inasmuch as the human soul is not the entire person, it can be said that the soul is not the "I" or the person. Indeed, this ought to be held so that the traditional line of Christian anthropology can be maintained. Therefore, arguing from this, St. Thomas deduced in the separated soul an appetite for the body or for the resurrection.<sup>61</sup> This position of St. Thomas manifests the traditional sense of Christian anthropology as that had been already expressed by St. Augustine.<sup>62</sup>

However, in another sense it can and ought to be said that "the 'human I' itself" subsists in the separated soul.<sup>63</sup> Through it, since it is the conscious and subsistent element of people, we are able to hold a true continuity between the person who once lived on earth and the person who will rise; without such a continuity of a certain subsisting human element the person who once lived on earth and the one who is to rise would not be the same "I." Through the separated soul the acts of the intellect and

will that were done on earth remain after death. Although separated, it performs personal acts of understanding and will. Moreover, the subsistence of the separated soul is clear from the practice of the Church, which directs its prayers to the souls of the blessed.

From these considerations it is evident that the separated soul is, on the one hand, an ontologically incomplete reality and, on the other hand, is conscious; indeed, according to the definition of Benedict XII, the souls of the saints fully purified ("immediately after death" and indeed already as separated ("before the reassuming of their bodies")) enjoy the full beatitude of the intuitive vision of God.<sup>64</sup> Such beatitude is perfect in itself and nothing specifically superior can be given. The glorious transformation of the body in the resurrection is itself an effect of this vision upon the body; in this sense, Paul speaks of a spiritual body or a body shaped under the influence of the "spirit" and not merely under the influence of the soul ("spiritual body") (cf. 1 Cor 15:44).

The final resurrection also involves an ecclesial aspect with respect to the beatitude of the individual soul, inasmuch as in the end all brothers and sisters who are Christ's will arrive at their fullness (cf. Rev. 6:11). Then the whole of creation will be subject to Christ (cf. 1 Cor 15:27-28) and thus it too "will be freed from its slavery to corruption" (Rom 8:21).

## 6. Christian Death

6.1. The characteristically Christian anthropological conception offers a specific understanding of the meaning of death. Since in Christian anthropology the body is not a prison from which a prisoner hopes to escape, nor a kind of vestment that can easily be put aside, death, naturally considered, is not an object of human hope or an event that human beings can tranquilly embrace without overcoming their antecedent natural repugnance. No one ought to be ashamed of the natural feelings of repugnance which are experienced in the face of death, since our Lord himself willed to suffer these before his own death, and Paul testifies that he had experienced them: "we do not wish to be stripped naked but to be clothed again" (2 Cor 5:4). Death intrinsically tears people asunder. Indeed, since the person is not the soul alone, but the body and soul essentially united, death affects the person.

The absurdity of death appears even more radically if we consider that death, though natural, exists in the historical order against the will of God (cf. Wis 1:13-14; 2:23-24): for "man would have been immune" from bodily death "had he not sinned."<sup>65</sup> Death must be accepted by Christians with a certain sense of penance, for Christians have before their eyes the words of Paul: "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23).

It is also natural that Christians suffer at the death of persons whom they love. "Jesus wept" over his dead friend Lazarus (Jn 11:35). We too can and ought to weep over our dead friends.

6.2. The repugnance that people experience in the face of death and the possibility of overcoming this repugnance constitute a characteristically human attitude utterly different from that of any other animal. In this way death is an occasion in which people can and ought to show themselves as people. Christians can, moreover, overcome the fear of death, relying on other motives.

Faith and hope teach us another face of death. Jesus faced the fear of death under the light of the will of his Father (cf. Mk 14:36). He died to "free those who through fear of death had been slaves their whole life long" (Heb 2:15). Consequently, Paul can already have the desire to be dissolved and be with Christ; that communion with Christ after death was considered by Paul to be "much better" than the state of his present life (cf. Phil 1:23). The advantage of this life consists in that "we are present in body" and thus have our full existential reality; but relative to our full communion after death "we are far away from the Lord" (cf. 2 Cor 5:6). Although through death we stray away from our body and are deprived of our full existential plenitude, we accept death in good heart; indeed, we can hope that with death's coming "we will be at home with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:8). This mystical hope of a communion after death with Christ, which can coexist with a natural fear of death, appears again and again in the spiritual tradition of the Church, especially among the saints, and must be understood in its true meaning. When this hope leads one to praise God for death, such praise is in no way rooted in a positive estimation of the state in which the soul lacks the body, but in the hope of possessing the Lord through death.<sup>66</sup> Then death is considered as a door leading to communion after death with Christ, and not as freeing the soul from a body that burdened it.

