

'God for Us' in the Challenge of Integral Human Development: Theology in Post-Vatican II Catholic Social Teaching

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Boston College

School of Theology and Ministry

**'GOD FOR US' IN THE CHALLENGE OF INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT:
THEOLOGY IN POST-VATICAN II CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING**

A Dissertation

by

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‘God for Us’ in the Challenge of Integral Human Development: Theology in Post-Vatican II
Catholic Social Teaching

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Abstract

In what sense is Catholic social teaching theological? Undoubtedly theology is a resource for ethical reflection but it can also be an outcome of it. This dissertation explores the theological contribution of post-Vatican II papal social encyclicals on development. Particular historical challenges and also specific worldviews adopted by the popes shape ethical reasoning and political priorities for action, but they do more. They stimulate theological thinking by making options among diverse theological frameworks, favoring certain concepts or symbols and downplaying others, and thus, they contribute to entering the mystery of God’s salvific love and allowing it to seize us.

Chapter one offers some guidelines for a theological reading of social encyclicals. Vatican II with its “principle of pastorality” works as a compass. Karl Rahner, whose theology is always at the same time anthropology and Christology, is a privileged partner for the investigation. The history of half a century of debates on theories of development is the background.

Chapters two to four analyze successively Paul VI’s *Populorum progressio* (*PP*), John Paul II’s *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (*SRS*), and Benedict XVI’s *Caritas in veritate* (*CiV*) by retrieving elements of context, highlighting the theological meaning of their methodological options, and exploring their insights about the mystery of being human and the mystery of “Jesus Christ for us.” In the 1960s, *PP* develops a theology which highlights incarnation and God’s grace at work in this world (neo-Thomist framework). Twenty years later, when early hopes about development have faded, *SRS* pursues this lead but also rebalances it with a greater concern for

sin and redemption brought by Christ in the world (Augustinian framework). It also incorporates categories put forward by Latin American liberation theology such as structures of sin, liberation, and option for the poor which stress the structural dimension of sin and grace (Liberationist framework). At the dawn of the 21st century and showing concerns for growing secularization in Western countries, *CiV* insists on God's transcendence (Augustinian framework) while still showing traces of the two other theological frameworks because of his addressing challenges of global justice.

The final chapter offers three guidelines for theology which arise from the recognition of the theological nature of the church's social teaching. (1) Without losing sight of its transcendental origin, theology ought to begin within history and with human experience. (2) A Christian anthropology ought to manifest the unity of the personal and social dimensions of being human which calls for both personal conversion and structural change. (3) Christologies can articulate approaches from above and from below in a variety of ways but the inescapability of the latter needs to be stressed in connection with taking seriously the option for the poor.

A.M.D.G.

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ABREVIATIONS

<i>Ap</i>	<i>Concluding Document of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean</i> , 2007, Aparecida, Brazil
<i>CiV</i>	<i>Caritas in veritate</i> (Benedict XVI, 2009)
CELAM	Latin American Episcopal Conference
CST	Catholic Social Teaching
<i>DCE</i>	<i>Deus caritas est</i> (Benedict XVI, 2005)
<i>DH</i>	<i>Dignitatis humanae</i> (Vatican II, 1965)
<i>DV</i>	<i>Dei verbum</i> (Vatican II, 1965)
<i>ES</i>	<i>Ecclesiam suam</i> (Paul VI, 1964)
<i>FCF</i>	<i>Foundations of Christian Faith</i> (Karl Rahner, 1978)
<i>GS</i>	<i>Gaudium et spes</i> (Vatican II, 1965)
<i>Med</i>	<i>Concluding Document of the Second Conference of the Bishops of Latin America</i> , 1968, Medellín, Colombia.
<i>MM</i>	<i>Mater et magistra</i> (John XXIII, 1961)
<i>OA</i>	<i>Octagesima adveniens</i> (Paul VI, 1971)
<i>PiT</i>	<i>Pacem in terris</i> (John XXIII, 1963)
<i>PP</i>	<i>Populorum progressio</i> (Paul VI, 1967)
<i>Pue</i>	<i>Concluding Document of the Third Conference of the Bishops of Latin America</i> , 1979, Puebla, Mexico.
<i>RH</i>	<i>Redemptor hominis</i> (John Paul II, 1979)
<i>RP</i>	<i>Reconciliatio et paenitentia</i> (John Paul II, 1984)
<i>SRS</i>	<i>Sollicitudo rei socialis</i> (John Paul II, 1987)
<i>TI</i>	<i>Theological Investigations</i> (Karl Rahner)

Note: Citations of church documents are made by indicating the abbreviation followed by the section number. Unless specifically indicated in the final bibliography, the English translation used for papal and conciliar documents is the one available at www.vatican.va. Emphasis in citing these documents is from the original unless otherwise noted.

INTRODUCTION

In *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (SRS) Pope John Paul II speaks of the church's social doctrine as belonging to the field of *theology* (SRS 41). In what sense is this the case? What does it mean to say that Catholic social teaching (CST) is theological? How do we, moral theologians or theological ethicists, understand the relationship between social ethics and theology?

A first obvious answer is to stress the natural movement which goes from theology to social ethics. Theology is a possible and fruitful source for ethical discernment of social issues. Theological ethicists commonly refer to a set of four sources for their reflection: Bible and Christian tradition, philosophical tradition, scientific reasoning, and human experience.¹ There is no doubt that CST in general, and more specifically its magisterial component since Leo XIII's *Rerum novarum*, is using theological concepts and symbols as sources. It is true that, up until Vatican II, it used principally a form of ethical reasoning based on natural law which seemed to provide universal principles accessible even outside the context of explicit Christian revelation. However one should remember that, in the Catholic understanding, natural law reasoning is far from being non-theological because it is envisioned as the expression of God's eternal law imprinted on human hearts and minds. More recently, after Vatican II, and especially in the

¹ John R. Donahue, "The Bible and Catholic Social Teaching," in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching. Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth R. Himes (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 9-40, 32; Lisa S. Cahill, *Foundations for a Christian Ethics of Sexuality* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress; New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 1-13; James Gustafson, *Protestant and Roman Catholic Ethics: Prospects for Rapprochement* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 142.

teachings of John Paul II and Benedict XVI, the theological sources of CST have become more explicit.

A good example of an approach which founds CST on theology is given by Michael and Kenneth Himes in *Fullness of Faith*.² In this book, they intend “to do a public theology by discussing the social implications and the public significance of central symbols within the Catholic tradition.”³ They show how theological reflections about original sin, the Trinity, grace, creation, incarnation, or the communion of saints give a stronger foundation to the Catholic Church’s pleas in favor of human rights, a consistent ethic of life, environmental ethics, or an ethic of solidarity. In a pluralistic context, theology is still appropriate as a source for ethical thinking.

Without denying this first way of articulating ethics and theology, it is possible to consider as well a second movement which would go *from* ethics *to* theology. Actually, while reading the brothers Himes, one already gets a sense that some of Catholic social ethics’ points of insistence are more strongly supported by certain theological approaches than by others. For example, CST’s stress on the common good and on the role of the state in working toward it are better supported by the Catholic understanding of original sin than that of the reformed churches and their more pessimistic view of human nature.

² Michael J. Himes and Kenneth R. Himes, *Fullness of Faith: The Public Significance of Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993).

³ Ibid., 25.

More recently, in *Global Justice, Christology, and Christian Ethics*, Lisa Cahill goes further in stressing the impact that social ethics and social practices ought to have on theology.⁴ In the line of liberation theologians, she affirms that *orthodoxy* must meet the criterion of *orthopraxis*. Theological concepts and doctrines need to be verified by the consequences they have on practices. Orthodoxy and orthopraxis cannot be separated. Cahill applies this principle while revisiting, from the perspective of global justice and social ethics, some of the main theological questions such as creation, evil, Christ, Spirit, the cross, and hope.

Cahill's book is one attempt, and a convincing one, at showing the movement that goes from ethics to theology. My aim in this dissertation is to continue to investigate in this general direction. I would like to show that the relationship between theology and social ethics can be envisioned through the consideration of how the latter contributes to the former and not merely how the former is a source for the latter. From the outset it is to be noted that it is not a matter here of merely reversing a logical deductive movement but rather of making a case in favor of a solid hermeneutical circle – or better hermeneutical spiral. When considering theological expressions of faith, ethical discernment, and practices, there are constant interactions among the three. Faith convictions and theological elaborations can prompt actions through the mediation of ethics. However, in return, practices captured in ethical guidelines can reshape our ways of expressing our beliefs. By being focused on how ethics, in particular CST, contributes to theology, I would like to deal with the part of the circle which is too often missing, without downplaying the well acknowledged fact that theology is a source for Christian ethics.

⁴ Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Global Justice, Christology, and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

In consequence, the aim of this dissertation is to highlight the contribution which post-Vatican II CST – more specifically, the papal social magisterium – has made to theology. By addressing various social, political, and economic issues from an ethical or moral point of view, by promoting some practices and denouncing others, this teaching brings particular insights to the theological endeavor. I will try to show that the *corpus* of the magisterium concerned with social issues puts a particular stress on some dimensions of the mystery of “God for us” which otherwise could be forgotten and that it also challenges other theological discourses and helps to reorient them. As case studies, I will focus on three encyclicals dealing with the challenge of development in a globalized world: Paul VI’s *Populorum progressio* (*PP*), John Paul II’s *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, and Benedict XVI’s *Caritas in veritate* (*CiV*). This will lead me to deal with three theological themes: methodology and style as theologically significant, theological anthropology, and Christology.

In this introduction I explain these choices. I make some preliminary methodological remarks about what I mean by *theological* contributions and the plurality implied here. I also explain why I opt for studying documents of the Roman magisterium. I then offer an overview of the theological journey I intend to make across three different encyclicals, authored by three different popes, and set within three different historical contexts. Particular historical challenges and also specific worldviews adopted by the popes shape ethical reasoning and political priorities for action, but they do more. They stimulate theological thinking by making options among diverse theological frameworks, favoring certain concepts or symbols and downplaying others. However, prior to addressing these topics, a few words are needed to situate the context within which this rather theoretical question of the articulation between social ethics and theology emerges.

I. A THEORETICAL QUESTION WITH PASTORAL IMPLICATIONS

Why take up the question of the theological dimension of CST? In the background of my reflection are the challenges facing the Catholic Church at the dawn of the 21st century in Western countries marked by a secularizing process⁵ and, more specifically, in my country, France. Three intertwined interests come to the fore. First, as Peter Henriot and Edward DeBerri brilliantly pointed out in the title of their famous book,⁶ indeed, CST is for most Catholics “our best kept secret,” so secret that it is barely known or, if known by name, is relegated to the margins of what constitutes Catholic identity. For many, it seems more important to focus on worship and liturgy or on what appears as “more explicit faith teaching.” Showing the theological contribution of CST is a way of stressing that this dimension of the Catholic faith is not optional or simply meant for those who have an acquaintance with it. Engagement for social justice, solidarity, and charity in the church are tasks required by the Gospel and ethical exigencies, but, more importantly, they are a source for faith. They are not simply a practical or ethical consequence of faith. They nourish and sustain it.⁷ Shedding light on the contribution of CST to theology is of interest in order to make it relevant to today’s Catholic communities who have a growing concern about strengthening their identity in a pluralistic context.

⁵ I take secularization in the third sense offered by José Casanova. It is not a decline of religion in the modern world, nor a privatization of religion but rather a functional differentiation of the role of religion from other spheres of human activity. José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

⁶ James E. Hug, Peter J. Henriot and Edward P. DeBerri, *Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret*, 4th rev. and expanded ed. (New York: Orbis, 2003).

⁷ See Etienne Grieu, *Un lien si fort. Quand l’amour de Dieu se fait diaconie* (Ivry-sur-Seine: Les éditions de l’atelier, 2009).

A second interest comes from pursuing the legacy of the Second Vatican Council. The main endeavor of the council, according to Pope John XXIII, in his opening speech, was to find ways and means of expounding theological truths “in the forms and proportions of a magisterium which is predominantly pastoral in character.”⁸ This pastoral approach was the leading attitude behind the *aggiornamento* or updating called for by Pope John. The meaning of “a pastoral approach” is certainly not straightforward. It took the whole council to envision the implications of such a turn without exhausting the question or clarifying all its aspects. I will say more on this in the first chapter. At the very least, however, the church at the council made a turning point in understanding its mission of proclaiming the faith. It does not consist in repeating unchanging eternal dogmas but in finding ways to express them in forms meaningful to the receivers, taking into account their situation in time and space. This is not simply a matter of changing the language or the rhetoric as one can change the appearance of an object by adding a new envelope. What is at stake is a growing awareness that faith and practice, what is witnessed and how it is witnessed, what is revealed and how it is revealed in words and actions, cannot be separated. Theological dogmas are not to be “received” merely in the sense of putting into practice something external. Christian practices themselves shape and develop theological understandings of the Christian faith.⁹ Because the various documents of the social teaching of the church always explicitly address a particular set of historically situated social issues, they are, *a priori*, in a good position for pursuing the task initiated at the council.

⁸ John XXIII, “Opening Address at the Council” (Oct. 11, 1962) in *The Documents of Vatican II in a New and Definitive Translation With Commentaries and Notes by Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Authorities*, ed. Walter M. Abbot (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966), 715.

⁹ On the understanding of the “pastoral principle” at work in the council and on a rich understanding of “reception” that is not mere “implementation,” see C. Theobald, *La réception du concile Vatican II: Tome I, Accéder à la source* (Paris: Cerf, 2009).

A third interest in investigating the theological dimension of CST concerns the mission of evangelization entrusted to the church. In recent times the phrase “new evangelization” has gained wide currency. Without entering into the multiple debates surrounding it, suffice it to acknowledge that, in Western countries marked by a form of secularization that makes the Gospel and the Christian faith somewhat foreign to many people, there is a big challenge to find ways to testify to the Good News of the salvation offered in Jesus Christ. Referring to the French context, it seems that a lot of what the church has to offer in the socio-ethical field could be received with interest by many outside the church who are deeply challenged by current economic, financial, political, and environmental crises. Can we not deepen our awareness that the CST tradition can be a path of addressing ethical issues while also of proclaiming the faith? Because it is rooted in the affirmation of the primacy of the freedom of religion that has become a cornerstone of CST with Vatican II’s *Dignitatis humanae*, this proclamation takes the form of a proposition and certainly not of an imposition. Paying attention to the theological insights present in social encyclicals should give us an additional tool for this proposition.

II. THEOLOGY AND THEOLOGIES

Investigating the *theological* dimension of some social encyclicals and attempting to highlight their *theological* contribution, we need first to reflect on the meaning of this qualifying term. The very notion of theology is certainly not univocal and doing theology from the perspective of CST will influence our definition of it. The understanding of theology with which I can argue that social encyclicals offer *theological* contributions will become clearer along the way of the investigation. Nonetheless, a few remarks can be made at the beginning.

Theology, broadly speaking, refers to past and contemporary reflections which interpret Scripture and have God and the Christian faith as their object. Etymologically, ‘theology’ means discourse or reasoning (*logos*) about God (*theos*). Theology refers to a “reasoned mode of understanding according to revelation;”¹⁰ it can be thought of as “an intellectual discipline, i.e., an ordered body of knowledge about God.”¹¹ Because the church has the mission to proclaim the Good News of God’s salvation in Jesus Christ, it must testify, in all that it teaches, social teaching included, to the mystery of God by saying something about it.¹² There ought to be a theological dimension to CST not only because CST uses theology as a source but also because it contributes to theology, to a reasoned discourse about God and about things considered in their relation to God.

By envisioning this theological dimension of CST, I am consciously shifting the understanding of theology from a mere “intellectual discipline” to an articulation of theory and praxis. The social encyclicals are an elaborate discourse reflecting the perennial and universal truth of the Christian faith. They, however, do so by relying on an analysis of historical situations and by offering practical orientations as well. They are a speculative moment in a reflection on human experiences but they are offering a kind of theology which is not purely speculative and is rather strongly articulated with practices.

¹⁰ William J. Hill, “Theology,” in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins, and Dermot A. Lane (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1987), 1015. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, q.1, a.1.

¹¹ Hill, “Theology,” 1011.

¹² “Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you” (1 Pt 3:15).

The object of the theological endeavor is certainly God, but more precisely it is “God for us,” or God as “God in relation with human beings,” God “loving us” and God “saving us.” This is the reason why I titled this dissertation “*God for Us in the Challenge of Integral Human Development*.” Theology, especially when it is approached from the perspective of social ethics, which deals with concrete human life, is necessarily soteriology. It deals not so much with who God is *per se* but with who God is *for us*, how God interacts with us and how God saves us.

Lastly, there is certainly not merely one theology developed in CST. We cannot speak of “the” theology of CST even if we limit our study to the post-Vatican II papal magisterium. This is due to the nature of the documents, the diversity of their authors and the diversity of their contexts. Moreover, it is certainly not the case that these documents provide a comprehensive or systematic theology; rather they provide hints and leads on some aspects of the question of “God for us” and they leave the door open to different schools of thought. In brief, whatever theology we find in them is marked at its root by a sense of plurality.

Taking this into account, Karl Rahner’s notion of mystery will be my guideline to define what my *theological* endeavor is.¹³ I expand more on this in chapter one. Mystery in the theological sense is not something mysterious that remains hidden from human reason and is impossible to apprehend. On the contrary, it is the reality that we must always try to apprehend more deeply with our reason, and more broadly with all our being, while it remains beyond any complete comprehensibility. God, and subsequently Jesus Christ, humanity, the church, etc., are

¹³ Karl Rahner, “Mystery,” in *Encyclopedia of Theology. The Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, ed. K. Rahner (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 1000-1004; Karl Rahner, “The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology,” in *Theological Investigations (TI)*, Vol. 4 (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1966), 36–73.

mysteries or various aspects of the one mystery of God's loving self-communication to and in humanity. Theology is the endeavor to apprehend these mysteries while keeping in mind that it is a matter of letting oneself be drawn into the one mystery. In this regard, many ways and approaches – many theologies and many different theological questions – are possible. Far from exhausting the mystery, they are paths to entering into it. To explore what the social encyclicals offer on several theological themes is to highlight some contributions among many others to a very wide theological endeavor.

Sensitive to this reality of theological pluralism and in order to highlight the theological insights stimulated by the encyclicals I will use a typology of “theological frameworks.” What I call a theological framework is a certain way of articulating a vision of God and a vision of the human world which tends to stress some aspects of the mystery, to use a certain set of categories and to privilege certain theological questions. There are three theological frameworks relevant to the analysis of the three social encyclicals under study in this dissertation.

The first two are defined along the line of thought developed by Joseph Komonchak in his description of the various currents of interpretation of Vatican II.¹⁴ He sees two theological trends at work. One is closer to Aquinas (the “neo-Thomist”), the other to Augustine (the “Augustinian”).¹⁵ The first is more incarnational, the second more eschatological. The first views

¹⁴ Joseph A. Komonchak, “The Redaction and Reception of Vatican II,” <http://jakomonchak.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/jak-views-of-gaudium-et-spes.pdf>, first published as “La redazione della *Gaudium et spes*,” *Il Regno* 13 (July 1999): 446-55; Massimo Faggioli, *Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press 2012), 66-91. I do not pretend to stick always and strictly to Komonchak's typology even if I use his terminology.

¹⁵ Komonchak does not pretend – and neither do I – that those frameworks reflect entirely the theologies of Augustine and Thomas in their complexity. The naming is merely an indicator of a certain proximity with the main aspects of their thought.

the world primarily as the place of God's revelation in creation, accessible by human reason participating in the eternal law. The second stresses the dimension of sin that is at work in the world and darkens human reason in need of redemption. The first highlights the created autonomy of the world and the intelligibility of nature, humanity, and history. The second stresses the necessity of grace, seeing true wisdom (as opposed to mere scientific knowledge) and true freedom as results of the redemption accomplished in Christ.

To these two theological frameworks, I add a third, which I call "liberationist" because I see it exemplified in Latin American liberation theology. In this framework the vision of the world is focused on the social and communal dimensions of human life and on the fact that God interacts with human beings not only as individuals but as collectives. Salvation is envisioned in its dimension of bringing about the Kingdom of God which implies changes at the level of institutions and structures. Sin is also named and approached in its social and structural aspect.

Of course these three theological frameworks are not exclusive of one another. In the social encyclicals under study in this dissertation, sometimes one is favored over the two others as the neo-Thomist in *PP* or the Augustinian in *CiV*. Sometimes the three appear rebalancing each other in the same document as in *SRS*. Each one calls attention to an important aspect of the mystery of "God for us." Nonetheless, the investigation will also highlight that the three theological frameworks cannot be merely juxtaposed. From the perspective of CST and of social ethical challenges, theology is better developed within the neo-Thomist framework, completed by the liberationist one and corrected, or rebalanced, by the Augustinian one.

III. MAGISTERIUM

Catholic social teaching certainly encompasses a larger set of reflections than the collection of papal and conciliar documents which started with Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical, *Rerum novarum*. First, the concern of the church for social issues did not emerge merely at the end of the 19th century. From the early Fathers of the church, through the works of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, to Bishop von Ketteler of Mainz, Germany, promoter of "social Catholicism" around 1850, there is no lack of powerful reflection about the social dimension of the Gospel and how Christian faith urges believers to work for justice. Second, even within the modern form CST has taken since the end of the 19th century, papal and conciliar pronouncements on social issues are only one piece of a broader picture constituted by various teachings and reflections issued by local bishops, bishops conferences and, more extensively, various groups within the church.¹⁶ Contributing to the picture are also the many reflections of the theologians who take social ethics as their object of research.

In this dissertation I choose, nonetheless, to work primarily on some documents of the Roman magisterium because they play a normative role in the wider tradition. Highlighting their theological nature can, thus, help vindicate my claim that Catholic social ethics in general is constructively theological and that theology in general cannot ignore this part of the magisterium or downplay it as secondary. However, this "normative role" in the case of the social magisterium requires qualification.

¹⁶ For example, in their reference book, *Catholic Social Thought. The Documentary Heritage*, David O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon include the two pastoral letters of the US bishops published in the 1980s. One can also think of some significant documents published by Catholic charities like Caritas or religious congregations. David J. O'Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010).

What Karl Rahner reflected about the specific nature of Vatican II's *Gaudium et spes* (GS) as a "pastoral constitution" applies also to the social encyclicals. Rahner wrote that,

this unique character [of a "pastoral constitution"] is such that it belongs neither to a law, a norm or a commandment, *nor can the instruction itself be reduced to the level of a mere expression of some opinion* which the promulgators happen to favor, or of a wish which imposes no obligation whatever upon those others to whom it is addressed.¹⁷

There is a level of obligation or binding associated with this type of magisterium. However, because it is neither a set of laws nor a set of a-temporal doctrinal statements but a reading and assessment of the current situation of the world with all the elements of contingency this task implies, this normative function works differently than in the case of a canon or a credal formula.

Social encyclicals pertain to some of the highest authoritative levels of the magisterium. They certainly need to be interpreted, contextualized and they can even be criticized. Their "pastoral" nature, like the one of GS, requires this interpretation and this is a crucial part of the process of receiving them as normative. However, they cannot be treated as merely theological opinions alongside other theological claims. They require a special consideration. This is why this dissertation engages key magisterial expressions of CST and does so with the conviction that the results found here will be openings applicable for CST more broadly and for theology in general.

IV. A THEOLOGICAL READING OF THE SOCIAL ENCYCLICALS

The two previous sections of this introduction have clarified some initial methodological questions concerning the search for *theological* contributions of post-Vatican II *magisterial* CST.

¹⁷ Karl Rahner, "On the Theological Problems Entailed in a 'Pastoral Constitution,'" in *TI*, Vol. 10 (New York: Seabury, 1977), 293-317 at 307. Emphasis mine.

We can now turn to the core of the argument as it will be developed in the following chapters. The central question is, *how* and *what* do social encyclicals concerned with integral human development contribute to entering the mystery of “God for us?”

Chapter one intends to establish some foundations and directions for the theological reading of the encyclicals. First, Vatican II is taken as a sure compass. As mentioned earlier, by taking a pastoral turn, the council took greater awareness of the centrality of historicity for theology. Christoph Theobald speaks of a “principle of pastorality” which is a key to interpret the council and to continue to receive it creatively. This principle is theologically rooted in *Dei verbum* (*DV*)’s renewed understanding of revelation as God’s self-communication. *GS* then, through its dialogical engagement with the current world, appears as the council’s best attempt to put it into practice. My claim in this dissertation is that the social encyclicals under study should be read following this lead. Various historical situations prompt equally varied specific theological contributions.