In the Eastern tradition there is frequently thought of the goodness of death inasmuch as it is the very condition of and way to a future glorious resurrection. "Therefore, if it cannot happen that nature be led to a better form and state without the resurrection, and if the resurrection cannot take place unless death precedes, then *death becomes a good thing*, inasmuch as it is for us the beginning and the way of changing for the better."<sup>67</sup> Christ has given this goodness to death through his death and resurrection: "As if extending his hand to what was lying in the grave, and looking therefore upon our corpse, he drew so close to death that to the degree that he touched mortality so with his body he gave to nature the beginning of the resurrection."<sup>68</sup> In this sense, Christ "changed sunset to sunrise."<sup>69</sup>

The pain and sickness that are the beginning of death ought also to be taken up by Christians in a new way. In themselves they are endured as vexatious, but even more so insofar as they are signs of the gradual dissolution of the body.<sup>70</sup> But now indeed through the acceptance of the pain and sickness permitted by the will of God, we become partakers in the passion of Christ, and through offering them up we are united to that

act whereby the Lord offered his own life to his Father for the salvation of the world. Each one of us ought to affirm, as did Paul of old: "in my own flesh I fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his body, the Church" (Col 1:24). We are led to attain to the glory of the Risen Christ through our association with his passion: "continually we carry about in our bodies the dying of Christ, so that in our bodies the life of Christ may also be revealed" (2 Cor 4:10).<sup>71</sup>

In the same way it is not right for us to be saddened over the death of our friends "as are the others who do not have hope" (1 Thess 4:13). For them, with "tearful cries and groans it is often the custom to bewail the wretchedness of those who die, or even their complete extinction;" we, on the other hand, like Augustine thinking of his mother's death, are consoled by this thought: "she (Monica) died neither miserably nor completely."<sup>72</sup>

6.3. This positive aspect of death is only reached through that way of dying which the New Testament calls "death in the Lord": "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" (Rev 14:13). This "death in the Lord" is to be hoped for inasmuch as it leads to beatitude and is prepared for by a holy life: "Yes, the Spirit says, they shall find rest from their labours, for their good works accompany them" (Rev 14:13). Thus life on earth is ordered to communion with Christ after death, a communion which is already effective in the state of the separated soul, although ontologically imperfect and incomplete.<sup>73</sup> Because communion with Christ is of higher value than existential fullness, life on earth cannot be considered the greatest good. This justifies that mystic hope of death which, as we have said, is frequent among the saints.

Through a holy life, to which God calls us by his grace and helps us by his aid, the original bond between sin and death is as it were broken, not because death is physically overcome, but inasmuch as it begins to lead to life eternal. Such a way of dying is a participation in the paschal mystery of Christ. The sacraments prepare us for such a death. The baptism in which we die mystically to sin consecrates us for participating in the resurrection of the Lord (cf. Rom 6:3-7). Through the reception of the Eucharist, which is the "medicine of immortality",<sup>74</sup> we obtain a pledge of participating in the resurrection of Christ.

Death in the Lord implies the possibility of another way of dying, namely death outside the Lord, which leads to a second death (cf. Rev 20:14). For in this death, the power of sin through which death entered (cf. Rom 5:12) manifests to the fullest extent its capacity to separate us from God.

6.4. Christian customs relative to the burial of the corpses of the faithful were quickly formed, and indeed were formed under the influence of faith in the resurrection of the dead. Ways of speaking, in words such as "cemetery" (a Greek word that signifies a "sleeping place") or "deposit" (the Latin *depositio*, involving Christ's right to take back the

body of the Christian as opposed to considering it as a gift, *donatio*), presuppose this faith. It was considered a "duty of people" to exercise care for the body of the dead (the corpse); but "if those who do not believe in the resurrection of the flesh do these things", even more particularly are they to be carried out by those "who believe that this obligation is to be fulfilled for a body which is dead but will rise and live for all eternity; for then it is also in a way to witness to this very faith."<sup>75</sup>

For a long time the cremation of corpses was forbidden,<sup>76</sup> because historically this was seen to be connected with a Neoplatonic mentality which intended the destruction of the body as a way of freeing the soul more promptly from prison<sup>77</sup> (more recently, however, it implied a materialistic or agnostic attitude). The Church no longer prohibits this, "unless it is chosen for reasons contrary to Christian doctrine."<sup>78</sup> Care must be taken lest the contemporary spread of cremation even among Catholics should in any way render obscure their right understanding about the resurrection of the flesh.

## 7. The "Living Fellowship" of All Members of the Church in Christ<sup>79</sup>

7.1. The ecclesiology of communion, which is strongly characteristic of the Second Vatican Council, believes that death does not undo the communion of saints, that is that union in the bond of love of all the brethren in Christ: "even more", that it is enriched "according to the enduring faith of the Church by the sharing of spiritual goods."<sup>80</sup> Faith gives to the wayfaring Christians on earth "the faculty of being in touch in Christ with their beloved brothers who have already died."<sup>81</sup> It is in particular through the various forms of prayer that this is effected.

The celestial liturgy is a large feature of St John's Apocalypse. The souls of the blessed take part in it. In the liturgy on earth it is when "we celebrate the eucharistic sacrifice that we are most powerfully united to the worship of the Church in Heaven, joining with and recalling the memory in the first place of the glorious ever Virgin Mary as well as the Blessed Joseph, the Apostles, martyrs and all the saints."<sup>82</sup> In fact, in the celebration of the earthly liturgy a desire to unite it with the heavenly liturgy is expressed. This is shown in the Roman anaphora, not alone in the *Communicantes* prayer (at least in its present form), but in the transition from preface to canon and in the prayer within the canon, *Supplices te rogamus*, where the petition is made that the earthly offering be taken aloft to the altar in Heaven.

This heavenly liturgy however is not simply a matter of praise. The Lamb who was slain is at the centre (cf. Rev 5:6), to wit, "Christ Jesus, who died, who was raised again moreover, who is at God's right hand, and who also intercedes for us" (Rom 8:34; cf. Heb 7:25). Since the souls of the blessed partake in this liturgy of intercession, they are able to care for us as we journey on our pilgrim way; "they are a great help to our

weakness by their intercession and brotherly concern."<sup>83</sup> Because we are made conscious of this conjoined heavenly and earthly liturgy, "it is supremely becoming . . . that we love these friends and co-heirs of Jesus who are also our brothers and outstanding benefactors, (and) that we should duly thank God for them."<sup>84</sup>

In addition the Church earnestly exhorts us "to implore them for blessings from God through his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, our sole redeemer and saviour and to commit ourselves to their prayers and assistance."<sup>85</sup> An invocation of the saints of this nature is an act whereby the believer in Christ commits himself with confidence to their charity. Since God is the source of all love (cf. Rom 5:5), any invocation of the saints is an acknowledgement of God as the ultimate foundation of the charity of the saints, and tends in the last analysis towards Him.

7.2. This concept of invocation is completely different from the notion of evoking spirits. The Second Vatican Council, while commending us to invoke the souls of the blessed, calls on us to remember the principal documents of the Church's magisterium aimed "against any form whatsoever of the evocation of spirits."<sup>86</sup> This enduring interdiction has biblical roots already in the Old Testament (Dt 18:10-14; cf. also Ex 22:17; Lv 19:31; 20:6, 27). A most famous instance is the evocation of the spirit of Samuel (*'ôbôî*) on the part of King Saul (1 Sam 28:3-25) to which Scripture attributes both the rejection and the death of Saul: "Saul died because he committed evil inasmuch as he transgressed the divine mandate, failing to observe it, and, what is more, consulted ghosts and not the Lord for guidance. And the Lord killed him and transferred his kingdom to David, the son of Jesse" (1 Chron 10:13-14). In the New Testament the Apostles sustain this prohibition and banish all magical practices (Acts 13:6-12; 16:16-18; 19:11-20).

The Doctrinal Commission at the Second Vatican Council explained the meaning of "evocation": it would involve any method whereby "the effort is made by human techniques to establish communication in the external order with spirits or disembodied souls in the hope of acquiring various kinds of information and forms of help."<sup>87</sup> This complex of techniques is commonly known as "spiritualism." As often as not – as the response referred to makes clear – the intention is to use the evocation of spirits to obtain hidden information. The faithful are directed in all that concerns such matters to God's own revelation. "They have Moses and the prophets; let them heed them" (Lk 16:29). Any further curiosity about post mortem affairs would be utterly foolish and should therefore be simply repressed.

There are sects today who reject the Catholic invocation of saints by claiming it falls under the biblical prohibition. In so doing they are failing to distinguish it from the evocation of spirits. On our side, as we urge the invocation of the saints to the faithful, we must teach them the nature of that invocation in such a way as to give the sects no handle for such misunderstanding.