The consideration of Vatican II as a compass also suggests that the methodology and style of magisterial documents are theologically significant. This will be the first theological theme investigated in the subsequent chapters. A key feature of *GS* was the adoption of a new language and of dialogical and inductive approaches. This adoption was reflective of a theological vision of the world sensitive to grace at work within it and more akin to what I called the neo-Thomist framework. However, resistances to some aspects of this methodological evolution on the part of people still committed to the council’s overall movement of renewal also reveal traces of the so-called Augustinian framework with its concern for sin at work in the world. As a legacy of the council, this tension between those two trends will be visible in the style adopted by the social encyclicals and I will investigate its theological meaning while studying them.

Second, Karl Rahner is chosen as a key partner for the theological investigation. The German theologian is not a direct theological source for the encyclicals. Neither are all of them reflective of his theology. Nonetheless he is a crucial resource in my endeavor because he is pointing to fundamental questions relevant to the articulation of ethics and theology, or *praxis* and theology. I have already suggested that his understanding of theology as the science of mystery is a solid basis for envisioning a plurality of theologies and of *loci theologici*. Moreover, Rahner sees intimate correlations among anthropology, Christology, and theology. He affirms the unity of love of God and love of neighbor, and develops a vision of the world as the place of God's self-revelation. All these themes are supportive of attempting to do a theology embedded in human experience and historical realities. They also suggest that Christology and theological anthropology are good theological questions to start with when looking at the theological contributions of the social encyclicals. These are the two other theological themes which I investigate in the subsequent chapters.

Finally, since the common topic of the three encyclicals under study is development, it is necessary to give some historical background on the debates surrounding this notion. Development has been studied since World War II from the perspective of economics, political science, international relations or environmental sciences. Various competing theories have been developed through the years out of rather liberal-capitalist perspectives or more Marxist ones. This includes even in some cases the rejection of the term development. While engaging these theories and criticizing them, but also, sometimes, endorsing some part of them, magisterial CST has constantly maintained a distinctive contribution by promoting a holistic approach. Integral human development is development of the whole person and of all humanity (*PP* 14). The three encyclicals under study address this challenge of integral human development with their own

particular set of questions and it is against this background that theological contributions are made.

Chapter two begins the theological reading of the encyclicals with *Populorum progressio*. Published in 1967, less than two years after the closing of the council, *PP* pursues the dynamism of *GS*. It offers a theology very much in line with the neo-Thomist framework, a theology which highlights the possibility of a positive, dialogue-oriented, transformationist relation of the church and the Gospel to the world. In the context full of hopes of the recent independence of many countries in the global South but also within a growing awareness of the North-South inequalities, Paul VI offers a vibrant plea in favor of an authentic development not reduced to the economic sphere, one which requires a global commitment for justice, solidarity, and peace.

The see-judge-act methodology and the explicitly dialogical approach adopted by the encyclical reflect a theological insistence on the mystery of the incarnation as God's grace at work in this world. By reflecting on integral human development for everyone, *PP* stresses the vocation of human beings to grow in all their dimensions, material, intellectual and spiritual, and recognizes their legitimate aspiration to freedom but it also highlights their being called to solidarity as an expression of their social nature. Through dealing with concrete issues such as hunger, unjust international trade relations, scandalous waste of money in the arms race, or land reform, the encyclical is also pointing to Jesus Christ as leading the way. He is shown as involved in the world and in proximity with the poor. He is also the full realization of the human vocation.

Chapter three turns to John Paul II and *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987). Twenty years after *PP*, John Paul II revisited the theme of development in his second major social encyclical. The context had changed. Many hopes prompted by the raising of the question of development in the

1950s and 1960s had not been fulfilled. Inequalities between countries and within them were increasing. Many nations in the global South were still struggling from poverty and a lack of real economic and political independence amidst various forms of neo-colonialism. The Cold War between the two ideological blocks of liberal capitalism and Marxist collectivism, of which the first pope from Eastern Europe had first-hand experience, had dreadful consequences in terms of local wars, arms trafficking and impediments to proper development. The encyclical takes a more critical and confrontational stance vis-à-vis the world in its current state. It also affirms more strongly its theological nature in its desire to offer a theological reading of the situation and to shed the light of the Gospel on it. These are features of the Augustinian framework. However, in *SRS* the two other theological frameworks of our typology are also at work: the neo-Thomist and the liberationist.

Concerning methodology and style, *SRS* seems to reframe the see-judge-act approach and to temper the dimension of dialogue championed in *PP*. There is still an engagement with secular sciences and concrete realities, some dimension of induction and of dialogue akin to the neo-Thomist framework. However, there is a greater stress put on the authority of the magisterium and on some more deductive forms of reasoning which reflect the influence of the Augustinian framework. The encyclical also bears the mark of the recent developments in the Latin American church and of the emergence of liberation theology. *SRS* incorporates – with nuances – their notions of structural sin, of option for the poor, and of liberation. As in *PP*, transcendent humanism and the social dimension of being human are the basis of the anthropology developed, but the dimension of sin is much more present. Strikingly, the pope denounces “the structures of sin” at work in the world and offers the virtue of solidarity as the antidote in order to promote an authentic development. In a descending movement, Christ appears as the redeemer and the

revealer in this world marked by sin but in a more ascending movement, he is also the one who leads to the poor and who is encountered in them.

Chapter four analyses *Caritas in veritate* (2009). Another two decades later, in his sole social encyclical, Benedict XVI chose to pursue the series initiated by Paul VI and to update the message of *PP*. The Cold War is over but the challenges concerning integral human development are still present. Inequalities continue to grow. The whole world is affected by an economic crisis that has started in the financial markets. Environmental issues are on the front page as well. What shapes Benedict's approach to these challenges is his concern for growing secularization in Europe and what he sees as the dangers of individualism and relativism spreading out of Western cultures. His favored theological framework is the Augustinian and we find it predominantly at work in the encyclical. The stress is on the dimension of conflict between the world marked by sin and God's promise of salvation and on the necessity to bring back a sense of transcendence. The church offers its contribution by presenting the resources of revelation and proclaiming "charity in truth" as the driving force for authentic development.

In this context, deductive forms of reasoning from principles to applications and insistence on the asymmetry of the dialogue between church and world are characteristic of the style of *CiV*. Beyond the contextual explanation of what appear as drawbacks on the path opened by *GS*, this shift also highlights a particular aspect of God's mystery. God's grace is an absolutely free gift on the part of God; and the church, especially in its teaching office, rather than the world too much marked by sin, mediates the true image of God. Developing reflections on categories like vocation, gift and gratuitousness, or relationality and communion, through practical considerations about the economy, the environment, or technology, *CiV* offers a vision of being human which is articulated around transcendence and openness to God. The encyclical presents

also various expressions of a Word Christology which starts with the affirmation of the divinity of the second person of the Trinity and envisions salvation as primarily participation in divine life through union with Christ. Undoubtedly, all these theological notes are reflective of the Augustinian framework.

Nonetheless, Benedict's concern for global justice, apparent in his addressing concrete social, economic, and political issues, prompts a certain rebalancing of his theology. This rebalancing is an expression, at least implicitly, of the neo-Thomist and liberationist frameworks. Changes are called for at the level of structures and not merely at the level of personal morality, for example concerning financial institutions, corporate businesses or international organizations. This awareness of the role of structures affects the overall anthropological vision and it also suggests that another type of Christology is possible, a Spirit Christology more sensible to the historical Jesus and to the presence of God in the world through the work of the Spirit.

This journey through the reading of three encyclicals reflective of three different times and three different popes will thus illustrate my claim that there is a possible movement *from* social ethics *to* theology. Coming back to my initial question, *how* are theological contributions made within social encyclicals? Because of a particular social question, a theological category is put forward, a biblical resource is used, or a new accent is added to a previous theological development. Moreover, the challenge of addressing a concrete social issue reshapes or rebalances previous theological developments, something we see particularly at work with John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

What are the theological contributions of the social encyclicals? First, the reading I intend to do should make clear that there is a necessary plurality in the ways of expressing the mystery of "God for us." The three theological frameworks to be encountered are reflective of this plurality.

They are three ways of entering into the mystery, each of which has something important to contribute. Second, this does not mean, however, that they can be merely juxtaposed or are equivalent in their contribution. My intention is also to show that doing theology from the perspective of CST leads to recognizing a grounding role for the neo-Thomist framework and its positive engagement with the world. The liberationist framework appears as a crucial complement with its stress on the social and structural dimensions of the questions. The Augustinian then comes as a corrective by insisting on sin and transcendence. Third, the theological reading of the encyclicals, as already suggested in the previous overview of the chapters offers more specific contributions concerning such themes as incarnation, a holistic vision of the human being, or a Christology marked by the option for the poor.

The final chapter aims at gathering these theological insights and at using them to reflect on three broad theological questions. (1) How to understand the role and centrality of historicity for theology? Any discourse about God necessarily begins with human experience and within history but theology does not originate here and needs always to manifest its transcendent source. In CST this can be done by faithfully engaging the tradition but also by recognizing the Bible as “the soul of theology,”¹⁸ and listening to the voice of the poor. (2) How to articulate within a theological anthropology the individual and social dimensions of the human person, or the call for personal conversion and the call for structural changes? The only truly Christian path is to work out a profound unity between the two. The development of a Trinitarian anthropology suggested by some passages of the social encyclicals is a possible lead in this direction. (3) How to balance, in Christology, different approaches to the mystery of Jesus Christ from above and

¹⁸ Cf. *DV* 24.

from below? Once again the path I suggest is to strongly articulate the two while insisting on the inescapable role of the latter. In this regard, I stress that the option for the poor has crucial Christological implications.

Catholic social teaching is theological. My hope in this dissertation is to shed a greater light on this theological nature so that ethicists may become more aware of the theological echoes of the ethical reflections developed in it, but also, so that theologians may gain a greater sense that, far from being merely a pastoral application of theological principles, it is an essential theological source.

CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATIONS FOR A THEOLOGICAL READING OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

This dissertation aims at highlighting the contribution of post-Vatican II magisterial Catholic social teaching on integral human development to theology understood as a reasoned discourse about God which is also a journey into the mystery of God. In chapters two to four I study three papal encyclicals dealing with integral human development and ask the question: what do they say that is theologically meaningful? Or, to reformulate the question using the Rahnerian concept of mystery which I explain later on: how do they help us to deepen our apprehension of the mystery of “God for us”?

Prior to this, in this first chapter, I give some foundations and directions for the study of these encyclicals. I have three objectives. First, I want to establish some legitimacy for looking for theological contributions in documents dealing with social, political and economic issues. Why is it theologically sound to make the journey from ethical reflection to theology, to consider social ethics a possible *locus theologicus*? I will argue that Vatican II shows us the way by enshrining in the magisterium the dimension of historicity at work in revelation. Revelation is not the transmission of a set of truths but God’s salvific self-communication to humankind. The truth of faith is not expressed by the mere repetition of ahistorical dogmas but through a pastoral approach that takes into account what is at work in various contexts and in the challenges of the current time. The council itself, situated in an ongoing history, is an example of a developing theology historically embedded. But it brings more than an example. With *Dei verbum*, it gives a theological understanding of what is at work in adopting a pastoral approach and with *Gaudium*

et spes, it shows it in practice by engaging a dialogue with the world. Karl Rahner will also contribute to my argument about looking for theological contributions in social encyclicals. With his understanding of theology as the science of mystery, he gives us a definition of theology that allows for a variety of approaches including the one I suggest which starts from social ethics. Moreover, Rahner's reflections about the intimate correlation between theology, Christology, and anthropology, the world as the place of God's self-revelation, or the unity of the love of God and love of the neighbor point in the direction of finding a *locus theologicus* in reflections concerning human beings in society.

A second objective of this chapter will be to establish the relevance of the theological topics which will be our focus in the study of the encyclicals. The wide question of the theological contribution of the social encyclicals needs to be narrowed to a set of manageable questions. Again Vatican II will be helpful to highlight the relevance of three questions: theological method and style, anthropology, and Christology. Karl Rahner will bring additional support for the two latter.

The third and last objective of this chapter is to offer some background for the common topic of the three encyclicals to be studied afterwards: integral human development. When speaking of this notion of integral human development, the popes enter an ongoing discussion in economics and international relations since World War II. It is therefore indispensable, even in a brief manner, to present the terms of the debate and to sketch the vision supported by CST. This will prepare the ground for exhibiting its theological implications in the following chapters.

The first two objectives of the chapter will be reached in a cumulative argumentative process running all the way through the first two sections. The first section gathers reflections about Vatican II seen as a compass for the theological endeavor of this dissertation. The second section

deals with Rahner's theological insights. The last section on the specificity of the notion of integral human development in CST amidst the debates concerning the development of peoples will be concerned with the third objective.

I. VATICAN II: A "SURE COMPASS"

In his Apostolic Letter following the celebration of the Great Jubilee of 2000, Pope John Paul II used the image of a compass to speak of the crucial role still to be played in the church by the second Vatican council. In it, "we find a sure compass by which to take our bearings in the century now beginning."¹ A compass gives the traveler the indication of the North. It helps to orientate oneself on a journey but a journey that remains to be invented.² A compass does not define the road to be taken. It is not a full road map but it is a useful tool to set the direction and to help keep it. Vatican II is a compass for our project of highlighting the theological contributions of social encyclicals because, first it validates the general direction – doing theology from the confrontation with contemporary social challenges – and second it helps us to get there by pointing out some important questions and topics – style, anthropology, and Christology.

What is so crucial about Vatican II that makes it our compass? Theology, or any articulated discourse attempting to state the Christian faith in God's salvation through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, comes in a particular context and is historically embedded.

¹ John Paul II, *Novo millennio ineunte*, Apostolic Letter at the Close of the Great Jubilee (2001), no. 57. www.vatican.va.

² Christoph Theobald, *La réception du concile Vatican II* (Paris: Cerf, 2009), 529-530. All subsequent quotes from this book are my translation.

Augustine wrote in the midst of a collapsing Roman empire. Thomas Aquinas elaborated his *Summa theologiae* in the context of the apogee of the stable society of the Middle Ages. The council of Trent came out of the challenge posed by the Reformation. Vatican II as well, as we will see, comes with its time. However, what is peculiar about this council is that historicity becomes fully acknowledged as pertaining to the Christian faith itself because a renewed understanding of revelation stresses its historical dimension. With Vatican II, the perennial truth of the Good News of God's salvation is no longer to be announced and maintained *despite* historical changes but *through* them and even *from them*. Of course, this raises a lot of questions, such as the relation between past declarations of faith and the present situation, or the nature of change when it comes to doctrine, or again, what can legitimately be a point of departure for theology (a *locus theologicus*). Those questions are addressed at Vatican II but certainly not completely solved. This, in itself, is also a mark of the historicity at work in theology. Depending on one's socio-political context and one's vision of humanity and the world, some are more inclined to stress perennial aspects of the faith and others more confident in the newness brought by new contexts. We will encounter those tensions in the following paragraphs about the council and again in the study of the encyclicals and the typology of theological frameworks which we already evoked in the introduction will help us to navigate among them. The key remains that, at Vatican II, theology becomes fully aware of its inscription in history and that it is also, in a certain sense, a product of this history. This gives us a solid grounding for attempting to unveil some theological contributions in magisterial documents dealing with social, political and economic issues historically situated.

My argument runs as follow. I begin with recalling some elements of context for Vatican II in order to show that the council itself and the theological insights it offers come, in a certain

sense, “out of” them. Then I highlight the slow process of acknowledgement by the council itself of the historicity of its pronouncements. I do so by using Christoph Theobald’s unveiling of the “principle of pastorality” at work in the council. I will adopt his understanding of reception as a creative process of which this dissertation wishes to be a modest contribution. In a third section, I present a theological justification of the historical dimension of any theology by highlighting the renewed understanding of revelation offered by *DV*. Finally, in the last section, I turn to *GS* in order to show an attempt at doing theology from historical situations.

a) Proclaiming the Christian Faith in an Historical Context

Like previous councils, Vatican II had as its core mission the proclamation of the Christian faith. In his opening speech, Pope John XXIII says that “the greatest concern of the Ecumenical Council is this, that the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine should be more effectively defended and presented.”³ Earlier in the speech he had mentioned the centrality of Christ in history and human life and his salvific union with the church.⁴ Along the twenty centuries of the history of the church, there is a strong element of continuity in the ongoing mission of proclaiming the Good News of the salvation offered in Jesus Christ. Now, each council is engaged in this mission at a particular moment in history and this implies undoubtedly an element of novelty that affects the “proclamation of faith.”

³ John XXIII, *Gaudet mater ecclesia. Opening Speech to the Council*, no. 11. *Acta apostolicae sedis* 54 [1962] 785-96. Translated from the original Italian version by J. A. Komonchak, <http://jakomonchak.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/john-xxiii-opening-speech.pdf>.

⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 3.

Vatican II took place from 1962 to 1965. The wider socio-political situation of the world found echoes in major themes and debates of the Council.⁵ World War II and the scandal of the extermination of the Jews in the Shoah are only two decades old. The question of the relation with the Jews and more extensively with other religions will come to the front with the watershed of *Nostra aetate*, the declaration on the relation of the church to non-Christian religions. There is a wide movement of emancipation of the peoples with the process of decolonization, a development in democratic participation, including in many countries the recognition of the right to vote for women. In the United States it is also the decade of the fight for civil rights. In this context, the council will address the internal question of the nature and organization of the church with a push toward collegiality and with the notion of “the people of God” replacing the “perfect society.” With the incredible advances in communications, the world becomes less Europe-centered and more conscious of its diversity. This is reflected in the experience lived by the fathers of the council who are coming from all parts of the world. As Rahner puts it, the church is becoming conscious of being “world-church.”⁶ The council also arrives at the end of what John O’Malley calls “the long nineteenth century.”⁷ After the intellectual and cultural shocks of the French Revolution, the Enlightenment, Marxism and Darwinism, the church adopted a posture of resistance against Modernity and developed a siege

⁵ For elements of context: David Hollenbach, “Commentary on *Gaudium et spes*,” in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching. Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth R. Himes (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 267-271; John W. O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2008); Giuseppe Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006).

⁶ K. Rahner, “Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council,” in *TI*, Vol. 20 (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 77-89.

⁷ O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 53-92.

mentality. The desire for a new type of relationship with the modern world will be at the heart of documents such as *Dignitatis humanae*, on religious freedom or *Gaudium et spes* on the church in the modern world.

Obviously the council, while continuing to proclaim a perennial faith, does so in a particular context that informs this proclamation. This is why John XXIII, in his opening speech, mentioned that the church “must also look at the present times which have introduced new conditions and new forms of life, and have opened new avenues for the Catholic apostolate.”⁸

The exact nature of this relationship between context and proclamation of faith, between changing historical situations and unchanging faith, is the subject of a theological debate. Some notions are put forward like *aggiornamento*, development, *ressourcement*, or reform in order to capture what is at stake.⁹ At least two theological trends are at work. In the introduction I identified them as the “neo-Thomist” and the “Augustinian.” The former is closer to Aquinas, more incarnational, stressing the intelligibility of the world of nature and of history where God’s grace is at work, envisioning in positive terms the dialogical relation between the church and the world. It embraces the idea of *aggiornamento* or updating of the church according to the challenges of the era. The latter is closer to Augustine, more eschatological, stressing the dimension of sin still at work in the world and the inescapable aspect of conflict between this world and the church. It favors the idea of *ressourcement*, or renewal by drawing from the early sources of the Christian faith. In the council at large, the first has a certain pre-eminence but the

⁸ John XXIII, *Gaudet mater ecclesia*, no.12.

⁹ John O’Malley, “‘The Hermeneutic of Reform’: A Historical Analysis,” *Theological Studies* 73, no. 3 (2012): 517-546.

debates about the interpretation of Vatican II during the last fifty years can be seen largely as expressing different balancing and weighing of them.

Whatever these theological debates, the very existence of an historical dimension in any proclamation of faith is widely accepted, unless one takes the radical position of the followers of Archbishop Lefebvre and considers the council heretical.¹⁰ Undoubtedly the opposition between continuity and discontinuity that fueled so many conversations in the last decade is somewhat barren when it comes to interpreting Vatican II and needs to be overcome.¹¹ There is continuity *and* change. Changes, novelty, and even a sense of a “new beginning” that many highlight when considering the last council are not *ex-nihilo* but are embedded in a much larger tradition. At the same time the refusal to consider any historical change because by definition “the church remains one and the same,” would simply consist in removing the church from history.¹² The crucial point with Vatican II is that the council itself becomes aware of the historicity at work in any attempt to express the Christian faith. The description of the slow surfacing of a “principle of pastorality” as described by Christoph Theobald is a good way to perceive this rising awareness and its consequences.¹³

¹⁰ Faggioli, *Vatican II*, 29-35.

¹¹ O'Malley, “The hermeneutic of Reform.” See as well Joseph A. Komonchak, “Benedict XVI and the Interpretation of Vatican II,” *Cristianesimo nella Storia* 28, no.2 (2007): 323-337; Benedict XVI, *Address to the Roman Curia* (Dec. 22, 2005), www.vatican.va; Agostino Marchetto, *The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council: A Counterpoint for the History of the Council* (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2010 [2005]).

¹² John W. O'Malley, “Vatican II: Did Anything Happen?” *Theological Studies* 67, no. 1 (2006): 3-33 at 7.

¹³ Christoph Theobald, *La réception de Vatican II* (Paris: Cerf, 2009); See as well: “The Principle of Pastorality at Vatican II: Challenges of a Prospective Interpretation of the Council,” in *The Legacy of Vatican II*, eds. M. Faggioli and A. Vicini (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press,

b) *The Pastoral Turn of Vatican II and the Implications for its Reception*

To capture the nature of the pastoral turn which happened at Vatican II we need to start again from the opening speech of John XXIII. In it, the pope invited the council fathers to measure “everything by the forms and proportions of a teaching authority primarily pastoral in character.”¹⁴ At this point, what a “pastoral” character meant remained rather vague and looked like a mere question of communication. It could be understood as simply putting a new envelope on a core of ancient doctrines. But the speech made it clear that the council would have not simply to repeat what had already been said in the past but to make the doctrine known more in depth by all the faithful. In this purpose there is a necessity to look “at the new conditions,” “the new forms of life,”¹⁵ while keeping as well the testimonies of the former councils. The precise articulation between the new and the old and the understanding of what is exactly subject to new

forthcoming publication), 26-37; “Enjeux herméneutiques des débats sur l’histoire du concile Vatican II,” *Cristianesimo nella Storia* 28, no. 2 (2007): 359-380; “The Theological Options of Vatican II: Seeking an ‘Internal’ Principle of Interpretation,” in *Vatican II: A Forgotten Future*, eds. A. Melloni and C. Theobald, *Concilium* 2005/4 (London: SCM, 2005), 87-107.

¹⁴ John XXIII, *Gaudet mater ecclesia*, no. 15.

¹⁵ “The greatest concern of the Ecumenical Council is this, that the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine should be more effectively defended and presented” (Ibid., no. 11). “But for this teaching to reach the many fields of human activity which affect individuals, families, and social life, it is first of all necessary that the Church never turns her eyes from the sacred heritage of truth which she has received from those who went before; and at the same time she must also look at the present times which have introduced new conditions and new forms of life and have opened new avenues for the Catholic apostolate” (Ibid., no. 12). “The salient point of this Council is not...a discussion of one or another article of the Church’s fundamental doctrine, a diffuse repetition of the teaching of the Fathers and of ancient and modern theologians, which is presumed to be well known and familiar to all. For this a Council was not necessary. But from a renewed, serene, and tranquil adherence to the whole teaching of the Church...the Christian, Catholic, apostolic spirit of the whole world expects a leap forward toward a doctrinal penetration and a formation of consciences in more perfect conformity with fidelity to authentic doctrine, with this doctrine being studied and presented through the forms of inquiry and formulation of modern thought” (Ibid., no. 15).

development – is it merely the expression of the doctrine or its content as well? – are still to come. However, this is a decisive move and it is the initial setting of what can be called the principle of pastorality which will affect not merely the expression of the doctrine but the doctrine itself.

Following on Theobald's analysis, in order to understand this principle of pastorality we have then to look at the way it is gradually received and shaped by the conciliar fathers in the course of the four sessions and through the production of the documents. "During the first period (1962-1963), the Council's assembly understands that it is necessary to abandon the juxtaposition between 'doctrinal' and 'pastoral' and to aim at presenting the Catholic truth in a style that makes *possible* its 'reception' by our contemporaries."¹⁶ By refusing the schemas proposed by the preparatory commissions and by constantly asking in their comments for a more pastoral language, the fathers become slowly aware that this pastoral tone, this taking into account of the possibility of the reception will take part in the shaping of the doctrine. But how exactly and with what theological grounding? This remains unclarified and will only resurface later with the discussions leading to the adoption of *DV* and *GS*.

Moving into the second period, the council, with the strong support of Paul VI, adopted Cardinal Suenens' program organizing the work of the assembly around the two major themes of the church *ad intra*, or in itself, and *ad extra*, or in its relation to the world and others. The issue of clarifying what the turn to pastorality meant was thus apparently put on standby. However, Theobald sees new aspects of pastorality coming to the fore. "In the second and third periods (1963-1964), the Council...understands which type of 'reform' the church must accept in order

¹⁶ Theobald, "The Principle of Pastorality at Vatican II," 27.

to propose and to present the Gospel in a credible and acceptable manner.”¹⁷ After the mere recognition of the necessity to bridge the gap between “doctrinal” and “pastoral” we have an awareness of the implication of this bridging in terms of permanent “self-reform,” or change in the church.

It is not until the last session that a third aspect of the principle of pastorality appears: “a new attention to the historical and cultural roots of the *recipients* of the Gospel and the discovery that revelation is entirely historical and therefore subject to continual reinterpretation *according to the situation* of those to whom it is transmitted.”¹⁸ This is why dialogue with the world, ecumenism and dialogue with other religions, and respect for religious freedom become so important. That revelation is historical and that those to whom the Gospel is transmitted are taking part in its reinterpretation make the social and historical circumstances more than a mere constraint in the communication of doctrine. They become, in a certain sense at least, a source, a *locus theologicus*, a milieu from which emerges the theological discourse. This is a crucial point for justifying that social encyclicals can contribute to theology.

To sum up, what is, for C. Theobald, the principle of pastorality? He states:

Put in the simplest terms, the answer is this: there can be no proclamation of the gospel without taking into account its recipients; and, to define the position of the latter more

¹⁷ Ibid. “We find this perspective of a permanent self-reform in the Constitution on the Church (*Lumen gentium*) and the Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis reintegratio*)” (Ibid.).

¹⁸ Ibid., 28. “The Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* (no. 44) talks about a ‘proper way to proclaim the revealed word (*accomodata praedicatio*) which must remain the law of all evangelization (*lex omnis evangelizationis*),’ and number 22 of the ‘Decree on Missionary Activity’ *Ad gentes* makes explicit this ‘law’” (Ibid.).

clearly, we should add that ‘what’ is at stake in the proclamation is already at work in them, in such a way that they accede to it in all freedom.¹⁹

Two things are crucial in this formulation. First, the object of the doctrine to be expressed by the council – and by extension, I would say, of any theological discourse – is the proclamation of the Gospel. This is the element of continuity beyond historical changes. Second, however, the truth of the Gospel cannot be apprehended outside a process of interpretation in which it is recognized that this Gospel is “at work” in the recipients. Those recipients, in their historical situation contribute to the shaping of this truth of the Gospel received at a specific moment in history. They are a source for any attempt at a theological discourse.

Theobald offers this principle as the key for interpreting the council in order to continue to receive it. The slow understanding of the meaning of the pastoral turn reshaped the notion of doctrine itself. The rising awareness that historicity is at work reshaped the perennial mission of the church to proclaim the truth of the Gospel. The reception of the council, therefore, is not a mere implementation of rules or orientations to be found in the adopted documents. The reception is not a matter of mere “application.” It is the continuous reenacting of this process of proclaiming the Gospel in new historical situations. As Theobald says,

the intrinsic and reversible relationship between the Gospel and the context, which appears here, is the real reason why the process of ‘measuring everything according to the forms and proportions of a Magisterium mainly pastoral’ is not completed at the end of the Council and should, instead, be claimed once again and continued locally and globally, every time a new historical context requires it.²⁰

¹⁹ Theobald, “Seeking an ‘Internal’ Principle of Interpretation,” 94.

²⁰ Theobald, “The Principle of Pastoralty,” 2. See as well, Theobald, *La Réception du concile Vatican II*, Part 4, 495-699.

We identify here, the particular “way of proceeding” of the council that we have to adopt if we take Vatican II as our compass. This “intrinsic and reversible relationship between the Gospel and the context,” which is recognized by the council’s turn to pastorality, is the reason why we attempt to look in social encyclicals, dealing with contextual issues and embedded in history, for theological insights – elements deepening our apprehension of the mystery of “God for us.”

So far, by deploying what is at stake in the council’s turn to pastorality, we have begun to show how Vatican II is our compass because it legitimates a theological approach inscribed in history. Before pushing forward the argument with the study of the implications of *DV*, let us also highlight an important topic which emerges here. This is the other way Vatican II offers itself as our compass: it raises topics and questions to be carried on in the subsequent study of the encyclicals.

To pursue the turn to pastorality, style matters. At the council, what started with a desire of renewing *how* doctrine was expressed finally ended up with affecting *what* the doctrine contains. Actually, the *what* and the *how* cannot be neatly separated and this is why paying attention to the *how* – meaning the style, the genre, or the form – is so crucial.²¹ Historian and theologian John W. O’Malley argues that the major change which occurred at Vatican II was a change of style.

In the tradition of the church from Nicea (325) until Vatican I (1869-1870), councils took more or less the form of a Roman Senate assembly aimed at making judgments on specific cases (condemning heresies, denouncing errors) and issuing ordinances. They had a characteristic style, although with differences: “that style was composed of two basic elements. The first was a

²¹ John W. O’Malley, *Four Cultures of the West* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004). Christoph Theobald, *Le christianisme comme style : une manière de faire de la théologie en postmodernité* (Paris: Cerf, 2007).

literary genre – the canon or its equivalent. The second was the vocabulary typical of the genre and appropriate to it. It consisted of words of threat and intimidation, words of surveillance and punishment, words of a superior speaking to an inferior – or to an enemy. It consisted in power-words.”²² On the contrary, Vatican II issued no canon, no condemnation.²³ By eschewing Scholastic language, “it moved from the dialectic of winning an argument to the dialogue of finding common ground.”²⁴ It is a shift to a more “pastoral” language.

According to O’Malley, the genre of Vatican II documents pertains to the category of epideictic or panegyric. Its aim is “not so much to clarify concepts as to heighten appreciation for a person, an event, or an institution and to excite emulation of an ideal.”²⁵ Secular examples of the epideictic genre are Fourth of July speeches which intend to gather and unite the nation. Although not entirely consistent through the whole corpus, the style of the documents of Vatican II has this general orientation of seeking for persuasion and reconciliation inside and outside the church, stressing a common ground between those who speak and those they address. The vocabulary used reflects this orientation. For example, O’Malley points to horizontal-words, such as “people of God,” “brothers and sisters,” or “priesthood of all believers,” and to reciprocity-words, such as “cooperation,” “partnership,” “collaboration,” “dialogue,” and “conversation.” At the end, “When both genre and vocabulary are taken into account they

²² John O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 45.

²³ “The Roman Synod of 1960, the ‘dress rehearsal’ for Vatican II, issued 755 canons. The council, which ended just five years later, issued not a single one” (Ibid., 306).

²⁴ Ibid., 46.

²⁵ Ibid., 47.

convey a remarkably consistent message. The message is that a model-shift has occurred or, better, is struggling to occur.”²⁶

O'Malley's analysis supports the idea that Vatican II brings to the fore the neo-Thomist, more open-to-the-world theological trend. It can probably be seen as a necessary theological rebalancing after Vatican I. Without putting a final judgment on this debate, the point here is that we perceive how much style is theologically significant. When we realize that historicity is at the heart of Christian theology, content and form cannot be separated. This will be crucial when reading social encyclicals in the following chapters of this dissertation and this is a way of taking Vatican II as our compass.

Let us now turn back to our central argument concerning the legitimacy of doing theology from the social encyclicals. I said that it was a way of pursuing Vatican II's turn to pastorality and of receiving the council by reenacting its process of proclaiming the Gospel in historical situations. I will now argue that this is theologically supported by *Dei verbum*'s renewed understanding of revelation.

c) Dei Verbum

Two major emphases can be highlighted regarding the doctrine of revelation put forward in *DV*: a personalist view of God's self-communication and an incarnational principle.²⁷ They offer

²⁶ Ibid., 51.

²⁷ Ronald Witherup, *Scripture. Dei Verbum* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2006).

a historical-dynamic concept of revelation²⁸ which explains why theology comes out of historical circumstances even if it is not the mere production of those circumstances. They contribute to shape theology which in turn speaks to these new situations revealing God's saving and transformative love, and is thus re-shaped again in a continuous hermeneutical process.

First, revelation in *DV* is presented in a personalist manner rather than a propositional one. Revelation is understood in an existential frame rather than a mere epistemological one. What is revealed in revelation is not firstly a set of truths put before us in order to be obediently believed but Godself who is to be encountered. Chapter two starts by stating:

In His goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of His will by which through Christ, the Word made flesh, man might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father and come to share in the divine nature (*DV* 2).

God's self-revelation is at the heart of Catholic and Christian theology and this has been constantly maintained in past church teachings. God freely chooses to reveal Godself through various means and Christ is the ultimate and complete revelation of God in the world. However, in the councils of Trent and Vatican I, the presentation of revelation adopted a propositional view, stressing what was revealed in the Scripture, and in the tradition of the church, in a static form and by philosophical categories. On the contrary, refusing to endorse a problematic duality of the sources of revelation, the fathers of Vatican II, used biblical images and highlighted the dynamism of the process of God's self-communication.²⁹ Two features are immediately

²⁸ Lieven Boeve, "Revelation, Scripture, and Tradition: Lessons from Vatican II's Constitution *Dei verbum* for Contemporary Theology," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 13, no. 4 (October 2011): 416-433.

²⁹ Witherup, *Scripture*, 44-45.

connected to this dynamism. Firstly, revelation occurs in a relation between God and humanity which is marked by proximity and friendship and which initiates a dialogue:

Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God (see Col 1:15, 1 Tm 1:17) out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends (see Ex 33:11; Jn 15:14-15) and lives among them (see Bar 3:38), so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself (*DV* 2).

Secondly, although Christ is the ultimate and definitive revelation, this does not mean that revelation is only a matter of the past. There is the sense that our understanding of revelation continues to grow:

For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. ... For as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in her (*DV* 8).

The second emphasis in *DV*'s presentation of the doctrine of revelation is the incarnational principle that shapes it. God becomes involved in human affairs. God's self-revelation is accomplished in Jesus Christ, "the Word made flesh... sent as 'a man to men.'" This is done through "words and deeds" (*DV* 4). Revelation is thus placed in the context of human history. Contrary to previous presentations of revelation stressing "words," the constitution highlights history. In a couple of paragraphs, it reviews the stages of the history of revelation starting with Adam, continuing with the people of Israel and culminating in Jesus Christ (*DV* 3-4). The history of the church, from the apostles onward, continues the process of handing on revelation (*DV* 7-8). More precisely, this history is *salvation* history. God's self-revelation is "for us" and for our salvation. The content of revelation is that "God is with us to free us from the darkness of sin and death, and to raise us up to life eternal" (*DV* 4). To sum up, as Witherup puts it, the constitution emphasizes

the unified, sacramental aspect of God's revelation. God is thus knowable in multiple and varied ways. God is revealed in creation itself, in the history of Israel, in the history of the church, and especially in the person, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Human reason is able to reckon with this divine revelation.³⁰

Coherent with this emphasis on the incarnational and historical nature of revelation, the constitution offers an approach to Scripture that maintains both its divine inspiration and its historical character. For example, it recognizes three layers of tradition in the Gospels: oral, written, and edited.³¹ This means that interpreting Scripture is crucial to welcoming revelation.³² The process of God's self-revelation implies an active participation as contrasted with a mere passive reception.³³

All the tensions and questions existing in the articulation between Scripture, Tradition and teachings of the church are far from being entirely resolved in *DV*, thus leaving room for numerous ongoing discussions; but for our concern it suffices to highlight the incarnational principle at work in the doctrine of revelation presented here. This principle fosters a crucial dimension of participation of the recipients in the process of welcoming and articulating God's self-revelation. Something of this self-revelation is at work each time human beings let their historical situation be illuminated by Scripture and reciprocally when they interpret the latter in

³⁰ Witherup, *Scripture*, 45.

³¹ *DV* 19; Witherup, *Scripture*, 39.

³² There is an underlying encouragement for biblical scholars to use modern, scientific tools as the basis of sound biblical exegesis. Not only they are concerned. All theologians ought to make of the study of Scripture, "the soul of sacred theology" (*DV* 24) and all the faithful are encouraged to become familiar with the Bible (*DV* 22).

³³ Of course this is not done without a regulatory framework and the constitution, consistent with previous teachings of the church, reaffirms the unique authoritative role of the church. However it adds that the "teaching office [of the Church] is not above the word of God, but serves it" (*DV* 10).

the context of their lives. Revelation understood this way grounds the pastoral principle we presented in the previous section which was at work in the council and is continued in the social encyclicals.

It is worth noting that many recent studies about Vatican II have highlighted this renewed understanding of revelation expressed in *DV* as a hermeneutical key for the whole council.³⁴ The way we understand how God communicates the Word of God to humanity, and ultimately how God reveals Godself, shapes the way we understand the church, and also its mission of transmitting the Good News in and to the world. The usual presentation of the council around the two questions of the church *ad intra* and the church *ad extra* is not sufficient because it leaves hidden the more fundamental question of faith and revelation, or the articulation between God's offer and humanity's response. For Theobald, with *DV* but also the declarations on religious freedom (*Dignitatis humanae*) and on the relations with non-Christian religions (*Ad gentes*), and some parts of *Gaudium et spes* and *Lumen gentium*, we find a new understanding of the relation between faith and revelation: "the relation between God and humanity is an historical event and is rooted in human conscience and freedom bringing them to their fulfillment."³⁵ This renewed understanding of revelation with its stress on historicity justifies theologically the principle of pastorality at work in Vatican II and to be continued in an active reception of the council.

³⁴ C. Theobald, *La Réception du Concile Vatican II*, 411-482; Gilles Routhier, *La Réception d'un concile* (Paris: Cerf, 1994); E. Gaziaux, "'Gaudium et spes' et la théologie morale aujourd'hui : quelles suggestions ?" in *Vatican II et la théologie. Perspectives pour le XXI^e siècle*, eds. P. Bordeyne and L. Villemin (Paris: Cerf, 2006), 203-218; Alain Thomasset, *La morale de Vatican II* (Paris: Médiaspaul, 2013).

³⁵ Theobald, *La réception de Vatican II*, 430.

This is why in this historical-dynamic view of revelation, emphasizing personal auto-communication of God through dialogue and incarnation, we find also a theological grounding for the study of the social encyclicals to come. Along the way we encountered the notion of dialogue as central and also many Christological accents. These are points of attention to keep in mind and elements offered to us by the council taken as ‘compass’ for our theological endeavor.

I now turn to *GS*, as the example which the council gives us of doing theology taking into account historical situations and starting from them.

d) Gaudium et Spes

In this section I begin by relating some debates about the nature of the constitution that took place during its elaboration. Besides discussions about topics such as marriage or war in a nuclear age, the question of legitimacy of a theological discourse consciously embedded in historical circumstances came to the fore. Those discussions are reflective of the slow surfacing of the principle of pastorality. The very existence of *GS* and the position it occupies among the council documents asserts the legitimacy of this principle. Then, I will highlight some key aspects of the theological approach of the constitution: entering into dialogue with others, recognizing the role of conscience and human experience, and reading the signs of the times. We will thus ground more solidly the theological approach envisioned in this dissertation – entering into the mystery of God from addressing social ethics questions – and highlight some of the theological questions we will later focus on.

That a theological question – a question about the nature of theology and doctrine – is really at stake when we consider the significance of *GS* is made clear by looking at some of the debates which occurred at the council. *GS* is one of the last documents adopted by the council and is the

one which raised the highest number of negative votes (75 *non placet* or ‘no’ for 2309 *placet* or ‘yes’) on the final ballot. This is only one sign of the difficulty encountered by the fathers in reaching an agreement on an endeavor that was very new for a council: to pursue the church’s mission to “carry forward the work of Christ under the lead of the befriending Spirit” (GS 3) by engaging in a positive and open dialogue with the world. In other words, this meant to proclaim the perennial truth of salvation in Jesus Christ through dealing positively with contingent issues. What had to be avoided was clear: condemnatory language and a deductive top-down approach that would situate the church vis-à-vis the world. Far less clear, and to be invented, was the new approach. The debate here was not only between the so-called majority which was embracing the whole project of the council and the minority resisting it.³⁶ Inside the majority itself there were different approaches, precursors of the debates to follow the council, and reflective of the diverse theological frameworks I already mentioned.

The last draft of GS elaborated in the inter-session of 1965, written in French, was strongly shaped by an inductive approach dear to Dominican Marie-Dominique Chenu and other Belgian and French *periti*. Applying the see-judge-act methodology of Catholic Action, it started with an analysis of the actual situation of the world in language which was not explicitly theological, then moved into illuminating and judging it in the light of revelation. On a practical level, this

³⁶ The minority had difficulties to accept the turn to historicity so obvious in GS. For example, Bp. Vairo (Gravina and Irsina, Italy): “We wonder especially whether the Church, in accommodating itself to the spirit of contemporary learning, which smacks of existentialism, historicism, and pragmatism, is not renouncing, to the detriment of the truth, the philosophy that has been propounded for centuries in Catholic schools, that defends the pursuit of unchangeable truth and undisputed metaphysical principles, and whose fundamental affirmations have been traced by the magisterium of the Church to the source of divine revelation.” N. Tanner, “The Church in the World,” in *History of Vatican II*, eds. G. Alberigo and J.A. Komonchak, vol. 4, *Church as Communion: Third Period and Intersession, September 1964-September 1965* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), 288.

approach rendered the text more accessible to “all the people of good will” who would be repelled by a start with too much theological and biblical language. As Msgr. Haubtmann – the chief coordinator of the redaction and rector of the Catholic University in Paris – justifies it, the method was theologically motivated as well: “For facts and human development (*devenir*) in their own way constitute a *locus theologicus* in which the believer must seek...the appeals and the solicitations of the Spirit.”³⁷

This draft was not well received by the German bishops who were worried about putting first a phenomenological analysis of the world. What would then be the theological nature of the document? Was it appropriate to call it a constitution, ranking it at the same level of the two dogmatic constitutions on the church and on divine revelation? Some suggested to call it simply a “declaration,” because dealing with contingent matters and engaged in discussions embedded in particular historical circumstances – in a word, being “pastoral” in character – it could not bear the highest degree of doctrinal authority. The Germans were also worried about a lack of consideration of sin at work in the world and therefore they were asking for more of a theology of the cross and of eschatology. The world we live in is not yet the kingdom of God.

In the final discussions at the last session, through the *modi* adopted, some of these worries were addressed and, for example, the final document appears more solid on the Christological and eschatological developments ending each chapter of the first part. However, the overall inductive approach was maintained. A note associated with the title even comes to confirm the

³⁷ P. Haubtmann, “Le schéma de la constitution pastorale *De Ecclesia in mundo huius temporis*,” *Études et documents* 10 (August 1965): 11, quoted by J. Komonchak, “The Redaction and Reception of *Gaudium et spes*,” 2.

doctrinal authority of the whole document, and stresses that one should not see the second part of it as the pastoral application of the more doctrinal first part:

The Pastoral Constitution *De Ecclesia in Mundo Huius Temporis* is made up of two parts; yet it constitutes an organic unity. By way of explanation: the constitution is called “pastoral” because, while resting on doctrinal principles, it seeks to express the relation of the Church to the world and modern mankind. The result is that, on the one hand, a pastoral slant is present in the first part, and, on the other hand, a doctrinal slant is present in the second part.... (GS note 1)

What is at stake here is the recognition that a new form of “doctrinal” discourse is possible, one which is not merely a presupposition for a pastoral discourse embedded in the reality of the current situation. On the contrary “doctrinal” and “pastoral” are intertwined and they mutually nourish each other. The constitution with its two dimensions remains an “organic unity.” The duality *doctrina/mores* – doctrine and morals – so much at work previously in the separation of theological disciplines, is overcome because, as Theobald highlights it, this separation “is not on a par with a way of proceeding which understands itself in the unity of believing and acting and in the contextual reinterpretation of the mystery in its globality.”³⁸

Behind the dissensions between the French and the Germans at the council one can already see at work the two theological trends we named neo-Thomist and Augustinian. GS as it stands certainly reflects more of the former. This is due in part to the general socio-political context of

³⁸ Theobald, *La Réception de Vatican II*, 268. See as well Bordeyne: “la perspective pastorale de *Gaudium et spes* déplace la distinction classique entre foi et mœurs, car elle conduit à ‘exprimer les vérités du salut d’une manière qui soit accessible aux gens, en tenant compte de leurs difficultés et en répondant à leurs questions comme ils se les posent dans leur pèlerinage de peuple de Dieu.’” Philippe Bordeyne, “La réappropriation de Vatican II en théologie morale: une redécouverte de la particularité chrétienne,” in *Vatican II et la théologie. Perspectives pour le XXI^e siècle*, eds. P. Bordeyne and L. Villemin (Paris: Cerf, 2006), 170. Raphael Gallagher, “The Significance of a Note: The Implications of *Gaudium et Spes* for Fundamental Moral Theology,” *Studia Moralia* 42 (2004): 451-463.

the 1960's with its movements of decolonization, liberation, affirmation of individual rights, and its hope in the possibility of building a global world in solidarity thanks to organizations like the United Nations. Later on, different contexts will bring different theological accents. However, what needs to be retained is that a theological discourse articulated within particular historical circumstances is legitimated and recognized as "doctrinal."

Having paid attention to the history surrounding the elaboration of the pastoral constitution, let us now pay attention to the document as it stands and highlight some key aspects of its theological ethical approach. I retain three: entering into dialogue, recognizing the role of conscience and human experience, and reading the signs of the times.

The word "dialogue" certainly captures a lot of the methodology deployed in *GS*. The church wishes to enter into dialogue with the world, with others, and also to foster dialogue in its midst in order to discern God's will in the current times. From the start the document is addressed not only "to the sons of the Church" but "to all who invoke the name of Christ" and universally "to the whole of humanity" (*GS* 2). The dialogical approach is visible all along the document through the attentive analysis of the current situation, the taking into account of the contrasted and complex experiences of men and women of this time, their "joys and hopes, ... [their] fears and anxieties" (*GS* 1). The recognition of an inherent solidarity between the church and the world is the base that renders dialogue possible. The community of the followers of Christ "realizes that it is truly linked with mankind and its history by the deepest of bonds" (*GS* 1). Particularly striking as an expression of a dialogical approach is the reciprocity at work in chapter four of the first part which presents the role of the church in the modern world. The church contributes to the making of human history and the building up of the human community by proclaiming the truth of the Gospel but "she is convinced [as well] that she can be abundantly

and variously helped by the world in the matter of preparing the ground for the Gospel” (GS 40). More generally, the council wishes to foster “this mutual exchange and assistance in concerns which are in some way common to the world and the Church” (GS 40). Concretely, the church learns from the encounter with other cultures, benefits from development of human social life and it even “has greatly profited and still profits from the antagonism of those who oppose or who persecute her” (GS 44).³⁹

Another crucial aspect of GS’s theological approach is the role given to human experience and conscience. In the transition from part I to part II of the constitution, it is explained that the council wishes to address some particularly urgent needs, “in the light of the Gospel and of human experience” (GS 46). Two sources for moral theology are mentioned here, but, instead of the traditional association of revelation and natural law, the notion used is “experience” which is broader than mere reason deciphering some “natural law contents.” According to Joseph Selling, GS therefore retrieves a general notion of “natural morality” expressing the very possibility of reason gaining insight into ethical questions without reducing this natural morality to a definite set of unchanging contents and conclusions.⁴⁰

³⁹ This stress on dialogue as a mutual exchange, in which the church has something to receive from others, is also visible in the other documents of the council addressing the relations with other Christian confessions and with other religions. In *Nostra Aetate* (NA), for example, it is recognized that the “precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones [the Catholic church] holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men” (NA 2).