7.3. As to the question of the need for purification of souls of the departed, "the Pilgrim Church offered suffrages for them from the very primitive age of Christianity."<sup>88</sup> The Church indeed believes that such a purification is benefitted "by the suffrages of the faithful on earth, that is, by the sacrifice of the Mass, prayer, alms-giving, and other pious works, which by custom and in accordance with what the Church lays down have been offered by the faithful for fellow faithful."<sup>89</sup> Since the postconciliar liturgical renewal "The General Instruction on the Roman Missal" gives an excellent interpretation of this multiple symbiosis of all the members of the church, which reaches its peak in the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist: the intercessions signify "that the Eucharist is celebrated in communion with the whole Church, in heaven and on earth, and that an offering is made for the Church itself and all the members, living and dead, who are called to share in the redemption and salvation that were won by the Body and Blood of Christ."<sup>90</sup>

## 8. The Purification of the Soul Prior to Meeting Christ in His Glory

8.1. When the magisterium of the Church asserts that the souls of the sanctified will enjoy the beatific vision of God and perfect union with Christ shortly after death, there is a presupposition: it is souls which are purified that are meant.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, the words of Psalm 15:1-2, albeit that they have the earthly sanctuary in mind, have a great bearing on the subject of life after death. "Lord, who will live in your tabernacle? Who will find rest on your holy mountain? He who enters without a blemish."<sup>92</sup> For nothing soiled can approach the divine presence.

These words express a consciousness of a reality which is so fundamental that, one way or another, a certain surmise of the necessity of post mortem purification exists in many of the great historical religions.

The Church also holds that any stain is an impediment when it comes to our intimate meeting with God and Christ. This principle is not concerned only with stains which break or destroy friendship with God and which, therefore, should they persist in death, make a meeting with God definitively impossible (grave sins), but also with those which darken such a friendship and require a prior purification, so as to make possible such a meeting with God and Christ. To this class belong the so-called "daily sins", which we call venial,<sup>93</sup> and also those remains of sin which may persist in the justified when guilt has been remitted and its attendant eternal punishment.<sup>94</sup> The sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is aimed at wiping away before death these remains of sin.<sup>95</sup> Only if we are made like to Christ can we have communion with God (cf. Rom 8:29).

For that reason, we are bidden to seek purification. Even those who are washed, must also free their feet of dust (cf. Jn 13:10). In the case of those who have not achieved this adequately by penance on earth, the Church teaches that there is a post mortem purificatory phase,<sup>96</sup> to wit,

"a purification preceding the vision of God."<sup>97</sup> Since this post mortem purification is to take place before the final resurrection, it is a state that belongs to an intermediate eschatological stage; indeed the very existence of such a state shows that an intermediate eschatology exists.

The Church's faith in such a state was already implicitly expressed in the prayers for the dead, and the catacombs have most ancient testimonies of this,<sup>98</sup> all of which find their basic foundation in the witness of 2 Mac 12:46.<sup>99</sup> In such prayers it is presupposed that the departed can be helped on the way of purification by the prayers of the faithful. The theology of that state began to develop in the third century in the case of those who had been restored to peace with the Church without having made the full penance before death.<sup>100</sup>

The practice of praying for the dead must be fully retained. It contains a profession of faith in the existence of such a purificatory state. This too is the meaning of the burial liturgy, a meaning we may not forget: the justified may still need further purification. There is a beautiful portrait of the deceased in the Byzantine liturgy, as it cries out to the Lord: "I still remain, no matter how much I am wounded, as an image of your surpassing glory."<sup>101</sup>

8.2. The Church believes that the definitive state of damnation awaits those who die burdened with grave sin.<sup>102</sup> It is categorically important to avoid any too close assimilation of the purificatory process which precedes our meeting with God with the process of damnation, as if all that lay between them was the opposition of eternal and temporal: the post mortem purification is "straightforwardly other than the pain of damnation."<sup>103</sup> In fact, a state whose centre is love, and another, whose centre is hate, cannot be compared. The justified are alive in the love of Christ. Death strengthens the consciousness of such a love. When there is a delay in reaching the possession of the beloved, there is sorrow, a sorrow that purifies.<sup>104</sup> St John of the Cross explains how the Holy Spirit as "the flame of living love" purifies the soul to enable it to reach the perfect love of God, both on earth and, where necessary, after death. In this way, he established a certain parallelism between the purification associated with the so-called "dark nights" and the passive purification of purgatory.<sup>105</sup> In the history of this dogma, carelessness in distinguishing properly between the states of damnation and purification created great problems in conducting a dialogue with the Eastern Christians.<sup>106</sup>

## 9. The Irrepeatability and Singleness of Human Life: The Problem of Reincarnation

9.1. The word "reincarnation" (and equivalents such as the Greek, *metempsychosis* or *metempsychosis*) describes a doctrine which holds that the human soul assumes another body after death. It has, that is, a new incarnation or enfleshment. This is a child of paganism in direct

opposition to Scripture and Church tradition, and has been always rejected by Christian faith and theology.<sup>107</sup>

In our time, "reincarnation" has a substantial vogue even in the west, and among many who define themselves as Christians. It has great currency in the media, and, increasingly, the influence of Eastern religions and philosophies which have a reincarnational character is spreading. The reason for this is the growth of a syncretistic mentality. The reason for its acceptance by many people is possibly due to an instinctive and spontaneous reaction to the rampant materialism of the present day. Many of our contemporaries view this life on earth as too brief to realise the full potential of the individual, or to correct and surpass life's failures.

The Catholic faith has a full response to this way of thinking. It is true that human life is too short to correct and surpass its failures and deficiencies. But the eschatological purification will be perfect. It is granted that a single earthly life is too short to realise all human potential in time. But the final, glorious resurrection will lead people to a state surpassing all their desires.

9.2. It is not possible to give in detail here all aspects of present reincarnational systems. The main thrust of reincarnationalism, however, in the West today may be summarised under four heads.<sup>108</sup>

9.2.1. There are many earthly existences. Our present existence is not our first bodily existence, nor our last. We lived before, and again and again we shall inhabit new bodies.

9.2.2. There is a law in nature which impels us to an enduring progress towards perfection. This same law leads souls to newer and newer lives. No regression is allowed, nor indeed any definitive standing still. *A fortiori*, any thought of a definitive state of eternal damnation is unthinkable. After many, or fewer, ages, they hold, a final perfection of pure spirit will be reached: (a denial of hell).

9.2.3. The ultimate destination is achieved by one's own merits. In each and every new existence, the soul progresses in virtue of its own strivings. Whatever evil was done is atoned for by personal expiations which each spirit meets and suffers in new and difficult incarnations: (a denial of redemption).

9.2.4. In proportion to the soul's progress towards final perfection the body in its new incarnations will grow less and less admixed with matter. This means that the soul has an innate tendency to definitive bodiless existence. Along this way, the soul will reach a definitive status, forever free of the body and independent of all matter: (a denial of resurrection).

9.3. These four elements which constitute reincarnational anthropology are an outright negation of the central affirmations of Christian revelation. There is no need to insist further on how different it is from the characteristically Christian anthropology. Christianity defends *duality*, reincarnation defends *a dualism* in which the body is simply an instrument of the soul and is laid aside, existence by successive existence, as an

altogether different body is assumed each time. As far as eschatology is concerned, the doctrine of reincarnation denies both the possibility of eternal damnation and the idea of the resurrection of the body.

But the fundamental error is in the rejection of the Christian doctrine of salvation. For the reincarnationist the soul is its own saviour by its own efforts. Its soteriology is one of autoredemption, which is diametrically opposed to the hetero redemption of Christian soteriology. In fact, if such a heteroredemption is suppressed, any talk of Christ the Redeemer is null and void. The nub of New Testament soteriology is contained in the following words: "This was his will and pleasure in order that the glory of his gracious gift, so graciously conferred on us in his Beloved, might resound to his praise. In Christ our release is secured and our sins forgiven through the shedding of his blood. In the richness of his grace God has lavished on us all wisdom and insight" (Eph 1:6-8). The whole doctrine concerning Church, sacraments and grace stands or falls on this central point. The serious nature of the doctrines involved here is thus evident, and it can readily be understood why the Church's magisterium has rejected the system we have been discussing, categorizing it as a theosophism.<sup>109</sup>

As to the specific point asserted by reincarnationalists concerning the repeatability of human lives, the Epistle to the Hebrews is well known: "it is appointed to men to die once and after that the judgment" (9:27). The Second Vatican Council appealed to this text when teaching that we have only a single life on earth.<sup>110</sup>

In the phenomenon of reincarnation there may well be certain aspiration towards disavowing materialism. But this "spiritualistic" tendency does not in any way nullify the profound contradiction it contains over against the message of the gospel.