⁴⁰ Joseph Selling, “*Gaudium et spes*: A Manifesto for Contemporary Moral Theology,” in *Vatican II and its Legacy*, eds. M. Lamberigts and L. Kenis (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 150-152.

The inductive approach developed in the first chapters offers a theological anthropology which is rooted in human experience, thus illustrating the role it plays as a source for moral theology. As Eric Gaziaux highlights,

The first paragraphs of the pastoral constitution set out how human experience, in its ambivalence, its ambiguities, its hopes and difficulties, is explicitly recognized as a starting point for a moral journey. At the heart of this experience, ethics is thus offered as a path to liberation (and happiness). It is this same experience which is reinterpreted as the place of a relation with God, where the theological dimension encounters the moral dimension.⁴¹

Here moral theology appears as “re-reading of human experience in light of a revelation operative in history and keeping a close connection with created realities.”⁴²

This recognition of the role to be played by human experience as a source for moral theology accompanies a stress on the centrality of conscience in moral discernment, a key for the anthropology developed by *GS*. Conscience is “the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, whose voice echoes in his depths” (*GS* 16). Therefore it is ultimately the place for the resolution of moral questions. Of course this conscience is not alone or autarkic in making decisions. It needs the voice of others including Scripture, tradition and also the magisterium. “In fidelity to conscience, Christians are joined with the rest of men in the search for truth, and for the genuine solution to the numerous problems which arise in the life of individuals from social relationships.” In any case, conscience erring from invincible ignorance does not lose its dignity (*GS* 16). This valorization of conscience finds echoes in other documents of the council, especially in *Dignitatis humanae* (*DH*), in which religious freedom is defended because no one can be “forced to act in a manner contrary to his conscience” (*DH* 3).

⁴¹ Gaziaux, “‘Gaudium et spes’ et la théologie morale aujourd’hui,” 209. My translation.

⁴² Ibid.

The final aspect of the theological approach of *GS* which is important to point out is the reading of the signs of the times.⁴³ *GS* recalls that “the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel” (*GS* 4). To this end, “The people of God, ... labors to decipher authentic signs of God's presence and purpose in the happenings, needs and desires in which this People has a part along with other men of our age. For faith throws a new light on everything, manifests God's design for man's total vocation, and thus directs the mind to solutions which are fully human” (*GS* 11). As already mentioned we recognize here the implementation of the see-judge-act methodology. It is visible in the overall organization of the pastoral constitution which starts with an “Introductory Statement” about the “Situation of the Men in the Modern World,” then moves on to a first part that offers the church’s anthropological vision and finally deals with five particular issues: family, culture, socio-economic activity, political community and world peace. The see-judge-act approach is also at work inside the sub-sections. In part one, each chapter begins with some consideration about the current human experience and develops itself up to a theological recapitulation. In part two, on specific issues, the third stage of practical recommendations is more systematically reached. The reading of the signs of the times as exercised in *GS* seems at first glance inductive. More precisely, according to Haubtmann, cited by Thomasset, it pertains to an “ascending dialectic:”

The deciphering of current reality (reading of the signs of the times) is put in relation with the interpretation of Scripture and with Christian tradition (reading of the divine will and of the history of salvation). It is at the end of this movement that both its source and its

⁴³ “Une démarche théologique originale : la lecture des signes des temps et le discernement du dessein de Dieu dans l’histoire.” Thomasset, *La morale de Vatican II*, 42.

dynamism are revealed: salvation accomplished by Christ in his incarnation, his life, his death, and his resurrection.⁴⁴

The phrase “ascending dialectic” captures the nuance at work when we speak of an inductive approach in theology. Inductive here does not refer to a mere linear process from human experience to consideration of the divine. This would situate human experience in a very problematic position as the *unique* source for this type of theological discourse. What is at stake here is rather a hermeneutical spiral in which human reality is taken seriously into account as a place for God’s self-revelation. It remains in striking contrast with the deductive, moralistic approach of the moral manuals from abstract principles to concrete case applications.

The three key aspects of *GS*’s theological approach which I have highlighted give us new indications of the questions and topics to pay attention to when highlighting the theology produced out of the social encyclicals. Dialogue came again as a crucial theme to be looked at in terms of the methodology and style of the documents. How an inductive approach is at work seems also an important methodological question. Regarding specific theological themes, anthropology, with the articulation between individual conscience and social embeddedness, comes to the fore alongside Christology which we had already mentioned in the previous section. Of course these topics and questions are prompted not only by the council’s endorsement that historicity matters for theology but also more specifically by the current historical situation of this event. However, it seems provisionally legitimate to start from them and to see how new contexts will make them evolve.

⁴⁴ Thomasset, *La morale de Vatican II*, 47. My translation.

e) Conclusion

In this first part I have shown how Vatican II is to be our compass for the journey of highlighting the theological contributions of some social encyclicals. The council gives the general direction of this dissertation by producing a new kind of theology conscious of its historicity. This gives legitimacy to the idea of doing theology from historically embedded documents dealing with social, economic, and political issues. This new kind of theology is encapsulated in Theobald's notion of a principle of pastorality at work in the council and to be continued for its creative reception. There is an intrinsic and reversible relationship between the Gospel and the context of its proclamation. Any attempt to proclaim the Gospel – which includes any attempt at a theological discourse – must take into account the historical circumstances of the recipients because the Gospel is already at work in them. The renewed understanding of revelation as God's self-communication which we find in *DV* gives a theological grounding to this principle and *GS* reaffirms it by showing it at work.

Along the way, I have highlighted various themes and questions to be carried out. This is the second way the council plays its role of compass. When theology is seen as embedded in historicity, style and methodology matter and they are theologically significant. More specifically we are led to pay attention to forms of dialogue at work and inductive approaches. Some hints have also been given to orient us toward anthropological and Christological entry points. However, because those themes and questions come to the fore out of a council situated at a particular historical moment, they will be reshaped when we move to the different contexts of the encyclicals. In this sense the council is not a full road map but only a compass.

At this point of our reflection an ongoing theological question has been surfacing. We have made clear that theology cannot avoid historicity and that the council recognizes it, but what

does this mean practically? How is theology to be made “in and from historical circumstances” while remaining faithful to God’s revelation in Jesus Christ? This is obviously not fully clarified and this is the crucial issue behind questions such as: What are the changeable circumstances to be taken into account and what is the unchangeable message of salvation offered by God in Jesus Christ? How do we articulate continuity and discontinuity? The council gave some leads which are themselves embedded in a particular historical situation. The study of the encyclicals will move us into other historical situations. The general question of doing theology “in and from historical circumstances” will thus be enriched, allowing us to readdress it in the final chapter.

For now, we turn to Karl Rahner in order to find additional justification and useful tools for our project of looking for theological contributions in the social encyclicals.

II. KARL RAHNER IN THE BACKGROUND

Because this dissertation aims at doing a *theological* reading of some documents of CST, it will imply discussions with systematic theologians. Among them Karl Rahner will take a particular role because he is an inspiration of the approach that I am exploring and gives me some tools for capturing the contribution of CST to theology. Four themes in Rahner’s theological reflections are particularly relevant. First, Rahner sees theology as the “science of mystery.” This is the approach to theology I have in mind when I affirm that CST contributes to theology because this view of theology is able to integrate a diversity of *loci theologici*, and also to link together the formulation of a theological discourse out of particular historical situations and the faithfulness to the object of this discourse, i.e. God’s salvation in Jesus Christ. Second, Rahner stresses the fundamental ties uniting anthropology, Christology and theology, thus supporting the idea of the theological nature of the anthropological reflections which we

encounter in the social encyclicals. Third, Rahner's vision of the world as the place of God's salvific self-revelation, and also as the object and beneficiary of God's saving love, gives a sense of the theological dimension of discussions concerning social, political and economic issues. Finally, Rahner identifies love of God and love of neighbor which implies also action for the transformation of socio-political structures. This helps to situate the social encyclicals at the heart of a quest for God. Before exposing those four themes and highlighting how they inspire the project of a theological reading of the encyclicals by providing both justification and points of attention, I begin with some considerations about the relevance of Rahner for today.

a) *A Theologian for the Twenty-first Century*

Certainly Karl Rahner (1904-1984) can be considered as one of the great Catholic theologians of the twentieth century. With a few others, "he has renewed the face of our theology."⁴⁵ But what is his relevance today?

In 2009, twenty five years after Rahner's death, Roman A. Siebenrock notes that this anniversary "was observed in a merely perfunctory manner, where it was noticed at all."⁴⁶ He illustrates this by way of explanation: "In 2000, George Weigel praised the historical achievement of Karl Rahner, but suggested that Rahner's time, the time of dialogue, is over and now the time of mission is beginning. The future of the church was not 'Rahnerian'; the theology

⁴⁵ J. B. Metz, "Apprendre à croire. Merci à Karl Rahner," in K. Rahner, *Le courage du théologien* (Paris: Cerf, 1985), 13. My translation.

⁴⁶ Roman A. Siebenrock, "Foreword," in *Karl Rahner: Theologian for the Twenty-first Century*, eds. Pádraic Conway and Fáinche Ryan (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), xi.

of Hans Urs von Balthazar was more suited to this missionary time of the church.”⁴⁷ However, this historicizing dismissal of the work of Rahner can be challenged.

Philip Endean makes a strong case in favor of Rahner not being *passé*: “Rahner’s questions will always be worth asking.”⁴⁸ As Endean notices, Rahner is often presented as a liberal in the debate between tradition and inspiration. In his context it is true that Rahner offered a careful “counterbalance” to counter-reformation theology. He stressed the value of personal experience as a theological source. However, one should not mistakenly understand him as rejecting the authority of the church. Rather he maintains at the same level both the authority of the presence of God at large in every human experience and the authority of the Word proclaimed in the church. Most importantly, and what is too often missed in the critiques either positive or negative, Rahner did not adopt uncritically the modern approach to truth. As far as theology is concerned, the modern epistemology of grasping certainty and gaining control of knowledge is not acceptable. The pervading place of mystery in Rahner’s theology is a strong affirmation of another kind of epistemology. In one sense, according to Endean, Rahner is already “post-modern” in his critique of the Enlightenment approach to knowledge.⁴⁹ This is why Rahner’s theology has a future. For example, a crucial Rahnerian question still worthy of consideration is secularity: “Rahner has taught us how to take secularity seriously as a source for theology without compromising our commitment to Christian Tradition.” Therefore, “the future of his

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Philip Endean, “Has Rahnerian Theology a Future?” in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*, ed. Declan Marmion and Mary E. Hines (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 295.

⁴⁹ On Rahner being already somehow “post-modern,” see as well, Declan Marmion, “Some Aspects of the Theological Legacy of Karl Rahner,” in *Karl Rahner: Theologian of the Twenty-first Century*, 13-22.

approach to theology will lie ... largely in the practical sphere, as people find Rahner a helpful resource for the theological interpretation of different life situations.”⁵⁰ Indeed, Rahner will be helpful for the theological interpretation of CST which is a reflective ethical discourse about human life in its social, political, and economic dimensions.

Some might argue that Rahner has little to contribute to the field of ethics or to moral theology. It is true that he has not written much in this specific area.⁵¹ However his reflections in other areas such as theological anthropology, Christology or practical theology have important implications for moral theology and ethics. Paulette Skiba suggests that “Rahner’s Christology can contribute to a theological grounding of Catholic social teaching concerning the dignity and responsibility of the human person.”⁵² She highlights Rahner’s presentation of Jesus Christ as “the total realization of the human person and the mediator of an intercommunicative salvation.”⁵³ Her work shows as well that contrary to some of Johann Baptist Metz’s critiques, interpersonal and social aspects are not absent from Rahner’s thought especially in his transcendental Christology.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Endean, “Has Rahnerian Theology a Future?” 293.

⁵¹ His only explicit incursion in the field of ethics is probably, K. Rahner, “On the Question of a Formal Existential Ethics,” in *TI*, Vol. 2 (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1963), 217–234.

⁵² Paulette Skiba, “The Transcendental Christology of Karl Rahner: A Resource for Catholic Social Teaching?” (PhD diss., Marquette University, 1997, ProQuest [AAT 9811407]), xii.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Metz presents his political theology as an attempt to counteract the privatizing tendency of modern liberal theology which came of age out of a positive embracing of some aspects of the Enlightenment. Without dismissing the valuable insights of the modern, transcendental, and existential theology like that of Rahner he reproaches such theology for not paying sufficient attention to the eschatological dimension of the Christian faith and to the social dimension of being human. Nonetheless, as will become clear at the end of this section, with Rahner’s consideration of the unity of the love of God and the love of neighbor or his reflections about

These are only glimpses about why Rahner should not be too quickly dismissed as *passé*. The four themes which we are now going to consider more in depth will give confirmation of his relevance for our topic.

b) *The Notion of Mystery and its Role in Theology*

For Rahner, theology is the “science of mystery.”⁵⁵ It is the endeavor of exploring the incomprehensible mystery of God in relation to humanity. It can thus encompass a diversity of approaches and disciplines ranging from systematic theology to biblical theology, spiritual theology and even, in our case, theological social ethics. This concept of mystery also gives a framework in which it is possible to understand theology as coming “out of” historical circumstances without merely reducing theology to a projection of human experiences onto God.

Mystery, here, is not to be understood in the conventional sense of something unknown or impossible to know as when I say: “I cannot figure out why is he acting like this, his behavior is a *mystery* to me;” or “Einstein’s theory of relativity remains an absolute *mystery* to me.” This understanding, however, is at work in much of the common use of the term mystery in theology. More precisely, as Rahner explains, the conventional but deficient definition of mystery in theology refers to the property of statements, the fact that some truths are provisionally

world history and salvation history, we have a solid grounding for a theology taking up those concerns. Although Rahner did not fully develop the political implications of his fundamental theology, he set the ground for what others would develop in political theology or liberation theologies. Metz, Johannes Baptist, *Theology of the World* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969); *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1980).

⁵⁵ K. Rahner, “Reflections on Methodology in Theology,” in *TI*, Vol. 11 (New York: Seabury, 1974), 102.

incomprehensible.⁵⁶ This definition stresses reason. A mystery is what is mysterious to reason. In relation to revelation, the conventional approach stresses that mysteries are objects of faith but this implies a notion of revelation limited to the communication ‘about a thing.’ Behind this approach there is the influence of the ideal of scientific knowledge inherited from the 18th and 19th centuries and oriented toward the search for evidence. This ideal carries with it the provisional character of mystery: ultimately sciences will be able to unveil all mysteries. In short, mystery is given a negative definition: that which cannot be raised to the level of evidence by reason or that which is a deficiency of reason.

Rahner challenges this approach by putting forward the traditional doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God. God is the incomprehensible. God is *the* mystery. Mystery is not a provisional character but an essential one. Thus the supreme act of knowledge is not the abolition of mystery but its final assertion, its eternal and total immediacy. The *visio beatifica* is not the unveiling and disappearance of mystery but its full assertion as source of, and aspiration to, love:

Mystery is not merely a way of saying that reason has not yet completed its victory. It is the goal where reason arrives when it attains its perfection by becoming love.⁵⁷

This is why Rahner calls God not only ‘mystery’ but ‘holy mystery.’ It is a mystery of love which elicits the dynamism of created human transcendence in its infinite openness toward and capacity for God.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ K. Rahner, “The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology,” in *TI 4* (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1966), 36-73; “Man in the Presence of Absolute Mystery,” in *Foundations of Christian Faith (FCF)* (New York: Crossroad, 1978), 44-89.

⁵⁷ Rahner, “The Concept of Mystery,” 43.

⁵⁸ Rahner, *FCF*, 65-66.

Mystery is the incomprehensible which calls for an exploration by reason whilst remaining always beyond everything that is apprehended. Paradoxically, the more one explores a mystery, the more it remains a mystery, and the more it reveals itself as mystery. God is *the* mystery, a mystery of an absolute proximity of love articulated in the three interrelated mysteries of the Trinity, of Jesus-Christ truly human and truly divine, and of the divinization of humanity in grace and glory. Consequently, in various theological endeavors, it is the same mystery that is approached, or better, that reveals itself. In whatever different disciplines, methodologies, objects, and questions, what is to be explored is the self-revelation or self-communication of God and the possibility of its salvific reception.

As Marmion puts it, in Rahner's understanding of theology, "All theological reflection begins and ends in the holy mystery of God."⁵⁹ There is a necessary '*reductio in mysterium fidei*' of theological propositions, otherwise theology fails in its true mission.⁶⁰ This means that any attempt to formulate a theological proposition is not so much an attempt to grasp something of the mystery of God as it is an openness to let oneself be seized by this mystery. This means as well that there is a legitimate and necessary diversity in theological work, and even incursions in what does not immediately strike us as "orthodox." As Rahner concludes, we can trust "in the power of the reality itself which is being referred to, i.e. in the one single mystery of the proximity of the incomprehensible God who sets all things free to come to himself and to be drawn into his infinitude."⁶¹

⁵⁹ Marmion, "Theological Legacy of Rahner," 19.

⁶⁰ Rahner, "Methodology in Theology," 110-113.

⁶¹ Ibid., 114.

Using Rahner's notion of mystery and his understanding of theology as the 'science of mystery' allows us to articulate the task of a 'theological reading' of CST. What is at stake is entering more deeply into the single mystery of God's saving union with humanity – "God for us." The project is thus to highlight some aspects of this mystery through the unveiling of theological propositions at work in the documents we read, while keeping in mind the analogical and partial nature of the endeavor. Speaking of theology as "science of mystery" gives us the tool to integrate a large array of theological insights of various natures and therefore to include reflections on practical issues, such as those we find in CST, as truly theological.

Moreover, because a theology from below, or one made out of particular historical contexts, runs the risk of being a mere anthropomorphism or a projection of some particular socio-political agenda, the notion of "science of mystery" is a reminder of the incompleteness inherent in any particular theological discourse. The mystery of God's salvific proximity is the element of continuity that surpasses all the historical changes and it can be apprehended only by faithfully, even if critically, receiving past traditions while elaborating new discourses and listening to new situations. Theology can be seen as a hermeneutical process which gets us closer to God by articulating God's incomprehensibility and God's self-communication in history in a kind of ascending spiral. It is done by paying attention to and searching for God's revelation in the Scriptures, in tradition and in human experience while at the same time allowing us to be seized by what is always greater.

In this dissertation, the terms "theology," or "theological" will always bear this notion of mystery. Theology is reasoned discourse about God in the sense of letting the unique mystery which God is seize us through the usage of discursive reason.

c) *Anthropology, Christology, and Theology*

In his theological reflections, Rahner stresses the fundamental ties uniting anthropology, Christology and theology in the global endeavor of this “science of mystery” presented in the previous section. He especially emphasizes a twofold movement from the mystery of humanity to the mystery of Jesus Christ, and reciprocally. This helps us to understand what is at stake in a bold affirmation such as the one that starts the final document of the second General Conference of the bishops of Latin America (CELAM) at Medellín (1968): “In order to know God it is necessary to know man” (*Med* Intro. 1). Because a large part of CST develops a theological anthropology by offering the vision of the church about the human being and on human societies, to make these connections is an insightful framework for the project of doing a theological reading of this teaching. Rahner invites us to think of any reflection on the human as a potentially Christological and theological reflection. Let us look at some of his arguments.

First, in Christian faith, Christology, anthropology, and theology, although distinct disciplines, must be treated as having a profound unity. Reflecting on what it means to say that “God became man,” Rahner ends with the powerful conclusion that “Christology is the beginning and the end of anthropology and this anthropology in its most radical actualization is for all eternity theology.”⁶² Indeed, human nature is a mystery in the sense that it can never be fully defined. However, this indefinability, in its poverty, is oriented toward its fulfillment which is the mystery we call God. Consequently, “the Incarnation of God is the unique and *highest* instance of the actualization of the essence of human reality, which consists in this: that man is

⁶² Rahner, *FCF*, 225.

insofar as he abandons himself to the absolute mystery whom we call God.”⁶³ The mysteries of humanity and of God are profoundly connected. More precisely, in the incarnation, God expresses Godself through the self-emptying or *kenosis* of Godself in order for human beings, whom God created, to become God’s reality.⁶⁴ Through his whole humanity Jesus is God’s self-revelation. Indeed, because there is only one human nature, the humanity of the man Jesus is the same as ours although the difference between creator and creature has to be maintained:

‘What’ [the man Jesus] is, as the self-expression of the Logos, and ‘what’ we are is the same. We call it ‘human nature.’ But the unbridgeable difference is constituted by the fact that this ‘what’ in him is spoken as his self-expression and this is not the case with us.⁶⁵

At this point, Rahner speaks of human beings as the “cipher of God.” “[M]an is for all eternity the expression of the mystery of God which participates for all eternity in the mystery of its ground.”⁶⁶ With paradigms like human beings as the “cipher of God” and the man Jesus as the “actualization of the essence of human reality,” it becomes clear that anthropology and Christology are theological in the sense that they are paths in the mystery of God’s self-

⁶³ Rahner, *FCF*, 218.

⁶⁴ “The primary phenomenon given by faith is precisely the self-emptying of God, his becoming, the *kenosis* and *genesis* of God himself. He can become insofar as in establishing the other which comes from him, he himself *becomes* what has come from him, without having to become in his own original self. Insofar as in his abiding and infinite fullness he empties himself, the other comes to be as God’s very own reality.” Rahner, *FCF*, 222.

⁶⁵ Rahner, *FCF*, 224.

⁶⁶ Rahner, *FCF*, 225.

revelation.⁶⁷ No other path is possible in order to speak of God than to reflect on the human condition as oriented toward its divine fulfillment.

Second point dear to Rahner, the mystery of Jesus Christ is to be approached through the mystery of humanity. This is what is at stake in opting for a transcendental Christology. Following Rahner, we can say that the Christological dogmas, as they are expressed in the Chalcedonian formulas, are a point of departure rather than one of arrival in the history of faith. It is true that their assertions that “Jesus is human in a radical sense” and that he is also “in his life, and death, the unsurpassable Word of God for us”⁶⁸ are unavoidable claims. In a sense, these formulas are a touchstone for any Christian theology. However, it should be recognized that there is a plurality of possible approaches for presenting the truth contained here according to different historical and cultural contexts. Transcendental Christology is one of these legitimate approaches in a modern or post-modern world which has seen the advent of the subject.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ See also, the striking title given by Rahner to the 4th chapter of his *Foundations of Christian Faith*: “Man as the Event of God’s Free and Forgiving Self-communication.” Creation is oriented toward Incarnation. Anthropology leads to Christology.

⁶⁸ Karl Rahner, “Christology today?” in *TI*, Vol. 17 (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 27.

⁶⁹ “We must acknowledge classical Christology and yet see that it is not the only possible one, in the sense that there could be no other orthodox statements of a Christological kind. For there are in fact statements which also lead to classical Christology and which protect it better and more effectively from misunderstandings than it can protect itself today by means of the history of its interpretation. Indeed the usual interpretation of classical Christology urgently and imperatively needs true deepening and supplementing. So the new approaches today would seem useful above all because the monophysitic misunderstanding of Christology is still a real and indisputable danger, both for believers who misunderstand the Church’s dogma, and for unbelievers who presuppose that this misunderstanding of the dogma is the doctrine of the Church, and therefore reject it. But every concept of the incarnation which views Jesus’ humanity, either overtly or implicitly, merely as the guise God takes upon himself in order to signalize his speaking presence, is and remains a heresy” (Ibid., 37-38). See also: Rahner, *FCF*, 285-293.

A transcendental Christology starts from the experiences of human beings who long for an absolute fulfillment. This first step is an anthropological acknowledgment that in every act of knowledge and of freedom human beings always transcend themselves toward the incomprehensible mystery we call God. The second step deals with hope. Human beings dare to hope that this mystery gives itself as the highest claim of existence that reconciles the finite, the conditional and the plurality that they are. This hope is a movement in freedom already borne by God's grace which is God's self-communication. In the third step, the self-communication of God and the hope for it are acknowledged as mediated historically. God is present and reveals Godself in the positive mode of *promise* and in the negative mode of *death*. In the fourth step, it is recognized that this hope searches for something final and irreversible: the end in an eschatological sense. Finally, it appears that the offer can be only a human being who surrenders every inner-worldly future in death, and whose acceptance of death shows his being accepted by God definitively. He is the "absolute saviour" and has an "exemplary significance" for the whole world by the authentic freedom he exercises in responding to God's promise.⁷⁰

This cursory presentation of the steps offered by Rahner underscores the movement at stake here. It goes from the human being longing for the fullness of her human vocation to the recognition of Jesus-Christ, God and human, as the absolute savior.

Another element of Rahner's Christology that I would like to highlight is that in Jesus Christ we have the fulfillment of what it means to be human. This echoes and supports the contention of *GS* that the mystery of the incarnate Word of God sheds light on the mystery of humanity.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Rahner, *FCF*, 208-212.

⁷¹ *GS* 22.

Indeed, for Rahner, Jesus, whom Christians acknowledge as the absolute savior, appears on both sides of the twofold modality of God's self-revelation. He is, at the same time, "the absolute promise of God" and the "acceptance of this self-communication."⁷² He is both the offer of God in grace and the perfect acceptance of this grace in freedom. "Jesus is that person who, in and through what we call his obedience, his prayer and his freely accepted destiny to die, also lived out the acceptance of the grace bestowed on him by God and of the immediacy to God which he possesses as man."⁷³ We can note here that the fact that Jesus Christ fulfills what it means to be human opens a way for theological anthropology, but also for ethics if we admit that ethics is concerned with the question of the process of humanization of human beings throughout their whole life. Ethics can thus be a path to better apprehend who Jesus Christ, human and God, is; at the same time, it is also knowledge of and relationship with Jesus Christ which drive a Christian ethical discernment.⁷⁴ Here lies another crucial hermeneutical spiral that we will find at work in the social encyclicals we are going to read.

With the exposition of the profound unity between anthropology, theology, and Christology, the offer of a transcendental Christology starting from human experience, and finally the presentation of Jesus Christ as fulfilling humanity, Rahner gives a solid grounding for a movement of seeking knowledge of God from human experience and through Jesus Christ. We can see this as the general framework in which inscribing our own search for the mystery of God through the reading of social encyclicals. In the social encyclicals, however, we will not be

⁷² Rahner, *FCF*, 195.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Rahner's reflection on the relationship of a Christian to Jesus Christ shows that here knowledge should not be reduced to an intellectual capacity. Knowing is also following Jesus and being transformed by this following.

concerned with a theoretical reflection about humanity in general but with the concrete reality of humans in society facing social, political, and economic issues. The two sets of reflections from Rahner to which we now turn will help to ground the idea that God is to be encountered precisely in these concrete realities. For Rahner, the world is the place and object of God's salvific self-revelation and there is a profound unity of the love of God and the love of neighbor.

d) God and the World

The social encyclicals, following the path opened by *GS*, are engaged in a dialogue with the world. Once again it is interesting to point out some of Rahner's reflections to highlight the theological nature of this dialogue. For Rahner, the world is the place of God's salvific self-revelation.⁷⁵ Although remaining the absolute other of the world and of human beings God is not distant. The mystery of God is a mystery of a salvific closeness, an inner presence in the movement of the world toward its fulfillment and of human beings toward theirs.

Considering the relation of God to the whole world, including human beings, the Christian faith has to avoid two pitfalls. The first is a pantheism in which God and the world are one and the same. Here, the whole world in its aspiration for fulfillment is identified with God. The second pitfall is just the opposite. It consists in considering God the creator as so absolutely beyond all creatures that God cannot be found in the world. God is in absolute externality to the world. Between those pitfalls, Rahner offers a striking formulation of God's presence in the world:

[T]here is only one question, whether this God wanted to be merely the eternally distant one, or whether beyond that he wanted to be the innermost center of our existence in free grace

⁷⁵ See in particular, Rahner, "The History of Salvation and Revelation," in *FCF*, 138-175.

and in self-communication. But our whole existence, borne by this question, calls for the affirmation of this second possibility as actually realized.⁷⁶

The tradition of “natural theology” shows that God can be found through the contemplation of God’s creation and through the usage of human reason, which is also God’s creation. However, Rahner goes further than such a “natural religion” in which the categorical structures of the world point to God. Indeed, for him, this is only one alternative that he describes as “man’s devotion to and respect for the world, the world in its own proper structures, including its interpersonal structures, in the knowledge that this world has an ultimate orientation towards its transcendental ground and abyss called ‘God.’”⁷⁷ However, in understanding God’s self-communication, there is a way to perceive “an immediacy to God in which, without ceasing to be really himself by being made a categorical object, [God] no longer appears merely as the ever-distant condition of possibility for a subject’s activity in the world.”⁷⁸ This other alternative is the transcendental experience of human beings oriented toward God. In Rahnerian terminology, “transcendental” is the characterization of an experience belonging to the profound humanity of the subject in its historical limited situation but opening to something radically beyond it.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Rahner, *FCF*, 12.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ “This experience is called *transcendental* experience because it belongs to the necessary and inalienable structures of the knowing subject itself, and because it consists precisely in the transcendence beyond any particular group of possible objects or of categories” (Rahner, *FCF*, 20).

Another traditional question of systematic theology offers an explanation on the same topic. This explanation pertains to the question of God's grace in human history.⁸⁰

Rahner proposes two conceptual models of how God's grace operates in human history. Although they need to be contrasted in theory, in practice they are not necessarily contradictory. Actually, both of them exist together in the church's concrete awareness. In the first model, God's grace can be seen as an intervention of God at a definite point in space and time. The world is secular by nature. "This conceptual model of grace is based on the implicit assumption that grace can be an unmerited gift of God only if it becomes present in a secular and sinful world to which it is mostly denied."⁸¹ This model is the one referred to in scholastic language as "actual" grace.

In the second model, the starting point is "the assumption that the secular world from the outset is always encompassed and permeated with the grace of the divine self-communication."⁸² This presence is either in the form of a pure offer or in the form of acceptance/rejection of God. Grace is not added to nature as a secondary decision of God.⁸³ On the contrary, "nature is because grace has to be."⁸⁴ In other words, "nature is never actually purely and simply secular; it

⁸⁰ Karl Rahner, "On the Theology of Worship," in *TI*, Vol. 19 (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 141-149.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Actually, in the 1950's debate on nature and grace, Rahner in reaction to Lubac did stress a "double gratuity" of creation and grace. In a sense, God's grace needs a "recipient" and this is human nature. However Rahner strongly emphasizes that this does not involve sequential distinct acts. See Stephen J. Duffy, "Experience of Grace," in *Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*, 49-52.

⁸⁴ Rahner, "On the Theology of Worship," 143.

is always nature graciously endowed with God himself.”⁸⁵ As a consequence, salvation history is an ongoing process. It is the history of freedoms – of God and of human beings – leading to the divinization of the world. In Scholastic language, grace is here understood primarily as “habitual” grace. Grace occurs whenever “a person accepts and realizes in freedom his existence as it is, as radically and immediately dependent on God.”⁸⁶ For Rahner, without rejecting the truth present in the first model, the second one seems more meaningful for modern minds. Once again this model stresses a “sacramentality of the world.”

What is said here about God and the world is crucial for understanding what is at stake in Christian social ethics. The world is the place where God reveals Godself, where God’s salvific closeness is manifested. It is not simply a playground where we live temporarily and where we are asked to do the good in order to gain the eternal beatitude somewhere else. In that case, morality would consist in trying our best to discover the rules of play that are in God’s mind and to follow them. If the world is God’s revealing place, “God’s world in the making,” as Schoonenberg says,⁸⁷ then this world matters in itself even though it is not yet the fullness of the “new earth and new heavens.” To say it differently, the world is not that from which human beings need to be saved. Rather God came in the world in order to save the world from sin and death. This world matters. Thus, moral decisions to be made concerning various social

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 44.

⁸⁷ Peter Schoonenberg, *God’s World in the Making* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1964).

challenges are the very place of an encounter with God. The quest for the good to be done is the quest for the fulfillment in God of the vocation to be human.⁸⁸

This sacramental dimension of the world, very much highlighted in Rahner's thought, should not be mistaken as downplaying the reality of evil also at work in it. The world is the place of God's salvific self-communication but for human beings it is also a place of violences, injustices, sufferings, broken relationships, etc. And very often sin at work is much more visible than grace. Rahner addresses the issue of sin and guilt in various writings.⁸⁹ We can retain his constant insistence on viewing human history, individual and collective, as both sinful and redeemed. As Brian O. McDermott puts it, "there is no period of a person's life and no sector of human history which has been, or will be, simply graceless, untouched by the redemptive influence of Jesus Christ. Yet, just as truly, we can and we must say that there has been no period of history which does not need redemption."⁹⁰

Rahner's explanations about "original sin" illustrate this point. What is original in a more proper sense is not sin but the love of God marking each human existence, "the original redeeming grace."⁹¹ However, theologically speaking, human existences are also marked by the power of sin at work:

Original sin, therefore, expresses nothing else but the historical origin of the present, universal and ineradicable situation of our freedom as co-determined by guilt, and this

⁸⁸ Cf. *GS* 39.

⁸⁹ See especially: Rahner, "The Possibility of a Decision against God" and "Original Sin," in *FCF*, 97-115.

⁹⁰ Brian O. McDermott, "The Bonds of Freedom," in *A World of Grace. An Introduction to the Themes and Foundations of Karl Rahner's Theology*, ed. Leo J. O'Donovan (New York: Seabury, 1980), 50.

⁹¹ The phrase is not Rahner's but McDermott's. *Ibid.*, 59.

insofar as this situation has a history in which, because of the universal determination of his history by guilt, God's self-communication in grace comes to man not from 'Adam,' not from the beginning of the human race, but from the goal of this history, from the God-man Jesus Christ.⁹²

Rahner's highlighting of the transcendental experience of the human being and his reflections about grace induce a vision of the world as the place and object of God's salvific self-revelation. This "sacramental" view of the world supports the idea that reflections and ethical discernment about this human world carry with them the presence of God and can be revelatory or theologically significant. His understanding of original sin comes as a reminder that this "sacramentality" of the world should not be understood as a downplaying of the reality of sin at work in the world as well. In reading post-Vatican II CST and entering into the dynamism of the council with its positive view of the richness of a dialogue with the world, we will have to keep in mind this reminder and be attentive to the way the reality of sin remains in the picture as well.

e) Love of God and Love of Neighbor

A final aspect of Rahner's thought worth highlighting is his reflection about the intimate relation between love of God and love of neighbor.⁹³ Christian social ethics and in particular CST are concerned with putting into practice the commandment of the love of neighbor. Rahner shows us the theological implication at work here: through the love of neighbor it is really God who is encountered.

⁹² Rahner, *FCF*, 114.

⁹³ According to James F. Bresnahan, the unitary love of God and neighbor can be seen as the basic moral ideal for a renewed ethics with both essential and existential dimensions. Although Bresnahan exposes the implications of Rahner's theological anthropology for fundamental moral theology, its point can be further extended to social ethics. James F. Bresnahan, "An Ethics of Faith," in O'Donovan, ed., *A World of Grace*, 169-184.

For Rahner, love of God and love of neighbor are two names given “to the same reality if we are to summon up its one mystery which cannot be abrogated.”⁹⁴ He explains this in a lecture given to an association of social workers, commending them for exploring the meaning of the love which they are practicing very concretely, a love that takes form by transforming socio-political structures.⁹⁵ This context makes clear that the love of neighbor, which Rahner is concerned with, is not reduced to mere interpersonal relationships but includes also the broader social dimension. As he states elsewhere:

Love of the neighbor in the Christian sense has a thoroughly unique social and sociopolitical dimension. ... If a person truly wants to love his or her neighbor, ... that person is bound out of love of this neighbor to do all that can be done, so that the sociopolitical structures of society are such that they serve the neighbor’s freedom and development, that they do not enslave or exploit the neighbor, and do not lead to injustice toward the neighbor.⁹⁶

To establish the unity of the love of neighbor and the love of God, Rahner argues that a positive moral act is also a saving event of divinization whether enacted by a believer or an unbeliever. He writes,

⁹⁴ K. Rahner, “Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbor and the Love of God,” in *TI*, Vol. 6 (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1969), 232.

⁹⁵ “You want to love by giving real help, but a help which is not merely an organized effort and effect of socio-political organization but which in truth remains love. Such love, however, where it truly exists and remains and thus really supports the social efforts between men – even though these efforts can also exist, be demanded and organized ‘without’ real love – is not the function of secular society but itself constitutes a completely new society of men even where it has no name; it allows the eternal kingdom of God to begin in secret and is the miracle of the birth of eternity.” *Ibid.*, 231.

⁹⁶ Karl Rahner, Paul Imhof and Hubert Biallons, ed., *Karl Rahner in Dialogue* (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 184.

wherever there is an absolutely moral commitment of a positive kind in the world and within the present economy of salvation, there takes place also a saving event, faith, hope and charity, an act of divinizing grace, and thus caritas is exercised in this.⁹⁷

This situates any human action even non-explicitly-religiously motivated as relevant to the mystery of salvation. However he goes further by affirming that love of neighbor is the basis and the total sum of all the moral dimensions of human life.

This comes from the *a priori* structure of the whole human being. This structure imposes a unified law of relation of a person with the variety of objects in the world which is ultimately a capacity of self-disposing in freedom, of “being-within-oneself.” All the knowing and willing can be reduced to this ultimate reality. This self-disposition, however, is not egoistic but on the contrary, when it is morally right and perfect, it is “the loving communication with the human Thou as such ... The act of personal love for another human being is therefore the all-embracing basic act of man which gives meaning, direction and measure to everything else.”⁹⁸ Love of the neighbor is then the fulfillment of the transcendental nature of the human being.

Crucial in Rahner’s reasoning, this means as well that we have to reject the idea that “the religious act immediately directed to God” could be more original to human existence or bear a higher rank than “the act of loving communication with another person.”⁹⁹ Indeed, revelation

⁹⁷ Rahner, “Love of Neighbor and Love of God,” 239.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 241.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 244.

happens always *vis-à-vis* and through a human being who is already in the world. There is no encounter of God outside the world in which we live, a world of relations with others.¹⁰⁰

This world of relations with others is precisely the subject matter of the social encyclicals. This is why what Rahner affirms here prompts us to see them as a *locus theologicus*, a place where the mystery of God can be approached. With the resources of his systematic reflections, Rahner gives support to a theology embedded in history, a search for God nowhere else than in the practical involvement of human beings searching to love one another in the challenges of the world.

f) Conclusion

In this section, I found in Rahner's systematic theology support for my project of highlighting some theological contributions of CST. His understanding of the articulation between theology, anthropology, and Christology, grounds a theological approach starting from human experience. Other reflections about the world as the place of God's self-revelation and object of God's saving love, and about the unity of the love of God and of the neighbor orient in this same direction. Moreover, to adopt Rahner's definition of theology as "science of mystery" offers a useful tool in order to situate the contributions of the social encyclicals in the wider theological discipline. Finally, this journey through Rahner's thought has underscored the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. See as well, Rahner, "Finding God in the World," in *FCF*, 81-89; "Practical Theology and Social Work in the Church," in *TI*, Vol.10 (New York: Seabury, 1977), 349-369. In the latter, Rahner stresses that 'practical theology' whose objects are charity and social work is a theological science in its own right and not simply a 'practical supplement' to other theological disciplines.

importance, for such a theological approach, of anthropology and Christology in their connection with the mystery of God.

Of course Rahner is a theologian of a particular epoch and his reflections are partly shaped by the questions of his time. In the typology evoked earlier, he fits certainly more in the neo-Thomist current than in the Augustinian. However, the questions he addresses about the presence of God within the world and in the most inner self of the human being remain crucial touchstones for Christian theology. These are underlying questions at work when we attempt to do theology out of confrontation with particular historical issues. This is why I take him as a favored interlocutor for my theological endeavor.

In the last section of this first chapter, I now turn to my third objective: to present some debates about the notion of development of peoples that are the shaping context of the social encyclicals I will study in the following chapters.

III. THE SPECIFICITY OF THE NOTION OF DEVELOPMENT IN CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

The three encyclicals to be studied in the following chapters have a theme in common. Paul VI's *Populorum progressio*, John Paul II's *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, and Benedict XVI's *Caritas in veritate*, put forward the notion of development as the “umbrella” category for continuing the tradition of papal encyclicals about social questions initiated in 1891 by Leo XIII's *Rerum novarum*. By doing so, they enter into an ongoing debate in economics but also in political science and international relations, and, more recently, in environmental sciences. Their theological contributions emerge in part from an engagement in those debates characterized by the promotion of the concept of integral human development. This section will thus provide some clarifications about the various ways in which the concept of development has been

understood especially in economics and political science, and about the debates surrounding it.

This will help to situate the specificity of CST's notion of integral human development.

Following a chronological order, I begin with the presentation of post-World War II theories of economic development, then move to teachings of the popes in the 1960s, and finally expose some of the major evolutions in the field since.

a) Post-World War II Theories of Economic Development

In the years following World War II, the question of development comes to the fore especially in the field of economics. This prompts the elaboration of various theories. Europe is devastated by the war and needs to be rebuilt. At the same time, many countries in what would soon be called the “third world” are entering into a decolonization process. The question of the path they need to take in their economic development and of the obstacles that impede it raises debates not only at a theoretical level but also at a very practical one. Policies of development are engaged everywhere.

A first view on economic development of countries is the one about modernization. Development is a linear process that is followed more or less by all nations but they are not at the same stage in their evolution. Underdevelopment is thus seen as a form of backwardness that should be overcome by fostering policies of modernization. The most significant and influential theory in this school is US economist Walt W. Rostow's stages-of-growth model.¹⁰¹

Having done a historical study of the economic evolution of a large variety of countries, Rostow offers a model of development in five stages: traditional society, preconditions for take-

¹⁰¹ Walt W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth. A Non-Communist Manifesto*, 2nd ed. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971 [1960]).

off, take-off, maturity, age of high mass consumption.¹⁰² In the 1950s, developed countries such as Britain, France, USA, Germany, Sweden, Japan, and Australia have all entered into the age of high mass consumption. Countries like Turkey, Argentina, Mexico, China, or India are just at the stage of take-off.¹⁰³ The assumption is that what happened in the first group of countries will occur in the second group, and presumably in other countries of the world, such as the African countries, as well. Development policies should then be oriented toward helping the move from one stage to another.

An important feature of the model is the crucial role played by the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) indicator. The evolution of a country is seen through the lens of its growth understood as the growth of its production of riches either considered as a whole or proportioned to its

¹⁰² Traditional societies are described as ‘pre-Newtonian’ societies in the sense of having a pre-Newtonian attitude toward the physical world. The world is capable of little productive manipulation, there are limited production functions and therefore there is “a ceiling on the level of attainable output per head.” (Ibid., 4) The stage of the preconditions for take-off is a transition period that sees the transformation of the society “in the ways necessary to exploit the fruits of modern science.” (Ibid., 6) It can be endogenous but most often it happens through an external intrusion by more advanced societies. Major changes appear such as modernization in transportation, and communications, as well as the rise of a banking system capable of mobilizing capital. The take-off occurs when economic growth becomes the normal condition of the society. Usually the proximate stimulus for take-off is technological. Then comes the drive to maturity. This is “the stage in which an economy demonstrates the capacity to move beyond the original industries which powered its take-off and to absorb and to apply efficiently over a very wide range of its resources...the most advanced fruits of (then) modern technology.” (Ibid., 10) Finally, the society reaches the age of high mass consumption. Consumption goes beyond basic food, shelter, and clothing. The urban population increases as well as the population working in offices and skilled factory jobs. The goal is no longer a mere extension of modern technologies. The welfare state is one possible manifestation of this stage. “Consumers’ sovereignty reigns.” (Ibid., 11)

¹⁰³ See chart of economic growth in selected countries, Ibid., 1.

population (GDP per capita).¹⁰⁴ The pertinence of this indicator to address the challenge of development will be strongly questioned in the following decades.

Neo-classical or liberal economics are at the heart of the school of modernization exemplified by Rostow's model. It had been the mainstream economic approach since the 1870s.¹⁰⁵ In the 1950s and 1960s, concerning the development in the "less developed countries," neo-classical (or orthodox, or liberal) economists suggest that the current division of labor in the world market is inevitable and favorable for everyone (theory of comparative advantages). Some countries are better endowed to produce raw materials and non-transformed agricultural goods whereas others have advantages in producing manufactured goods. There is need for a massive import of capital and technology on the part of developed countries, just as the Marshall Plan fostered the recovery of Europe after the war and this continent's move into the age of high mass consumption. However, this import is meant to accelerate the process of removing internal impediments to development. Underdevelopment has mainly endogenous causes and is merely an anterior stage on a linear evolution.

Opposing this approach, another school appears in the decades following World War II. The "structuralists" contend that the underdevelopment of some countries is not a stage in a process of evolution but a structural component of the development of others. There are "structures" at

¹⁰⁴ "We shall utilize *per capita* output or *per capita* income as our index of development." Harvey Leibenstein, *Economic Backwardness and Economic Growth* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1957), 9.

¹⁰⁵ Ian Malcolm Little, a more recent economist sympathetic to this current, sees the characteristic of a liberal economic definition of development in the fact that "it integrates economic development with welfare economics. Economic development (or economic progress or real economic growth) occurs if there is a rise in the present value of average (weighted) consumption per head." Ian Malcolm David Little, *Economic Development: Theory, Policy, and International Relations* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), 6.

the level of international relationships and of the trade system that make the development of the South almost impossible. The most significant tenants of this school are the economists of the United Nations' Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) ¹⁰⁶ and their director Raúl Prebisch, an Argentinian economist. ¹⁰⁷

As Prebisch explains, the world is divided between the economic “center” consisting of the industrialized nations like the USA and Europe and the “periphery” consisting of primary producers. Contrary to the theory of “comparative advantages” he asserts the division is of no advantage for the peripheral countries such as Latin American ones. Underdevelopment is caused by the constant extraction of surplus by advanced economies. Development will be achieved by reinvestment of these surpluses in national economies in order to increase the national income to be redistributed in an equitable form. The dominating classes from the periphery are not interested in developing a productive capitalism in the under-developed countries nor are the countries of the center which benefit from the current situation. Hence, full development is impossible without a radical political change. ¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ In Spanish, *Conferencia Económica para América Latina* (CEPAL). It was founded in 1948. Later on, in 1984 its scope was extended to include the countries of the Caribbean and the English name evolved into *Economic Commission for Latin America and Caribbean* (ECLAC).

¹⁰⁷ Raúl Prebisch and CEPAL, *The Economic Development of Latin America and its Principal Problems* (Lake Success, NY: United Nations, Department of Economic Affairs, 1950). This document is often coined the “ECLA Manifesto” and is the reference for the structuralist approach to development.

¹⁰⁸ Consejo de Redacción, “Desarrollo económico y social: teorías, propuestas, responsabilidades,” *Revista de Fomento Social*, no. 60 (2005): 11-38; Little, *Economic Development*, 19-26, 77-84.

At the policy level, structuralism calls for a strong implication of the state in order to foster development.¹⁰⁹ There is a need for interventionist policies for the redistribution of the incomes generated by the exportation of raw materials and the setting of priorities. There is also a need for some forms of protectionism in order, for example, to allow the less developed countries to develop their own production of manufactured goods.

Generally speaking the structuralist approach, as expressed by ECLA, advocates for a voluntaristic reshaping of the economic order. It is confident that a reform of the world trade system and adequate national and international policies that would refuse the *laissez faire* approach of classical economics, could allow for the development of all nations in the North as well as in the South. There is an implicit belief in a convergence of interests, in the long run, between developed and developing countries.¹¹⁰

In the 1960s, however, some begin to challenge the internationalism of ECLA. Born out of structuralism, a more radical school appears. It is the school of “dependency.” Looking at socio-political factors, it stresses the situation of dependency of Latin American countries on the United States and the obvious discordance of interests between them.¹¹¹ The theory of

¹⁰⁹ Gunnar Myrdal, European economist, counter-part of Prebisch as the executive secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, and another leading figure of structuralism, contends that the process of economic development without state intervention leads to an increase of inequalities between a small group of rich countries and a larger group of very poor countries. This is the “principle of cumulative and circular causation.” Gunnar Myrdal, *Economic Theory and Under-Developed Regions* (London: G. Duckworth, 1957).