#### 10. The Greatness of the Divine Intentions and the Seriousness of Human Existence

10.1. Since we have our human lives once only, it is clear how serious a matter our lives are. There is no second time around. Since our earthly life is the way to the reality of the last things, our behaviour in life has irrevocable consequences. Our life in the body has an eternal destiny.

The truth is that people begin to recognise the meaning of their final destiny only when they realise the divine origin of their own nature. God created humankind "to his own image and likeness" (Gen 1:26). What is implied here is that God has given people the capacity of knowing God and freely loving him, and of ruling over the other earthly creatures, of making them subject, and making use of them.<sup>111</sup> This capacity is rooted in the spiritual nature of the human soul. Since each human soul is a direct creation by God in each person,<sup>112</sup> each person is a product of a single concrete act of God's creative love.

10.2. God did not only make people, but placed them in Paradise (Gen 2:4), a biblical way of saying that the first person had the closest bonds of friendship with God.<sup>113</sup> It is easy to understand how Paradise was lost by a sin against a grave divine precept (Gen 3:23-34), since a sin of that sort destroys friendship with God.

A promise of salvation follows the sin of the first person, (cf. Gen 3:15), which according to both Jewish and Christian exegesis will be brought by the Messiah (cf. in the context of the word *sperma* (the *Sep-tuagint's*: *autos* and not *auto*).

Indeed, in the fullness of time God "reconciled us to himself through Christ" (2 Cor 5:18). And that is to say that "he who was sinless was made sin by God for us, that we might be made one with the righteousness of God through him" (2 Cor 5:21). Moved by mercy, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, so that whoever believes in him would not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). The redemption allows us "to see the depth of that love which does not recoil before the extraordinary sacrifice of the Son, in order to satisfy the fidelity of the Creator and Father towards people, created in his image and chosen from 'the beginning' for grace and glory."<sup>114</sup>

Jesus is the "true Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (Jn 1:29). The forgiveness of sin won by the death and resurrection of Christ (cf. Rom 4:25) is not a legal thing merely but an inward renovation of the human being.<sup>115</sup> Moreover, it raises us higher than our natural condition. Christ was sent by the Father "that we might be adopted as sons" (Gal 4:5). In his name we believe with a lively faith, he gives us "the power to be made sons of God" (cf. Jn 1:12). In that way we enter God's family. The Father's aim is that "we become like the image of his Son so that the Son is the firstborn of many brothers" (Rom 8:29). As a result, Jesus Christ's Father becomes our Father (cf. Jn 20:17).

As we are the Father's sons in the Son, we are "also heirs: heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ" (Rom 8:17). The meaning then of the promise of eternal life to us is that we share in the inheritance of Christ: "we are citizens of heaven" (Phil 3:20), because, as far as heaven is concerned, already we are not "strangers or newcomers, but . . . fellow citizens with the saints and intimates in God's household" (Eph 2:19).

10.3. In revealing the Father's secrets to us, Jesus wants to make us his friends (cf. Jn 15:15). But friendship cannot be forced on us. Friendship with God like adoption is an offer, to be freely accepted or rejected. The happiness of Heaven is the consummation of the gift of Christ's friendship freely offered and accepted freely. "To be with Christ" (Phil 1:23) in the way of friends, is the essence of the eternal blessedness of Heaven (cf. 2 Cor 5:6-8; 1 Thess 4:17). The theme of the vision of God "face to face" (1 Cor 13:12; cf. 1 Jn 3:2) is to be understood as an expression of intimate friendship (cf. already in Ex 33:11: "God spoke to Moses *face to face* in the way a man speaks *to his friend*"). This consummated and

freely accepted friendship implies a concrete possibility of rejection. What is freely accepted can be freely rejected. Whoever thus chooses rejection, "has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph 5:5). Eternal damnation has its origin in the free rejection to the very end of God's Love and Mercy.<sup>116</sup> The Church believes that this state consists of deprivation of the sight of God and that the whole "being" of the sinner suffers the repercussion of this loss eternally.<sup>117</sup>

This doctrine of faith shows equally the importance of the human capacity of freely rejecting God and, the gravity of such a freely willed rejection. The Christian while on earth is aware that he lives under Christ's future judgement: "For we must all have our lives laid open before the tribunal of Christ, where each must receive what is due to him for his conduct in the body, good or bad" (2 Cor 5:10). Only in the presence of Christ and by the light he conveys, can that mystery of iniquity which is resident in the sins we commit be understood. Through grave sin a human being comes, in his way of acting, to look on "*God as the enemy of his own creature, of the very man he has made, as if God were a danger and a menace to man*".<sup>118</sup>