¹¹⁰ The growing role of the United Nations as well as the rising of various forms of regional or world cooperation among nations (European Economic Community, Non Aligned Movement, etc.) is a source of hope that sustains this internationalist view.

¹¹¹ Enzo Faletto and Fernando Henrique Cardoso, *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

dependency denounces the imperialism still at work in so many countries. Imperialism is materialized in the dependency of the capitalism of the peripheries upon the capitalism of the centers, to use Prebisch's categories. It is an economic imperialism. Consequently, for development to occur in Latin America there is a need to break radically with imperialism through social and political movements opposing the imposition of the capitalism of Northern industrialized countries.

It is in this context of growing debates at the theoretical level about theories of development that the Catholic church comes in with its own reflection about the development of peoples.

b) Catholic Social Teaching about the Development of Peoples in the 1960s

Until the 1960s, we find no mention of the question of the development of peoples in the social teaching of the popes. Catholics, however, were not entirely absent from the growing concern about development. By nature, the church in "territories of mission" had always been active in developing education, health care, social organization, or agricultural improvements while proclaiming the faith. After World War II, groups of Catholics in the first world engaged in reflections and actions to address the challenge of the gap between developed and developing countries. For example in France, Fr. Louis Joseph Lebreton, a Dominican friar, founded IRFED, a research center on the economy of development.¹¹² The center offered general and specific studies concerning international cooperation, economic development, social policies, etc. Lebreton took part directly in projects in various developing countries as advisor to governments. He will be highly influential in Paul VI's reflection on development.

¹¹² The *Institut de Recherche et de Formation à l'Économie du Développement* (IRFED) was founded in 1958.

In 1961, John XXIII published his first social encyclical, *Mater et magistra (MM)*, to commemorate the 70th anniversary of *Rerum novarum*. This marked the beginning of a series of documents from the higher authorities of the church that would increasingly address the question of development of peoples. Then followed John XXIII's *Pacem in terris (PiT)* (1963), Vatican II's *GS* (1965), and finally Paul VI's *PP* (1967). This last encyclical can be seen as the *magna carta* of Catholic teaching about development. It is its central topic and *PP* offers the first fully articulated reflection on it. However, in the previous documents most of the main characteristics of the church's approach to the development of peoples were already present.

First and foremost, to be authentically human, development has to be integral, integrating all the dimensions of human activity. Mere economic growth is not sufficient. Offering a few norms about international cooperation between economically advanced and developing countries, *MM* begins by asserting that "efforts should be made to ensure that improved social conditions accompany economic advancement. And it is very important that such advances occur simultaneously in the agricultural, industrial, and various sectors" (*MM* 168). In its section about international cooperation, *GS* states: "Developing nations should take great pains to seek as the object for progress to express and secure the total human fulfillment of their citizens" (*GS* 86).

Second, there is a duty to work for development, especially on the part of the developed countries. This is not optional or to be governed by mere contingent interests. The expression of the precise content of this duty evolves with better understandings of the challenges of development, but it remains a constant in the church's documents. In *MM*, the moral duty of "helping the poor and unfortunate" is raised to a new level in which "countries with advanced productive systems are lending aid to less privileged countries" (*MM* 159, 160). In *PiT*, development is seen as a right for all nations (*PiT* 86). In *GS* the recognition of the growing

interdependency of peoples in the world or *socialization* calls for reminding that “it is a very important duty of the advanced nations to help the developing nations” (*GS* 86).

Third, attention should be paid to the fact that peoples themselves are the first actors of their development. This does not diminish the aforementioned duty to help but it stresses the ever-present danger of using help as a means of domination without respecting the equal dignity of each human being and of each people. *MM* warns against the danger for “economically developed countries” in “giving aid to poorer countries” of turning “the prevailing political situation to their own advantage and [seeking] to dominate them” (*MM* 171). In a more explicit form and with the language of rights, *PiT* affirms that “cooperation ... should be effected with the greatest respect for the liberty of the countries being developed, for these must realize that they are primarily responsible, and that they are the principal artisans in the promotion of their economic development and social progress” (*PiT* 121). *GS* mentions the situation of newly independent countries which are “far from being free of every form of undue dependence” (*GS* 85), without further elaborating on this yet.

Fourth, development is connected to peace. Negatively put, “it is not easy for [nations] to keep the peace advantageously if excessive imbalances exist in their economic and social conditions” (*MM* 157). *PiT* expands on the idea that peace in the world can be achieved by fostering an order of justice, reflecting God’s justice, in which the rights of the person and of peoples are promoted. Part of this endeavor is the development of peoples through international cooperation and solidarity. Scandalous is the amount of resources spent on armaments in some countries while so much is needed to foster economic and social progress in others (*PiT* 109).

All those hints about development appear in documents which are addressing a larger array of other economic, political, and social questions. With the publication of *Populorum Progressio*

in 1967, this concern is put at the center. It is the entry point for actualizing the social teaching of the church. Twenty and forty years later, John Paul II and Benedict XVI will adopt the same entry point. The elements already mentioned in the previous documents of the decade are exposed in a more articulated and systematic form.

In the vision of the church, “development cannot be limited to mere economic growth.” It is not possible to speak only of economic development without taking into account other dimensions of the question. It is not even sufficient to speak about the social and political conditions for economic development. “In order to be authentic, [development] must be complete, integral, that is, it has to promote the good of every man and the whole man” (*PP* 14). *Integral development as development of the whole person and of all humankind*, this motto is the touchstone to evaluate any theory or concrete project concerning development. It stresses the necessity of an integral approach which, from the economic to the social, from the political to the spiritual, does not exclude, a priori, any dimension of human life.

This vision is rooted in the Christian understanding of the human vocation as oriented toward God and bearer of an inalienable dignity. Hence, the first actors and responsible persons of development are the people themselves. “In the design of God, every man is called upon to develop and fulfill himself, ... he is responsible for his fulfillment as he is for his salvation” (*PP* 15). This is true not only individually but also collectively. “Developing nations” are called to develop “in accordance with their own genius” (*PP* 43).

However, with the same Christian understanding, it must be affirmed that “there can be no progress toward the complete development of man without the simultaneous development of all humanity in the spirit of solidarity” (*PP* 43). There is a duty to take on the challenge of poverty, hunger, lack of education, or epidemic diseases around the world. There is a duty to fight for

eliminating these plagues. However, it is not sufficient. “It is a question, rather, of building a world where every man, no matter what his race, religion, or nationality, can live a fully human life, freed from servitude imposed on him by other men or by natural forces over which he has not sufficient control” (*PP* 47).

Finally, “development is the new name for peace” as the title of the last section of the encyclical states so boldly. “Peace cannot be limited to a mere absence of war...No, peace is something that is built up day after day, in the pursuit of an order intended by God, which implies a more perfect form of justice” (*PP* 76). This connection between peace and development is a powerful way of integrating the various aspects of development, orienting them toward a universal goal that is not merely growth or progress in itself.

To sum up, the development of peoples ought to be integral, calls for both a duty of solidarity and a profound respect for self-agency, and is the path toward true peace. This is the vision of the church in the 1960s. It does not offer political or economic solutions. That is neither its role nor its competence.¹¹³ However this does not mean that the church is not engaged in this field. It offers its vision as a means of inspiring and orienting reflection and action. Hence it reminds us of the ultimate goal – the fulfillment of humanity as oriented toward God – and it gives us tools to assess the various theories and technical options. To this effect, *PP* offers a powerful paragraph where the nature of development, according to the vision previously exposed, is articulated around the notion of the transition from less human conditions to more human ones:

Less human conditions: the lack of material necessities for those who are without the minimum essential for life, the moral deficiencies of those who are mutilated by selfishness. Less human conditions: oppressive social structures, whether due to the abuses of ownership

¹¹³ Cf. *PP* 13.

or to the abuses of power, to the exploitation of workers or to unjust transactions. Conditions that are more human: the passage from misery towards the possession of necessities, victory over social scourges, the growth of knowledge, the acquisition of culture. Additional conditions that are more human: increased esteem for the dignity of others, the turning toward the spirit of poverty, cooperation for the common good, the will and desire for peace. Conditions that are still more human: the acknowledgment by man of supreme values, and of God their source and their finality. Conditions that, finally and above all, are more human: faith, a gift of God accepted by the good will of man, and unity in the charity of Christ, Who calls us all to share as sons in the life of the living God, the Father of all men (*PP* 21).

We find here a large scale of values which gives a more concrete form to the notion of integral development. They range from fighting against extreme poverty to sharing the life of the living God. They show that this notion of development is rooted in materiality but simultaneously it is very theological. There is a profound integration of the historical and the material with the theological. In the subsequent documents of CST concerning development this will be a permanent feature but it will take on different nuances depending on the context and the theological framework favored.

PP's vision of integral human development is not developed in a mere theoretical form, independently of the contemporary debates about policies. For example, land reform is advocated for (*PP* 24), planning is encouraged (*PP* 33), unbridled economic liberalism is denounced (*PP* 26), etc. In all of these applied analyses and recommendations, Paul VI's encyclical appears sympathetic to the structuralist theory of development. It calls for profound structural reforms while still believing in internationalism.¹¹⁴

This does not mean, however, that the church's approach to the development of peoples can be reduced to this theory. As we have seen, the Catholic vision of an integral human

¹¹⁴ Michael Sutton, "Les contingences d'une encyclique : *Populorum progressio*," in *Les chrétiens et l'économie / Colloque de l'association française d'histoire religieuse contemporaine* (Paris: Centurion, 1991), 131-155.

development is much broader and situated at a different level than mere economics and international politics. The endorsement of structuralism was contingent to the situation of the 1960s.¹¹⁵ It allowed criticizing the reductionist view of development as mere GDP development such as in theories of modernization because such a view is not consonant with the Christian vision of the human being who is not mere *homo economicus*. Elements of structuralism fostered solidarity between nations and respect of subsidiarity in recognizing the primary responsibility of peoples for their development. At this time it seemed to be the most appropriate way for the universal magisterium to shed the light of the Gospel on the question of development. This option, however, remains open to change when the question will be addressed in a more restricted localization such as Latin America, or later on in the following decades. For example in Latin America, dependence theories will be more widely adopted in church documents in order to denounce the “neo-colonialism” at work in the continent.¹¹⁶ The broader vision of integral human development, however, will continue to be fostered in CST.

We now turn to some major evolutions in the reflection about development since the 1960s. John Paul II’s *SRS* and Benedict XVI’s *CiV* will expand *PP*’s vision of integral human development in reaction and interaction to those evolutions and this will prompt some of the theological reflection we will focus on in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation. Here I highlight only the reshaping of some debates about development and the emergence of new questions, leaving for later on the study of how the encyclicals respond to them.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 154-155.

¹¹⁶ Cf. *Med. Peace* 8.

c) *Evolutions in Theories of Development since the 1960s*

Neo-liberal approaches to development that flourished in the 1980s and 1990s can be seen as successors of the theories of modernization.¹¹⁷ They share the same endorsement of classical liberal economics and the belief that the free market is the best tool for economic development. They rely on the GDP as the primary indicator of development. They are prompted by the idea that what has worked for some countries, namely not only the western developed ones but some rapidly developing ones in Asia as well, should work for others. They nonetheless part from their predecessors in the role given to the state which, in their view, should be absolutely minimal. They advocate for privatization of the public sector and liberalization of international trade and have led to the promotion of stabilization and structural adjustment policies fostered by IMF and the World Bank.¹¹⁸

Among the critics of the neoliberal approach, we find a revitalization of ECLA's structuralism in what will be coined neo-structuralism.¹¹⁹ This school of thought denounces the pretention to universalization without sufficiently taking into account the diversity of the situations of the countries. It questions the high social cost of the policies of stabilization and adjustment in regard to their mediocre results. It especially contests the assertion that it is

¹¹⁷ "Desarrollo económico y social," 15-16; Antonio Luis Hidalgo Capitán, *El pensamiento económico sobre desarrollo: de los mercantilistas al PNUD* (Huelva: Universidad de Huelva, 1998), 163-192; Josep F. Mária Serrano, "El 'Consensus de Washington' ¿Paradigma del capitalismo triunfante?" *Revista de Fomento Social* 55 (2000): 29-45.

¹¹⁸ John Williamson, "What Washington Means by Policy Reform," in *Latin American Adjustment: How Much has Happened?*, ed. John Williamson (Washington, DC: Institute for International Economics, 1990), 5-20.

¹¹⁹ Capitán, *El pensamiento económico sobre desarrollo*, 119-132; Ildefonso Camacho Laraña, "América Latina tras la 'década perdida' (Un estudio basado en la interpretación neoestructuralista)," *Revista de Fomento Social*, no. 47 (1992): 465-473.

necessary to start with stabilization and adjustment, leaving for later other tasks such as the fight against poverty or processes of structural reforms and democratization.¹²⁰ In fact not everything from the neo-liberal analysis is rejected. In a certain auto-critique of the earlier structuralist theory, neo-structuralism recognizes a necessity of paying attention to monetary and financial aspects such as the treatment of the debt and the need for reassessing an overwhelming confidence in the State. However, the key point remains that putting all the trust in the free markets is not the solution.¹²¹

Alternative approaches to development, departing strongly from both the modernization trend and the structuralist one, have also appeared. This is not the place to make a comprehensive review of these approaches.¹²² I mention only two of them as exemplars of the discussions going on and in which the social encyclicals participate: human development and sustainable development.

Since 1990, following the ideas of economists, Mahbub Ul Haq and Amartya Sen, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) promotes the notion of human development understood as “a process of enlarging people’s choices.”¹²³ The essential choices to be made available are the choices “to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living.” But human development includes also additional choices

¹²⁰ “Desarrollo económico y social,” 18.

¹²¹ CEPAL, *Transformación productiva con equidad. La tarea prioritaria del desarrollo de América Latina y el Caribe en los años noventa* (Santiago de Chile: United Nations, 1990).

¹²² For a comprehensive review, see Hidalgo Capitán, *El pensamiento económico sobre desarrollo*, 193-232.

¹²³ UNDP, *Human Development Report 1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 10.

ranging “from political, economic and social freedom to opportunities for being creative and productive, and enjoying personal self-respect and guaranteed human rights.”¹²⁴ Therefore,

According to this concept of human development, income is clearly only one option that people would like to have, albeit an important one. But it is not the sum total of their lives. Development must, therefore, be more than just the expansion of income and wealth. Its focus must be people.¹²⁵

The measurement of GDP is clearly insufficient in order to render information about human development understood in this way. That is why, from the 1990 report on, UNDP developed a new indicator called “human development index” (HDI). It combines three variables: longevity (measured through life expectancy), level of education (measured through a combination of the rate of adult alphabetization and the rate of registration of children in primary, secondary and superior education), and living standard (measured through purchasing-power-adjusted GDP). This index, which can be refined in various ways such as an improved taking into account of inequalities, is the basis for the publication of annual reports presenting classifications of countries and evolutions. It has led to the adoption of the eight millennium development goals by the United Nations in 2000 with a target in 2015.¹²⁶ This illustrates well the shifting of the UNDP approach in order to take into account a broad view of development that is not merely economic development but human development. In many aspects this approach is close to the

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Those goals are: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and develop a global partnership for development. UNDP “The Millenium Development Goals. Eight Goals for 2015,” (2000), <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/mdgoverview>.

call for integral development made by Paul VI in *PP* and echoes the teaching of subsequent popes.

A growing concern about ecological and environmental issues in the last four decades has also strongly impacted reflections and discussions about development.¹²⁷ In 1987, the so-called *Bruntland* report defines *sustainable development* as development which satisfies the needs of the present generations without compromising the capacities of future generations to satisfy theirs.¹²⁸ This approach adds a notion of intergenerational solidarity to the notion of international cooperation already at the core of several theories of development. It also pushes toward a better taking into account of the reality of the limitation of some natural resources and the price to be paid in the future for the damage done to the environment by human activity. Some thinkers try to incorporate those constraints into the orthodox model of economy, for example by promoting the incorporation of environmental costs in the process of fixing market-prices.¹²⁹ Others argue for a radically new heterodox approach to economy by advocating for development without economic growth.¹³⁰ The very notion of development itself is radically criticized by still others. The term is to be abandoned, they say, because it seems too strongly connected with the growth in production of manufactured products, means of transportation, and consumption of energy that

¹²⁷ Hidalgo Capitán, *El pensamiento económico sobre desarrollo*, 204-211.

¹²⁸ World Commission on Environment, and Development, *Our Common Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

¹²⁹ David W. Pearce, *Environmental Economics* (New York: Longman, 1976); David W. Pearce et al., *Sustainable Development: Economics and Environment in the Third World* (Brookfield, VT: Gower, 1990).

¹³⁰ John B. Cobb, Clifford W. Cobb and Herman E. Daly, *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy Toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1994); Herman E. Daly, *Beyond Growth: The Economics of Sustainable Development* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996).

are detrimental to the environment. The phrase “sustainable development” thus appears as a contradiction in itself. What we have to enter into, is, on the contrary, a movement of “decreasing” or “de-growth.”¹³¹

As we will see in studying the encyclicals of John Paul II and Benedict XVI dealing with development, CST does not give up this concept but on the contrary continues to use it repeatedly. However this is never a blind endorsement of a particular political-economic theory. According to the popes, the notion of integral human development –the development of the whole human being and of all human beings – is an integrative and dynamic concept which remains a powerful tool to address the challenges of a globalizing world. It allows for stressing various dimensions depending on the context. John Paul II will develop the virtue of solidarity in international development at the end of the cold war when Benedict will reaffirm the necessity of an opening to transcendence in an ever more secularized world. Both of them however, will use the profoundly anthropological and theological notion of development set by Paul VI to continue to ethically assess concrete issues such as world trade, economic cooperation, new forms of colonization, growing inequalities... They will also become more concerned with environmental issues which are coming to the front in debates about development.

In the last section of this first chapter, I have presented the main lines of discussion concerning the development of peoples since World War II and I have situated the intervention of the church on this topic. This will serve as a background for the subsequent theological

¹³¹ Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971); Serge Latouche, *Le pari de la décroissance* (Paris: Fayard, 2006); Florent Marcellesi, *Cooperación al posdesarrollo: bases teóricas para la transformación ecológica de la cooperación al desarrollo* (Bilbao: Bakeaz, 2012).

reading of *PP*, *SRS*, and *CiV*. Promoting the notion of integral human development, these documents take positions in the ongoing debates. Doing so causes theological claims about God, Christ, or the human being to be highlighted in ways different than in other theological disciplines. It might also prompt new insights. In all of this it is the mystery of God which is more deeply apprehended or, better, is allowed to seize us more wholly.

CHAPTER TWO

PAUL VI'S *POPULORUM PROGRESSIO*: DEVELOPMENT, JUSTICE, AND PEACE

On March 26, 1967, sixteen months after the end of the second Vatican council and in the middle of the first Decade of Development declared by the United Nations, Pope Paul VI published his first social encyclical and dedicated it to the topic of the development of peoples. *Populorum progressio* has as its starting point the pastoral concern of the church for and its solidarity with the peoples in hunger for material development, for health and education resources but also for political freedom and cultural flourishing. The encyclical provides a contribution of the church to the issue of development through a conceptual reflection grounded in its tradition but also through concrete appeals to actions and reforms addressed to all the faithful Catholics and more broadly to all people of good will.

The first part deals with the notion of complete human development. The situation of a predominantly-post-colonial world is that of growing inequalities between rich and poor people, in material possessions but also in power. The Christian vision of development is the personal development of everyone and the development of all. It demands to foster a transition from less human conditions to more human conditions, materially, culturally, and spiritually. Consequently actions need to be undertaken in developing countries concerning areas as diverse as land reform, industrial development, state planning, or support to family and to societal intermediary bodies.

In a second part, the encyclical addresses more directly the better-off countries and appeals to solidarity in providing aids, to justice in reforming international trade relations and to charity in

fostering collaboration and brotherhood. In a world marked by the tensions of the Cold War and post-colonial conflicts, development is also the new name for peace. *PP* ends with a vibrant appeal for everyone to take on the task of working for integral human development.

To characterize the message of *PP*, one can say that it strongly connects the notion of development with justice and peace. Actually, the encyclical was, in a way, the mission statement of the newly created Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace.¹ The development of peoples is a matter of justice in the sense that it does not concern merely individual commitments to help the destitute but also the bringing about of just structures and institutions at the national and international level which will foster the flourishing of persons and societies. This development is then the source of a true peace which is not the mere absence of war but the path toward a universal fraternity in which humanity recognizes itself as truly a family.²

This chapter, thus, takes Paul VI's encyclical as a first case study in order to show how and what Catholic social teaching contributes to theology. The ongoing question I attempt to answer is how this magisterial document dealing with social, political and economic issues of its epoch helps us to enter more deeply into, or be seized more deeply by, the mystery of "God for us." Or, in other words, what insights concerning crucial theological themes such as Christology and theological anthropology, are particularly highlighted because of the specific concerns, situation and methodology of the document.

¹ Cf. *PP* 5.

² On recognizing humanity as human family, cf. Jon Sobrino, "*Populorum progressio*: Sowing the Seeds for Liberation Theology," in *The Development of Peoples: Challenges for Today and Tomorrow. Essays to mark the fortieth anniversary of Populorum progressio*, ed. International Jesuit Network of Development (Dublin: Columba Press, 2007), 24-36.

In order to achieve this goal I begin by recalling some significant elements of context for the production of the encyclical. It was published at a time of post-colonial effervescence full of challenges and great hopes. The church began to live out the fruits of the council. A few key figures had a particular inspirational role for the encyclical. Then in the second section I analyze its methodology and style and their theological significance. An inductive see-judge-act approach to the issue at stake and the promotion of dialogue are very much at work in a similar fashion as in *GS*. Those two features point to the depths of the mystery of the incarnation and also to the mystery of a self-revealing God in dialogue with humanity. In section three I focus on *PP*'s contribution to theological anthropology and in section four on its contribution to Christology. *PP* offers a rich vision of being human as becoming more human. It stresses both the personal dimension of transcendence and freedom on the one hand and the social dimension on the other hand. The encyclical also sheds some light on the mystery of Jesus Christ by highlighting his involvement in the world and his nearness to the poor, and by recalling that the fullness of humanity is realized in him.

The last section will conclude on the overall nature of the theology produced by *PP* in its context, a theology very much in line with the neo-Thomist framework. In contrast with the anti-modernist crusades of the pre-Vatican II period which stressed the sinfulness of the world, this theology rather highlights the possibility of a positive, dialogue-oriented, transformationist relation of the church and the Gospel to the world.

I. CONTEXT

Without attempting to picture the whole historical context of the world and the church in the middle of the 1960s when *PP* was elaborated, it is worthwhile to highlight a few specific

elements which are more closely related to the theological themes of our subsequent sections.³ By doing this, it will later become clearer how the historical context plays a role in shaping a theological discourse. Concerning the situation of the world, crucial contextual elements are decolonization, growing awareness of disparities between nations and the Cold War. Concerning the church we have to mention the continuing process of becoming a world church in the aftermath of Vatican II, and the concrete experience of Pope Paul VI travelling outside Europe. Finally some figures have been especially inspiring for the encyclical and I will evoke three of them: the Dominican Father Louis Lebreton, the philosopher Jacques Maritain, and the Belgian diocesan priest, founder of the Young Catholic Workers, Cardinal Joseph Cardijn.

a) The World in the Mid-Sixties

At the end of World War II, it was still possible to say that the sun never sets on the British Empire. Most of Africa, large parts of Asia and Oceania were under colonial powers principally French and British. On the contrary, by the middle of the 1960s, decolonization had officially occurred in most of those regions. To name only a few examples: India gained its independence in 1948, French colonies in Africa and the former Belgian Congo in 1960, British colonies in Africa between 1961 and 1965. This was a powerful sign of the aspiration of peoples to freedom and independence but also to participation in their own government and respect for their own culture. This aspiration found strong echoes in the encyclical and undoubtedly shaped some of its anthropological vision.

³ For a presentation of the context of *PP*, see Allan Figueroa Deck, “Commentary on *Populorum progressio*,” in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, ed. M. Himes (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 293-296.

However, national independence does not mean instant removal of all mechanisms of dependence and colonialism. As *PP* highlights, “peoples who have recently gained national independence experience the need to add to this political freedom a fitting autonomous growth, social as well as economic, in order to assure their citizens of a full human enhancement and to take their rightful place with other nations” (*PP* 6). A striking feature of the decades following World War II was the growing disparity among nations. Western countries of Europe and North America were largely benefitting from “a time of new and exhilarating social, economic, and cultural advances on a global scale,”⁴ a time of economic expansion, industrialization, new technologies and expanding communications media. With the impulse of the Marshall plan for the reconstruction of Europe after World War II and energy available at very low cost, it seemed that economic growth and technical advancement could continue forever. It was “the myth of infinite growth, of the complete conquest of the planet ... and of space.”⁵ Meanwhile the gap with the “developing countries” was growing. Statistics speak by themselves:

30% of the world’s people living in the North, particularly in the North Atlantic region, are enjoying 70% of the world’s goods and services, 80% of its trade and new investments, over 90% of its industry and nearly 100% of its critical capacities for advanced research.⁶

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, the question of development was on everyone’s lips. The United Nations had declared the 1960s, “the Decade of Development.” However for many the idea remained that there was some sort of continuous progress line on which some were more advanced and others suffered backwardness and needed to be helped to catch up. The debate was

⁴ Ibid., 293.

⁵ Paul Poupard, “Le père Lebreton, le pape Paul VI et l’encyclique ‘Populorum progressio’ vingt ans après,” *Notiziario* 14 (May 1987): 73. My translation.

⁶ Barbara Ward, “Looking Back on Populorum Progressio,” in *Readings in Moral Theology* no. 5, eds. Charles Curran and Richard A. McCormick (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1986), 132.

starting about other analyses of the situation and especially the idea that underdevelopment of some countries was structurally connected to the development of others. With an encyclical focusing on the development of peoples, Paul VI engaged the church at the heart of a crucial world issue.

A last element of the world context needing to be recalled is the Cold War going on between the West and the East, which had repercussions on the whole world. After a peak of tension with the building of the Berlin wall in 1961 and the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, the mid-sixties enjoyed a time of timid *détente*. However the Iron Curtain was still dividing strongly the two parts of Europe. Various conflicts in the so called “Third World,” such as the Vietnam War, were simply the offshoring of the major confrontation between the two super powers and their competing ideologies despite attempts by some countries to constitute a third power freed from the first two.⁷ All this fueled a costly arms race which Pope Paul VI constantly denounced, calling instead for using the money “to relieve the more destitute of the world” (*PP* 51).

b) A Pope in the Aftermath of Vatican II

Concerning the context of the church, *Populorum progressio* was published on Easter Sunday, March 26, 1967, less than two years after the end of Vatican II. The church continued to become more aware of being “world-Church”⁸ and the encyclical reflects this by repeating after

⁷ In 1955, at the Bandung Conference twenty five mostly newly independent countries from Asia and Africa gathered with the aim of fostering collaboration among themselves. In 1961, the Non-Aligned Movement was founded in Belgrade with the agenda of setting a middle course between the two super powers.

⁸ K. Rahner, “Basic Theological Interpretation of the Second Vatican Council,” in *TI*, Vol. 20 (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 77-89.

John XXIII: “the social question has become worldwide” (*PP* 2).⁹ At the council almost 50% of the bishops came from the Third World.¹⁰ Even if the majority of them were missionaries and originally from Europe, they nonetheless brought into the discussion some perspectives from the countries where they were working. This would continue thanks to a greater level of internationalization of the curia under the pontificate of Paul VI.

More specifically the pope himself began to travel outside of Italy and to get some personal experience of the challenges he addressed in his encyclical. This “direct contact with the acute problems pressing continents full of life and hope” and the opportunity to “see and virtually touch the very serious difficulties besetting peoples... at grips with the problem of development” (*PP* 4) are explicitly recognized as a source for the document. Before being elected pope, in 1960, Cardinal Montini had travelled to Brazil.¹¹ In 1962 he visited during one month some missionaries from his diocese of Milan in Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia) and Burkina Faso (then Upper Volta). He also stopped in Nigeria and Ghana.¹² Then, as pope, he made a significant journey to India in December 1964 of which a journalist wrote:

It created in Asia a hitherto unappreciated image of the Church: that of the compassionate Vicar of Christ – a Christ born poor – more at home in the slums of Bombay than in the magnificence of the papal court.¹³

⁹ Cf. *MM* 157.

¹⁰ O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2008), 23.

¹¹ Peter Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI: the First Modern Pope* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993), 292-293.

¹² *Ibid.*, 302.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 412.

In Bombay, Paul VI also pleaded wholeheartedly for peace and the diversion of the money spent on arms toward the assistance of developing countries.¹⁴ He would powerfully repeat the same message at the tribune of the United Nations in 1965.¹⁵

c) Inspiring Personalities and Movements

To conclude this overview of key elements of context we need to present three personalities who greatly inspired the encyclical. The first is Fr. Louis Lebreton, O.P. (1897-1966).¹⁶ Although the authorship of papal encyclicals is given to the pope who signs them, he is usually not the main redactor. In the case of *PP* it is officially recognized that Lebreton wrote the first drafts in 1964 and 1965 and is thus the central inspiration of the document, even if he died before its publication.¹⁷ Before World War II, Lebreton began his life as a Dominican priest by helping fishermen in the northern coast of Brittany in France to organize in the midst of a deep crisis prompted by the industrialization of their profession. He explained his involvement saying:

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ “Jamais plus la guerre, jamais plus la guerre! C'est la paix, la paix, qui doit guider le destin des peuples et de toute l'humanité! ... consacrer au bénéfice des Pays en voie de développement une partie au moins des économies qui peuvent être réalisées grâce à la réduction des armements. Nous renouvelons ici cette invitation.” Paul VI, *Discours à l'assemblée générale des Nations Unies*, October 5, 1965, nos. 5, 6. www.vatican.va.

¹⁶ François Malley, “Ethics and Economics in Father L. J. Lebreton,” in *Ethics and Economics. Catholic Thinkers in the 20th Century*, ed. G. Gaburro (Heidelberg: Physica-Verlag, 1997), 53-69; *Le Père Lebreton. L'économie au service des hommes* (Paris: Cerf, 1968); Louis Joseph Lebreton, *Human Ascent* (Chicago, IL: Fides, 1955); *Dynamique concrète du développement* (Paris: Économie et Humanisme, Éditions ouvrières, 1961).

¹⁷ Cf. the press conference given by Msgr. (later Cardinal) Poupard for the official presentation of *PP*. Paul Poupard, “Présentation de l'encyclique ‘Populorum progressio,’” *La documentation catholique* 64, no. 1495 (1967): 1015-1021.

We cannot accept a society in which the effort for generosity and gratitude is restricted to the help of the “poorer and poorer.” We must provide a structure to the society that is able to adapt to man.¹⁸

There, Lebret realized that the crisis that the fishermen were facing was not merely a social crisis but an *economic* and *structural* one. To address it one needed to begin by knowing reality:

“Nothing can take the place of observation. A long and deep observation is essential to achieve the knowledge of human reality.”¹⁹ This leads then to a turn to action, including political action through unions. During the war, Lebret moved to the South-East of France and, with some economists, founded the center *Économie et Humanisme* (Economy and Humanism) whose goal is “to bring economy back to the service of humanity.” In 1947 he started to travel around the world and to work on the problem of underdevelopment through counselling governments in analyzing needs and resources and elaborating development plans. According to Lebret, already at this time, “development was for a nation the passage from a less human phase to a more human phase.”²⁰ It implied a profound respect for indigenous values but also an integrated vision of the human being who in all its dimensions is in a process of ascension or human fulfillment.²¹

A second important inspiring figure for *PP*, though not an immediate redactor, is the French philosopher Jacques Maritain (1882-1973).²² In *Integral Humanism*, Maritain defines humanism as that which “tends essentially to render man more truly human, and to manifest his original

¹⁸ Lebret, quoted in Malley, “Ethics and Economics in Father L. J. Lebret,” 53.

¹⁹ Lebret, quoted in Malley, *ibid.*, 55.

²⁰ Malley, *Ibid.*, 62.

²¹ Lebret, *Human Ascent*.

²² Jean-Yves Calvez, “Le retournement: Jacques Maritain,” in *Chrétiens penseurs du social* (Maritain, Mounier, Fessard, Teilhard de Chardin, de Lubac), vol. 1 (Paris: Cerf, 2002), 33-56.

greatness by having him participate in all that which can enrich him in nature and in history.”²³ He offers this integral humanism as the basis for envisioning the historical realization of a new Christendom which would be neither a return to the medieval domination of the sacred over temporal matters nor the acceptance of a modern ideology rejecting religion in the private area, but rather the infusion, from within, of Christian values in the democratic society respecting the autonomy of the temporal. Alongside this autonomy, Maritain advocated for pluralism in the political organization of society, respect for the freedom of persons, and engagement in the realization of a fraternal community.²⁴ His approach, grounded in the philosophy and theology of Aquinas, resonates very much with the relation between church and earthly realities articulated in *GS*: distinction and autonomy without separation. On the practical level it supports a transformative vision of the society under the impulse of the Christian values at work in the faithful engaged in various aspects of the social life.²⁵ *PP* incarnates very much this vision and there is no doubt that the notion of “integral development” it promotes has some roots in Maritain’s concept of “integral humanism.”²⁶

²³ Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism: Temporal and Spiritual Problems of a New Christendom*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (New York: Scribner, 1968 [French edition, 1936]), 2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 162-210.

²⁵ For emerging Latin American liberation theology, this is not sufficient because it risks too much cooptation with actual unjust social structures. What is needed is rather a more “revolutionary” approach, in the sense of not simply “transforming” the structures but turning the bad ones down and replacing them by new ones. See Gutiérrez’s comments on Maritain’s notion of a New Christendom. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 2nd edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), 35-36.

²⁶ Deck, “Commentary on *Populorum Progressio*,” 298-299.

A final inspiring figure worth mentioning is the Belgian priest, Fr. Joseph Cardijn (1882-1967).²⁷ Born into a modest family, Cardijn experienced, very soon after his joining a seminary for secondary education, the gap growing between church ministers and his former schoolmates who were already at work in factories. He thus decided to devote his whole life to bridging this gap, swearing by the deathbed of his father:

I will give my life to this thing, to end the scandal which brings death to millions of young workers, separating them from Christ and the Church.²⁸

This led him to gather groups of young workers for fostering mutual support and growth in Christian faith. One of them later highlighted being “grateful to Cardijn not for social principles but for having taught him to use life as a lecture hall and the gospel for commentary.”²⁹ In 1920, the *Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne* (JOC or Young Christian Worker, YCW) was founded and very soon became an international movement spreading all over the world. In 1925, Cardijn went to Rome with some of the youth and managed to secure an encounter with Pope Pius XI to get an official recognition. Following on that, Cardijn constantly maintained direct contact with popes and members of the curia, bringing the concerns and the worldviews of the young workers to the attention of high church officials. Cardijn summarized the aim of the YCW this way:

The action of the YCW is a very simple thing – the action of Christ who continues to live and act in the world now in the person of his young Christians.³⁰

²⁷ Edmund Arbuthnott, *Joseph Cardijn, Priest and Founder of the Y.C.W.* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966).

²⁸ Ibid., 10.

²⁹ Ibid., 17.

³⁰ Ibid., 41.

One methodological key of the YCW is the see-judge-act approach that they practice in their meetings. In *Mater et magistra*, John XXIII mentioned explicitly this method and recommended it for the whole church.³¹ *PP* continued in this line and we will study more at length in the next section what that means.

Social encyclicals never appear out of a vacuum. On the contrary they are embedded in an historical context. I have presented in the preceding pages a few elements of context for *PP* taken from the global world history but also from the more particular personal histories of those who contributed to the document. They constitute the background against which to begin the analysis of the theological contribution of the encyclical. There is no doubt that *PP* is aware of the evils and sufferings of the social life of its time but the overall context in the world and in the church is also open to possibilities of transformation and full of hopes. This renders more natural the development of a theology open and in dialogue with the world in reaction to the confrontational stance of the church in the preceding century. The neo-Thomist framework with its positive vision of the work of God within the world is easily at home here. Other contexts will prevail at the time of publication of later social encyclicals and will in part explain that they demonstrate other theological frameworks.

II. METHODOLOGY AND STYLE

Paying attention to how things are said is crucial in order to grasp the core of what is said. As noted in the first chapter, Vatican II's change of style was not a mere external new envelope of some old teaching but carried with it a doctrinal renewal. *PP* follows in these footsteps. This

³¹ *MM* 236-237.

section will pay attention to some features of the style and methodology adopted by the encyclical, namely the implementation of a rather inductive see-judge-act approach and the place given to dialogue. Both of them are theologically significant. The first highlights the incarnational dimension of the Christian faith and the necessity to put the Gospel into action against the temptation of a faith focused only on other-worldly life and ignoring worldly mediations. The latter is connected to God's own Trinitarian mode of revelation and salvation in history.

a) See-Judge-Act Approach

Since the early 1920s, in the YCW he founded, Fr. Joseph Cardijn had formalized a way of fostering the apostolic vocation of lay people which was subsequently adopted by all the Catholic Action Movements. He explained:

Laymen are formed first of all by the discovery of facts, followed by a Christian judgment, resulting in the actions they plan, the plans they carry into effect, the responsibilities they shoulder.³²

And John XXIII fully endorsed this approach in his first social encyclical in 1961:

There are three stages which should normally be followed in the reduction of social principles into practice. First, one reviews the concrete situation; secondly, one forms a judgment on it in the light of these same principles; thirdly, one decides what in the circumstances can and should be done to implement these principles. These are the three stages that are usually expressed in the three terms: look, judge, act (*MM* 236).

These three steps of seeing, judging, and acting are the basic structure of the first part of *PP* in which Paul VI reflects on "Man's Complete Development." He starts with the data of the problem (*PP* 6-11), continues with offering a vision of development informed by Scriptures and

³² Joseph Cardijn, *Laymen into Action* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1964), 150.

various theological and philosophical resources (*PP* 12-21) and finally he makes recommendations by pointing to several areas where there is “action to be undertaken,” such as the limits in the exercise of the right to property, the challenge of industrialization, the need for planning, or demographic issues and the role of the family. (*PP* 22-42). In the second part on “The Development of the Human Race in the Spirit of Solidarity,” the focus is more directly on the “act” step: recommendations are addressed to the more well-off nations. However, those recommendations are rooted in the observation of reality and a careful analysis of it through the lens of the Christian faith. For example, the inequity in trade relations (*PP* 56-61) is pointed out thanks to precise socio-economic analysis. Industrialized countries import raw materials from less developed countries and have the power to transform them into manufactured products which are then sold back to the latter with a considerable added value. In a second step, the traditional teaching of the insufficiency of the law of supply and demand to establish the moral rightness of a contract in cases of huge inequality of power, which Leo XIII had used to reflect about just wages,³³ is applied to the situation of the relations between rich and poor countries. Finally, Paul VI advocates that “without abolishing the competitive market, it should be kept within the limits which make it just and moral, therefore human” (*PP* 61).

Let us make some additional remarks concerning the implementation of each step of the see-judge-act approach in the encyclical. Seeing reality as it stands and taking it as a starting point is an important feature highlighted by many early commentators. To take a Spanish one, there is a sense of staying “close to reality,” not flying away from it in abstract reasoning but

³³ Cf. *Rerum Novarum* no. 34.

rather deepening the understanding of reality with the awareness of its complexity.³⁴ French Jesuits of *Action Populaire* highlight that “it is without explicit philosophical deductions, without the detour of pure natural law that Paul VI envisions religious hopes also at the concrete level of human life.”³⁵ The tone is given in the introduction when the pope mentions the travels he made and which opened his eyes on some dimensions of the reality of development issues. Overall the style of the encyclical is “direct, journalistic, and concrete.”³⁶

Concerning the step of “judging,” it is worth highlighting the role of the Bible. It is not so much the number of biblical quotations in the encyclical that is significant but the way they are used. They appear far less in the form of proof-texting than in previous magisterial documents and much more as inspirational or challenging sources. Notably, several parables concerning riches are mentioned.³⁷ A parable does not give an immediate ethical rule but prompts one to change one’s vision of the world. Many direct quotes are questions: “How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?” (1 Jn 3:17) (PP 23); “For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life?” (Mt 16:26) (PP 40).³⁸ The Bible is a source for raising questions rather than immediately

³⁴ Matías García Gomez, “Un nuevo tono en el magisterio social de la Iglesia,” in *Teología y sociología del desarrollo. Comentario a la Populorum progressio* (Madrid: Razon y Fe, 1968), 3-36.

³⁵ Action Populaire, *Populorum progressio. Introduction et commentaire* (Paris: Spes, 1967), 23. Translation mine.

³⁶ García Gomez, “Un nuevo tono,” 5.

³⁷ PP 47: The rich man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31); PP 49: The rich man who does not know where to store his riches (Lk 12:20); PP 74: the last judgment (Mt 25:35-36).

³⁸ See as well: “If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,’ and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?” (Jas 2:15-16) (PP 45).

giving answers. There is an evangelical tone in the encyclical and “the vigor of the appeal is one of a prophet calling to the attention of everyone some situations which are no longer bearable.”³⁹

Concerning the last step of “acting,” we can note the sense of urgency which runs through the entire encyclical: “solidarity in action at this turning point in human history is a matter of urgency” (PP 1), “it is to all that we address this solemn appeal for concrete action toward man’s complete development and the development of all mankind” (PP 5), “the question is urgent for on it depends the future of the civilization of the world” (PP 44), “it is time for all men and all peoples to face up to their responsibilities” (PP 80). The style of the encyclical is meant to mobilize around the urgency of the action to be taken.⁴⁰ Some called it a “manifesto,” and they highlight that it is a document which requires taking action also at the “political” level, meaning at the level of global structures of societies and of international relations.⁴¹

All those stylistic and methodological remarks bear a theological meaning. The encyclical starts by reminding us that it is the Gospel which “makes it the duty [of the Church] to put herself at the service of all, to help them grasp their serious problem in all its dimension and to convince them that solidarity in action at this turning point in human history is a matter of urgency” (PP 1). The Christian faith and the Gospel have concrete and practical implications in

³⁹ Philippe Laurent, “Introduction à *Populorum progressio*,” in CERAS, *Le discours social de l’Église catholique. De Léon XIII à Benoît XVI*, 4th edition (Paris : Bayard, 2009), 523-528 at 525. Translation mine. Concerning a prophetic tone, see as well Vincent Cosmao, “Introduction,” in *Le développement des peuples. Populorum progressio* (Paris: Centurion, 1967), 24.

⁴⁰ García, “Un nuevo tono,” 12.

⁴¹ Rafael Lopez Jordan, ed., *El manifiesto social de Pablo VI. Comentarios, presupuestos conciliares y repercusión posterior de la encíclica Populorum progressio* (Madrid: Studium, 1967); García Gomez, “Un nuevo tono,” 9; René Coste, “L’encyclique *Populorum progressio* vingt ans après,” *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 109, no.2 (1987): 179.

the present world. They have to be put into practice not simply through the conversion of individuals but through the transformation of the temporal realm. Everything in the encyclical is oriented toward an active commitment for this transformation, “in the name of the evangelical message and of the faith.”⁴² As the Venezuelan commission Justice and Peace highlighted in its 1968 commentary:

The Church is not interested in the technical and political aspects of development in themselves. It is her faith which prompts her to engage with the problems of the temporal city, to engage concretely ... to engage not only through a doctrinal statement but through offering a global vision of humanity which compels her to concrete formulations. Theologically the participation of the Church as institution and of Christians themselves in the multiple tasks of the development of peoples is plainly justified.⁴³

With its focus on concrete reality and its call for action, the encyclical highlights that the salvation proclaimed by the Gospel is not purely other-worldly but on the contrary is already at work when the church fulfills its mission and contributes to the transformation of the present world.⁴⁴ Proclaiming the Gospel includes proclaiming the Gospel in action and in action at the heart of the most crucial political, economic and social issues of the time.

⁴² Action Populaire, *Populorum progressio*, 24.

⁴³ Comisión Venezolana de Justicia y Paz, *Justicia y Paz. El subdesarrollo latinoamericano a la luz de la Populorum progressio* (Caracas, 1968), 1. Translation mine.

⁴⁴ GS had pointed to this when speaking of the kingdom being already “present in mystery.” It is not only our virtues or good intentions which have eternal value but the “fruit of our labors” themselves: “The expectation of a new earth must not weaken but rather stimulate our concern for cultivating this one. For here grows the body of a new human family, a body which even now is able to give some kind of foreshadowing of the new age. Hence, while earthly progress must be carefully distinguished from the growth of Christ's kingdom, to the extent that the former can contribute to the better ordering of human society, it is of vital concern to the kingdom of God. For after we have obeyed the Lord, and in His Spirit nurtured on earth the values of human dignity, brotherhood and freedom, and indeed all the good fruits of our nature and enterprise, we will find them again, but freed of stain, burnished and transfigured, when Christ hands over to the Father: ‘a kingdom eternal and universal, a kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace,

This insistence on the implementation of social justice for the proclamation of the Gospel is an expression of the deep meaning of the mystery of the incarnation. In a commentary immediately following the publication of *PP*, Peter Riga remarked that the theological issue at stake was to take seriously “the law of Incarnation” and to reject any form of Docetism. For Riga, some Christians “wish to regress to God ‘in himself,’ to contemplation of the eternal verities. This ... is an escape from the reality of man with whom, by the Incarnation, God is forever implicated.”⁴⁵ In this conception, God remains an illusion. On the contrary, “there are others today for whom God can be found only when man has been found... [they] recall that God has become visible in Jesus Christ the man, just as he has become visible in the extension of his body – all men.”⁴⁶ *PP* is a strong expression of the latter approach. Paul VI is adamant on social justice, because the church has to follow the example of the incarnate Word. We cannot abstract the “spiritual” in human life because,

God has made man as a whole and his total vocation is to be what God has created him. This includes the economic as well as the political, the social as well as the spiritual....To work for more humane conditions among men is, in reality, to work for the extension of the spirit of Christ, the extension of the Gospel into the world of men (*PP* 32).⁴⁷

In the North American context, in which some critiques of liberal capitalism by the encyclical were not well received, even among Catholics, Riga’s comments stressed that denying the legitimacy of the church to intervene in particular temporal issues such as the development of

of justice, love and peace.’ *On this earth that kingdom is already present in mystery*. When the Lord returns it will be brought into full flower” (*GS* 39, emphasis mine).

⁴⁵ Peter Riga, *The Church of the Poor. A Commentary on Paul VI’s Encyclical On the Development of Peoples* (Techny, IL: Divine Word Publications, 1968), 4.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 5-6.

peoples actually challenges the very heart of the Christian faith: God became human.⁴⁸ In this section about the methodology and style of *PP*, the argument is a good pointer to the theological issue at stake. By engaging the magisterial teaching in the realm of concrete reality, by looking at the issue of development, judging it with the light of faith and urging to action, Paul VI expresses the Christian belief in the incarnation.

b) Dialogue

Another methodological and stylistic feature of *PP* is the emphasis given to dialogue. Not only dialogue and common work with those who do not share entirely the Catholic faith are encouraged, but Paul VI shows that he practices what he preaches. He mentions “the memory of [his] unforgettable encounter in Bombay with [his] non-Christian brethren” (*PP* 82) and also makes explicit that the reflection he offers is nourished by the dialogue with economists, sociologists, philosophers, or contemporary theologians. Previous social encyclicals have always been prepared with the help of specialists, priests or laypeople, but in the footnotes only references to the Bible, prior magisterial documents, Saint Thomas, or some Fathers of the church appeared. For the first time several contemporary names are cited: two theologians (de Lubac and Chenu), a philosopher (Maritain), an economist (Colin Clark), a moralist (Nell Breuning) and a specialist of development policies (Lebret). It might appear only symbolic for the reader accustomed to modern academic standards, but for a document of the church which is

⁴⁸ On the connection between *PP*'s call to action and the mystery of the incarnation, see as well Vincent Cosmao: “Nous n’aurons jamais fini de découvrir à quelle profondeur le mystère de l’incarnation ‘identifie’ Dieu, au nom de qui parle l’Église, et l’humanité dont la vérité se manifeste en lui. ... C’est au nom de l’Homme-Dieu que l’Église propose à tous les hommes un humanisme plénier (*PP* 42), un humanisme transcendant (*PP* 16) dans lequel tous les peuples puissent s’épanouir ‘selon leur génie propre’ (*PP* 41)” (Cosmao, “Introduction,” 19, 21).

not compelled to these standards it is a very significant symbol. The search for truth, or “deepening of human knowledge” (PP 86) about the question of development called for by the pope, implies listening to a variety of voices inside and outside the church, and among secular disciplines.⁴⁹

Dialogue is also put into practice in the way the encyclical attempts to reach out to a large audience. Following in the footsteps of John XXIII’s *Pacem in terris*, PP is addressed, not only to the bishops, priests, religious, and faithful but to “all men of good will.”⁵⁰ The church does not intend to impose its teaching or vision of the world on others but is convinced that many can join their efforts together in the fight “to further the progress of poorer people, to encourage social justice among nations, to offer to less developed nations the means whereby they can further their own progress” (PP 5). The encyclical ends with a vibrant appeal to various categories of people: other Christians and non-Christian believers (PP 82), people of good will, delegates of international organizations, rulers, journalists, educators (PP 83-84). All those “who have heard the appeal of suffering peoples, ... [and] are working to answer their cries” are called “apostles of development” (PP 86).