Since we have only one lifetime (Heb 9:27),<sup>119</sup> in which the gift of divine friendship and adoption is offered gratuitously to our freedom, and since there is a danger of losing these, the serious nature of our life is obvious. Decisions we now make have eternal consequences. The Lord has set before us "the way of life and the way of death" (Jer 21: 8). Although he invites us to the way of life by prevenient and cooperative (*adiuvians*) grace, we can choose the other way.<sup>120</sup> When we choose, God genuinely respects our liberty, without failing to continue to offer his saving grace even to those who are turned away from him. It must be stated that in fact God genuinely respects whatever we on our part freely will to do, whether we accept or reject grace. It follows that in a certain way salvation and damnation each begin on earth in that people by their moral actions open or close themselves to God. On the other hand, the greatness and the ensuing responsibility of human liberty is clear.

Every theologian is aware of the difficulties that people now, and in every former period, find in accepting the New Testament teaching on hell. For that reason there is much merit in keeping a mind open to the sober teaching of the gospel, whether in expounding it or in believing it. Such sobriety should content us, and we should avoid attempts to grasp in concrete detail how to reconcile God's infinite goodness and human liberty. The Church takes seriously both human liberty, and the divine Mercy which gives people the liberty which is a condition for obtaining salvation. Since the Church prays for the salvation of all people living, by that fact it is praying for the conversion of all. God wants "all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4). The Church has always believed that such a universal salvific will on God's part has an ample efficacy. The Church has never once declared the

damnation of a single person as a concrete fact. But, since hell is a genuine possibility for every person, it is not right – although today this is something which is forgotten in the preaching at exequies – to treat salvation as a kind of quasi-automatic consequence. For these reasons, we should, where this doctrine is concerned, make Paul's words our own. "How deep are the wealth and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How inscrutable his judgements, how unsearchable his ways!" (Rom 11:33).

10.4. Reincarnationalists believe our earthly life too brief to constitute our only life. This is why they insist on repeatability. The Christian ought to be aware of the brevity of life since he knows we have one life only. As we "all sin . . . in many ways" (Jam 3:2), and since there often was sin in our past lives, we must "use the present opportunity to the full" (Eph 5:16) and "throwing off every encumbrance and the sin that all too readily restricts us, run with resolution the race that lies ahead of us, our eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith" (Heb 12:1-2). "We have not here a lasting city, but seek one that is to come" (Heb 13:14). The Christian then as an alien and a pilgrim (cf. 1 Pet 2:11) hurries in holiness of life to his own country (cf. Heb. 11:14), where he will be with the Lord (cf. 1 Thess 4:17).

## 11. The law of prayer is the law of belief

11.1. It is a principle of theology that "the law of prayer establishes the law of belief."<sup>121</sup> We can and should find the faith of the Church in the liturgy. Since a full investigation of the doctrine of the Last Things in the liturgy is not possible here, we shall attempt a synthesis of the main ideas which are found in the renewed liturgy which followed the Second Vatican Council.

11.2. The first thing to observe is that in the liturgy for the dead<sup>122</sup> the resurrection of Christ is the ultimate reality which lights up all the other realities concerned with Last Things. As a result the resurrection of the body is our supreme hope. "Since then Christ arose as the firstborn among the dead and will give our frail body a shape similar to his own glorious body, we commend our brother to the Lord that he may take him into his peace and raise up his body on the last day."<sup>123</sup> It is clear from this text that the resurrection not only belongs to the future, that is, it is not yet in effect, but will take place at the end of the world.

11.3. Since the resurrection of the body will take place at the end of time, there is in the interim an eschatology of souls. For this reason, prayers are said for the blessing of the grave "that when the body (of the deceased) is swallowed in it, the soul may be stored up in paradise."<sup>124</sup> In biblical terms inspired by Lk 23:43 mention is made of the soul's retribution being "soon after death." There are other forms of prayer of the same tenor with regard to the soul. *The Burial Service*, for instance,

has this prayer which is said as the body is placed on the bier: "Accept, O Lord, the *soul* of your servant, N, which you have called from this world to yourself, so that free from the fetters of every sin, it may be granted the blessedness of peace and eternal light and may merit being raised to the glory of the resurrection among your saints and chosen ones."<sup>125</sup> A prayer for the "soul" of the deceased is repeated in other places.<sup>126</sup> The prayer spoken as the very moment of death approaches is thoroughly traditional and very ancient. "Go, Christian soul, from this world in the name of God, the Almighty, who created you, in the name of Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, who suffered for you, in the name of the Holy Spirit, poured forth into your heart; today may you dwell in peace and live with God in holy Sion."<sup>127</sup>

The formulas used in prayers of this kind include a petition which would be unintelligible if there were no post mortem purification. "May his soul suffer no injury [ . . . ] forgive him all his wrongs and sins."<sup>128</sup> The reference to wrongdoing and sins must be understood here in connection with daily faults and the remains of mortal sins since the Church offers no prayers for the damned.

In one prayer the ordination of the eschatology of souls towards the resurrection is beautifully expressed: "Most Merciful Father, we commend the soul of our brother into your hands, buoyed up by the certain hope that he like all who have died in Christ will rise with Christ on the last day."<sup>129</sup> Such a resurrection is envisaged in a thoroughly realistic way both because of the parallelism with Christ's own resurrection and because of the relationship with the dead body in the sepulchre: "Lord Jesus Christ, who, in the three days you lay in the tomb, so sanctified the graves of all who believe in you that while they serve to bury the body they also augment the hope of resurrection, please grant that your servant may sleep in peace until you, who are resurrection and life, awaken him and fill him with light."<sup>130</sup> The "Third Eucharistic Prayer" also brings out the realistic nature of the resurrection of the dead (together of course with the idea of a glorious transformation), its relationship with Christ's own resurrection, and the fact that it belongs to the future: "Grant that the person who (in baptism) died with Christ may also share his resurrection, when Christ will raise our mortal bodies and make them like his own in glory."<sup>131</sup> This text has great theological significance since it is contained within the anaphora.

### Conclusion

We wanted to conclude this exposition of ours on certain contemporary eschatological questions with the testimony of the liturgy. The Church's faith appears in the liturgy, which is a privileged locus when it comes to professing that faith. That testimony has made it clear that the liturgy serves to strike a balance between the individual and collective

elements in eschatology and to bring forth the christological meaning of the ultimate realities, without which eschatology would be reduced to mere human speculation.

It is now in order, as we end this exposition, to introduce, by way of a final doctrinal synthesis, the paragraph with which the "Introduction" to the book of the *Order of Burial* begins, and in which moreover the spirit of the new Roman liturgy is crystal clear:

In burying its children the Church celebrates with confidence the Paschal Mystery of Christ, so that they, having been made of one body with Christ's death and resurrection, may pass with him from death to life, to be purified indeed in their souls and to be assumed into heaven with the saints and chosen ones, while awaiting in their bodies for the blessed hope of Christ's advent and the resurrection of the dead. Wherefore the Church offers the eucharistic sacrifice of the Pasch of Christ for the dead and pours out prayers and commendations for them so that, in virtue of the mutual interaction of all Christ's members, what brings spiritual help to some affords to others the consolation of hope.<sup>132</sup>

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1. Cf. St. Clement of Rome, *Ad Corinthios* 5: Funk 1, 104-6.

2. Cf. St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Romanos* 4: Funk 1, 256-8.

3. Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 39: AAS 58 (1966) 1057.

4. Synod 1985, *Relatio Finalis* II, A, 1 (E Civitate Vaticana 1985) p. 6.

5. Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 18: AAS (1966) 1038.

6. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter *Recentiores episcoporum synodi*, Introduction: AAS 71 (1979) 940.

7. Synod 1985, *Relatio Finalis* II, D, 1, p. 17.

8. Synod 1985, *Relatio Finalis*, I, 4, p. 4.

9. On this cf. H. de Lubac, *La postérité spirituelle de Joachim de Fiore*, 2 vols. (Paris 1978 and 1981).

10. For the relationship between Marx and Hegel cf. *ibid.*, vol 2, 256-360.

11. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction *Libertatis nuntius* (Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation') 10, 6: AAS 76 (1984) 901; Vatican translation.

12. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction *Libertatis nuntius* (Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation') 10, 5: AAS 76 (1984) 900.

13. Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 20: AAS 58 (1966) 1040.

14. Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 21: AAS 58 (1966) 1041.

15. Cf. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 31: AAS 68 (1976) 28.

16. Cf. International Theological Commission, *Human Development and Christian Salvation* (1976), in International Theological Commission, *Texts and Documents, 1969-1985* (San Francisco 1989) 145-62.

17. Synod 1985, *Relatio Finalis*, II, D 6, p. 19.