Moreover, dialogue between nations and between cultures is fostered as a key component for development and peace. There is a need for more dialogue between developed and developing countries concerning the implementation of mechanisms truly respectful of the dignity of each party (PP 53). There is also a need to foster a dialogue between cultures or civilizations that

⁴⁹ This is the natural continuation of what had been articulated about the relation between the church and the modern world at Vatican II in *Gaudium et spes*. Cf. GS 44, 62.

⁵⁰ Cf. the title of the encyclical: “Encyclical Letter on the Development of Peoples. His Holiness Pope Paul VI. *To the Bishops, Priests, Religious, the Faithful and to All Men of Good Will*.”

creates fraternity, a “dialogue based on man and not on commodities or technical skills” (*PP* 73). Dialogue and collaboration are also needed among developing countries and inside them in order to overcome tensions and conflicts prompted by excessive nationalism and forms of racism (*PP* 62-64).

This emphasis put on dialogue is theologically meaningful. Three years before *PP*, in *Ecclesiam suam*, the first encyclical of his pontificate and, in a sense, its program, Paul VI had reflected at length about the notion of dialogue. It is “the mental attitude which the Catholic Church must adopt regarding the contemporary world” (*ES* 58). Dialogue has its origin “in the mind of God Himself.” Indeed, as exemplified in prayer, “religion of its very nature is a certain relationship between God and man.” Paul VI continues by presenting the doctrine of revelation in terms of dialogue:

Revelation, too, that supernatural link which God has established with man, can likewise be looked upon as a dialogue. In the Incarnation and in the Gospel it is God's Word that speaks to us. That fatherly, sacred dialogue between God and man, broken off at the time of Adam's unhappy fall, has since, in the course of history, been restored. Indeed, the whole history of man's salvation is one long, varied dialogue, which marvelously begins with God and which He prolongs with men in so many different ways. In Christ's “conversation” with men, God reveals something of Himself, of the mystery of His own life, of His own unique essence and trinity of persons (*ES* 70).

In those few sentences, the pope connects the attitude of dialogue not only to the way God reveals Godself to humanity but also to the mystery of salvation which occurs within the dialogue between God and humanity in Christ and finally to the mystery of the Trinity which is a mystery of dialogue par-excellence. This is how much theological weight Paul VI puts on the promotion of dialogue.

This dialogue, “which God the Father initiated and established with us through Christ in the Holy Spirit” (*ES* 71) serves as a model for the dialogue the pope wants to foster between the

church and the modern world. Just as God takes the initiative, the church ought to make the first move toward others (*ES 72*). Dialogue is induced by love (*ES 73*), is neither limited and self-seeking, nor coercive (*ES 74*), but rather universal (*ES 76*) and persevering (*ES 77*). It is not difficult to recognize in *PP*, especially in the various features we have noticed previously, the attempt of Paul VI to implement this model. Without explicitly restating the theological foundation of what he does, he still highlights that God's relation to humanity is a relation of dialogue.

Engaging in explicit dialogue with the world, particularly a dialogue with "secular" disciplines, is not a mere strategic move for the church in order to gain a greater audience but it is really the recognition of the divine presence at work in the world. Another way to stress this aspect is to consider *PP*'s approach as pertaining to the search for wisdom. An early French commentator stated:

Paul VI appeals to human wisdom which reflects God's wisdom and to Christian wisdom which is a participation in it. It is only in this light that the integral development of the human being will be assured.⁵¹

God as Wisdom is one approach to the mystery of God which is present in a large part of the biblical literature, and most preeminently in books like Proverbs, Wisdom, Ecclesiastes or Sirach. They all highlight that God reveals Godself in creation and in human wisdom even when

⁵¹ Charles Molette, "En vue d'aider à une première lecture de l'encyclique *Populorum progressio*," *Les études sociales*, no. 73-74 (Juin-décembre 1967): 32. Translation mine.

God is not explicitly named.⁵² One might say that *PP*'s theological approach bears a lot of this tradition.⁵³

The move of *PP* toward an explicit recognition of the need for theology to dialogue with various secular disciplines, a move which is the direct prolongation of Vatican II, can be further reflected upon with the help of Rahner. Due to its central focus on development the encyclical is mainly concerned with the relation between theology and economics and political science. Rahner's reflection does not specifically deal with those disciplines. However what he says about interdisciplinary dialogue in science and the relation between science and theology is illuminating.⁵⁴

Early on in his theological career, Rahner pointed out that the truth of human existence is found only in dialogue because truth is present to some degree in all groups and people.⁵⁵ Despite their pluralism and often their seemingly irreconcilable conflicts, all sciences have a common ground which is human knowledge. This "human factor" is the grounding for

⁵² The book of Ecclesiasticus has barely any mention of God in it but is fully recognized by both Hebrews and Christians in their canons of Scripture.

⁵³ Note as well, that the encyclical stresses the need for wisdom in the current epoch: "even more necessary is the deep thought and reflection of wise men in search of a new humanism" (*PP* 20); "The future of the world stands in peril...unless wiser men are forthcoming. ... Many nations, poorer in economic goods, are quite rich in wisdom and able to offer noteworthy advantages to others" (*PP* 40 quoting *GS* 15).

⁵⁴ Karl Rahner, "A Small Fragment 'On the Collective Finding of the Truth,'" in *TI*, Vol. 6 (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1969), 82-88; "The Current Relationship between Philosophy and Theology," in *TI*, Vol. 13 (New York: Seabury, 1975) 61-79; "Theology as Engaged in an Interdisciplinary Dialogue with the Sciences," in *TI*, Vol. 13, 80-93; "On the Relationship between Theology and the Contemporary Sciences," in *TI*, Vol. 13, 94-102.

⁵⁵ Rahner, "A Small Fragment," 84.

interdisciplinary dialogue, among sciences but also between theology and science.⁵⁶ It is true that science is concerned with “this-worldly” reality whereas theology is concerned with the transcendental of the human being, meaning the transcendental experience of the human being oriented toward the absolute mystery. But theology is impossible apart from concrete experience and from addressing “this-worldly” reality, beginning with the concrete historical reality of Jesus Christ. This is why science and theology have a common ground.⁵⁷ The deepening of knowledge about the human condition offered by science is indispensable to theology in its reaching out to the mystery to which this human condition itself, in its transcendental, points.

Theologically this common ground is supported by Rahner’s assertion concerning the history of salvation and revelation and world history, the former being what theology is concerned with and the latter what science is concerned with. For Rahner, “the history of salvation and revelation [is] coextensive with the whole of world history.”⁵⁸ This does not mean that they are identical because in the history of the world there is also the history of the rejection of God, which is the opposite of salvation. However, Rahner explains that “anyone who does not close himself to God in an ultimate act of his life and his freedom through free and personal sin ... this person finds salvation.”⁵⁹ Therefore “the history of salvation and its opposite is not confined to the history of true and false religion strictly as such. Rather it also encompasses the apparently merely profane history of mankind and of the individual person.”⁶⁰ This history is also a history

⁵⁶ Rahner, “Theology as Engaged in Interdisciplinary Dialogue,” 85.

⁵⁷ Rahner, “Theology and the Contemporary Sciences,” 95-101.

⁵⁸ Rahner, *FCF*, 142.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 144.

of revelation because it is the history of God coming to us in freedom. All individual histories and the whole collective history of the human race are the history of salvation and of revelation grounded in God's self-communication to human beings in grace. We can apply to all sciences what Rahner says about philosophy, "everything human belongs to God, and only so is truly appropriated to man," and so "in the midst of all philosophy the theologian discerns God revealing himself in his grace."⁶¹ By extension, could we not say that in the midst of all the studies concerning the development of peoples, the theologian can discern "God's revealing himself in his grace?" In a certain sense, this is what we find at work in *PP*.⁶²

A last remark from Rahner in relation to theology and science is worth noticing. Theology can play an important role in interdisciplinary dialogue because of its ability to combat the totalitarian tendency inherent in any scientific discipline. Rahner states:

Theology must (provided always that it makes its message authentic and credible by the attitude it adopts towards itself) be the upholder of self-criticism on the part of the sciences. It must persuade them to be modest in outlook, to be aware of their provisional nature and their limited perspective, which they can never wholly overcome, whatever extrapolations, sometimes justified and sometimes not, any given science may inevitably and habitually undertake. ... As the upholder of the inconceivable Mystery which is uncontrollably but nonetheless really present, and which must be respected as such by every science, it will ward off the temptation to which every science is liable of setting itself up as wholly autonomous and totalitarian in character.⁶³

⁶¹ Rahner, "Current Relationship between Theology and Philosophy," 79.

⁶² Needless to say, a huge question remains concerning the ways to exercise this discernment. Not everything brought in by secular science is God's revelation. Sin is also at work. This is why there is a constant tension in the magisterium between the recognition of the contribution of secular science and its critique. The era of *PP* and Vatican II is certainly marked by a wider openness in reaction to the anti-modernist attitude of the previous century.

⁶³ Rahner, "Theology as Engaged in Interdisciplinary Dialogue," 89.

When considering the role played by economics in our societies, and already at the time of *PP*, it is undeniable that it works as if it encompasses the whole of reality. Paul VI's reflection on development offers an example of how theology attacks this totalitarian trend by affirming that human development cannot be reduced to mere economic growth because human persons and peoples can never be reduced to mere data but are transcendental subjects oriented and driven by the holy mystery whom Christians call God. Beyond its contingent engagement in the economic and political debates of the time, *PP* offers the notion of integral human development as an ever-challenging criterion to evaluate economic theories and policies. And by doing so, the encyclical gives a reminder of what Rahner calls, "the provisional nature and limited perspective" of any science, economics included.

To conclude this section about dialogue, we can retain that the promotion of dialogue in *PP* and the clear signs given of the pope's commitment to practice it are theologically meaningful because they refer to the way God relates to humanity. They point to God's revelatory presence in this world and in many human endeavors such as the scientific search for knowledge. However this dimension of God's mystery so much highlighted in the encyclical is only one dimension of the mystery. Not everything in the world and in science points toward God because sin is also at work. We will see that other more recent magisterial documents are more eager to stress the challenges associated with dialogue and so to point at this other dimension of the mystery of God's relation to humanity. What we have already noticed, thanks to Rahner, of the critical stance that theology as science of the holy mystery ought to take in regard to the totalitarian temptation of sciences will take on more importance.

c) Conclusion

Style and methodology are theologically meaningful. In the dynamism initiated by *GS* and the council, *PP* puts into practice an inductive see-judge-act approach and stresses dialogue at multiple levels. By doing so the encyclical expresses, in a practical way, faith in the incarnation and faith in God's salvific revelation through a dialogical encounter with humanity. In this section, I have shown how the way the teaching of the church is presented reflects important contents. Incarnation is not an abstract dogma but the reality of recognizing God's salvation at work when humanization is fostered, when the conditions for an integral human development are implemented and when on the contrary dehumanizing, unjust situations are denounced. Believing that Jesus Christ is truly divine and truly human, that God became human, ought to be expressed through discerning the signs of the kingdom of God in the present world and also the signs opposing it. This discernment leads to acting in order to bring about this kingdom. The deepening of the mystery of the incarnation is also at work in the recognition of God's self-revelation in everything which is authentically human. Dialoguing and collaborating with others in the search for humanization is a crucial locus for encountering God's salvific love. The promotion of dialogue is not a mere strategic move. More profoundly it reflects the manifestation of the very self of a triune dialoguing God who is at work in history. These theological insights are not displayed in a systematic way in the encyclical but thanks to other contributions from the pope himself and from Rahner we were able to highlight them. We thus grasped something of the mystery of "God for us."

Having reflected on the meaning of the style and methodology at work in *PP*, we now turn to the two specific theological areas on which I have chosen to focus: theological anthropology and Christology.

III. THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

This section deals with the theological contribution of *PP* concerning anthropology. At the occasion of its addressing the issue of the development of peoples in the context of the 1960s, the encyclical offers a rich theological vision of the human person and of humanity.⁶⁴ Promoting integral development highlights both the transcendent and the social dimensions of the human being. I will present successively these two dimensions as they appear in the applied reflections of the encyclical and connect them with the more theoretical ones of other thinkers.

a) Transcendent Humanism

As we have seen in the first chapter of this dissertation, in the midst of the debates being conducted in the first Decade of Development, the church promotes a notion of integral human development or the “development of the whole person and of all humankind” (cf. *PP* 14). In *PP* this notion of integral human development bears with it the promotion of a “complete humanism” (*PP* 42), or “new humanism” (*PP* 20), which a commentator qualified as “an incarnate, real, lucid, exigent, and militant humanism.”⁶⁵ The encyclical speaks also of a “transcendent humanism” (*PP* 16). This qualification encompasses a first set of features in the portrait of the human being offered by the encyclical. Being human is being in a dynamic process of fulfilling a human vocation. This implies that there are multiple dimensions of being

⁶⁴ “[The Church] offers men what she possesses as her characteristic attribute: a global vision of man and of the human race” (*PP* 13).

⁶⁵ Antonio L. Marzal, “El nuevo humanismo,” in Joaquin Ruiz-Gimenez, ed., *Comentarios de Cuadernos para el dialogo a la Populorum progressio* (Madrid: Edicusa, 1967), 121. Translation mine.

human which are all open to growth (material, intellectual, spiritual) and that there is a centrality of freedom. Let us develop the meaning of these three features.

In *PP*, the human being is not viewed primarily in terms of a fixed human nature but rather in terms of the fulfillment of a human vocation. “In the design of God, every man is called to develop and fulfill himself, for every life is a vocation” (*PP* 15). The notion of development brings a notion of a constant dynamism. The encyclical begins with evoking “those peoples who are striving to escape hunger, misery, endemic diseases, and ignorance... those who are looking for... a more active improvement of their human qualities” (*PP* 1). It speaks of what people “aspire to” (*PP* 6), and how the church can help them attain “their full flowering” (*PP* 13). What is characteristic of human beings is a capacity or potential for development in humanity: “At birth, everyone is granted, in germ, a set of aptitudes and qualities for him to bring to fruition” (*PP* 15). This characteristic is theologically grounded because it is recognized as “God’s design” or “the destiny intended by [the] Creator” (*PP* 15).

The crucial issue then, is to look at what sustains and what impedes such dynamism of humanization. Development is “the transition from less human conditions to those which are more human” (*PP* 20). In describing these conditions, various dimensions of the human being that are called to flourish are articulated. First there is the material dimension. Human beings have material needs which need to be fulfilled in order to flourish in life. Hunger, misery, lack of medical resources, lack of material necessities are targeted as “less human conditions.” Large parts of the encyclical deal with the fight against them. For example, the pope relays an alarm in favor of those “countless men and women ravaged by hunger” (*PP* 45).

However, the material dimension cannot be separated from other human dimensions called to flourish, beginning with the intellectual one. The striving to “have more” and “do more” goes

hand in hand with seeking to “know more” and all are directed toward “being more” (*PP* 6). The encyclical speaks at length of the development of education and culture: “hunger for education is no less debasing than hunger for food: an illiterate is a person with an undernourished mind” (*PP* 35). “Growth of knowledge and the acquisition of culture” are part of those conditions that are “more human” (*PP* 21). Human beings are called to grow in their rational dimension no less than in their material dimension. The social and moral dimensions must also be mentioned at this point. “The moral deficiencies of those who are mutilated by selfishness” are among the “less human conditions” as well as the distorted social relationship marked by abuses of power. On the other hand, more human are “increased esteem for the dignity of others, ... and cooperation for the common good” (*PP* 21).

Lastly human beings have a spiritual dimension, an openness to what is beyond the mere human condition. This as well is called to develop in the human vocation:

Conditions that are still more human: the acknowledgement by man of supreme values, and of God their source and their finality. Conditions that finally and above all, are more human: faith, a gift of God accepted by the good will of man, and unity in the charity of Christ, who calls us all to share as sons in the life of the living God, the Father of all men (*PP* 21).

There is a fundamental orientation of the human being toward God. “Just as the whole of creation is ordained to its Creator, so spiritual beings of their own accord orient their lives to God, the first truth and the supreme good” (*PP* 16). This is why the encyclical stresses that “there is no true humanism but that which is open to the Absolute and is conscious of a vocation which gives human life its true meaning” (*PP* 42). The human being is not the ultimate measure

of all things and *PP* recalls the saying of Pascal: “Man infinitely surpasses man” (*PP* 42). In this sense, this humanism is rightly called *transcendent* humanism.⁶⁶

Because all those dimensions of the human being are interrelated and called to thrive together, true human development cannot be reduced to mere economic growth.⁶⁷ The criterion of integral human development, the touchstone constantly repeated for practical evaluation of issues concerning the development of peoples, bears with it a rich multilayered vision of the human being in a process of humanization ultimately oriented toward God.

A last feature of the transcendent humanism portrayed in the encyclical is the centrality of freedom. People aspire to “freedom from misery” as well as “political” freedom (*PP* 6). And indeed, the human being is “endowed with intelligence and freedom” (*PP* 15). Becoming more human means becoming freer. Misery, destitution, growing inequalities directly negate freedom. The second part of the encyclical insists on the necessity for more well-off countries to come to the aid of less well-off ones. This necessity is rooted in the promotion of human freedom:

It is not just a matter of eliminating hunger, or even of reducing poverty. The struggle against destitution, though urgent and necessary, is not enough. It is a question rather of building a world where every man, no matter what his race, religion, or nationality, can live a fully human life, *freed from servitude* imposed on him by other men or by natural forces over which he has not sufficient control; a world where *freedom is not an empty word* and where the poor man Lazarus can sit down at the same table with the rich man (*PP* 47, emphasis mine).

⁶⁶ The influence of Maritain is obvious here. He is actually explicitly cited in a note in *PP* 42 alongside Henri de Lubac. The integral humanism defended by Maritain comes as a reaction to some modern forms of atheistic humanism which posit that in order to affirm the human person one needs to negate God. On the contrary, for Maritain, an integral humanism implies the recognition of the spiritual dimension of being human. Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, 4-7.

⁶⁷ Cf. Lebreton's quote: “We do not believe in separating the economic from the human, nor development from the civilizations in which it exists. What we hold important is man, each man and each group of men, and we even include the whole of humanity” (*PP* 14).

Freedom means also freedom from a form of enslavement to material possessions:

Increased possession is not the ultimate goal of nations nor of individuals. All growth is ambivalent. It is essential if man is to develop as a man, but in a way it imprisons man if he considers it the supreme good, and it restricts his vision (*PP* 19).

Greed, avarice, selfishness are opposed to true freedom. Working for integral human development implies genuine resistance to the various forms of these vices.

In the encyclical, the importance of freedom as a central feature of the fully human condition is also prompted by the use of the vocabulary of rights and of responsibility. Following on John XXIII's full endorsement of human rights in *Pacem in terris*, Paul VI mentions several times respect for the fundamental rights of the person. For example, although planning is crucial, *PP* warns against "the danger of complete collectivization or of arbitrary planning, which, by denying liberty, would prevent the exercise of the fundamental rights of the human person" (*PP* 33).

The notion of responsibility is also omnipresent in *PP*. Persons and peoples ought to be the primary agents of their development and this responsibility ought not to be denied by disguised forms of paternalism and colonialism. Indeed,

[Man] is aided, or sometimes impeded by those who educate him and those with whom he lives, but each one remains, whatever be these influences affecting him, the principal agent of his own success or failure (*PP* 15).⁶⁸

And,

⁶⁸ "Man is only truly man in as far as, master of his own acts and judge of their worth, he is author of his own advancement, in keeping with nature which was given to him by his Creator and whose possibilities and exigencies he himself freely assumes" (*PP* 34).

As sovereign states, [the receiving countries] could demand that there be no interference in their political life or subversion of their social structures. As sovereign states they have the right to conduct their own affairs, to decide on their policies, and to move freely toward the kind of society they choose (*PP* 54).

The encyclical praises also the actors of development in education who are “the primary agents of development, because they render man capable of acting for himself” (*PP* 35).⁶⁹

The portrait of the human being as transcendent in the sense of being dynamically called to grow in all her dimensions, oriented toward God and freeing herself from all forms of enslavement, is connected directly to two theological motifs explicitly mentioned in the encyclical. First, the human vocation is to realize the image of God in which human beings are created. Speaking on the topic of work in the context of industrialization, *PP* infers that the human person “must cooperate with his Creator in the perfecting of creation... God who has endowed man with intelligence, imagination, and sensitivity, has also given him the means of completing his work in a certain way: ... everyone who works is a creator” (*PP* 27). The vocation of the human being is to develop in humanity by continuing the creation and by working at the transformation of this world.⁷⁰ Second, the fulfillment of oneself through personal development is also the expression of union with Christ. In this union is reached “a transcendent

⁶⁹ According to Donal Dorr this is one of the most important contributions of *PP*: “The encyclical has as a central theme the idea that every person and all peoples are entitled to be shapers of their own destiny. This is one of the most important contributions of *Populorum progressio* to the understanding of development: it is not possible to develop people; development is something people have to do for themselves.” Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2012), 172.

⁷⁰ It is important to notice that in this approach, “being in the image of God” does not have simply a spiritual or intellectual component – the human being has a soul and is a rational creature – it concerns also the dimension of acting in the world by continuing the creation. Here is a perspective that sees human “nature” as being called and enabled to act creatively with God.

humanism which gives [a human person her] greatest possible perfection” (*PP* 16). I will come back to this aspect in the next section on Christology.

These two theological notes recall that the transcendent humanism highlighted by the encyclical pertains to a theological anthropology or a theological vision of the mystery of humanity. Turning once again to Rahner we find a confirmation of the theological weight of such anthropological reflection and he can help us to make more explicit the theological insights present in the encyclical.

The German theologian reformulates at the end of his life in *Foundations of Christian Faith* what he had already formulated in his first works about the human being.⁷¹ Although taking the form of a philosophical enquiry, it is at the same time a theological one because the question is to envision what in the human being makes possible divine revelation and salvation. Rahner asks the question: “What kind of hearer does Christianity anticipate so that its real and ultimate message can even be heard?”⁷² Three key features of being human come to the fore and they echo what we have highlighted in *PP*: subjectivity or personhood; transcendent being; freedom and responsibility.

Human beings are persons and subjects. They experience themselves as products of what they are not. Specific anthropologies like biochemistry, psychology or sociology explore this fact by trying to apprehend the wholeness of being human through their particular viewpoint. However human beings experience that they are always more than this. Being a person means

⁷¹ Karl Rahner, “The Hearer of the Message,” in *FCF*, 24-43. Anne E. Carr, “Starting with the Human,” in *A World of Grace*, ed. Leo J. O’Donovan (New York: Seabury, 1980), 17-30.

⁷² Rahner, *FCF*, 24.

being a whole beyond mere empirical data. Being a subject means experiencing oneself as prior and more original than the plurality of empirical data. “Being a person...means the self-possession of a subject as such in a conscious and free relationship to the totality of itself.”⁷³

This personalist approach resonates with *PP*’s insistence on the human being, as a whole or in all her dimensions, being the criterion of authentic development and the latter not to be reduced to mere material or economic growth.

For Rahner, saying that human beings are transcendent beings expands the notion of personhood and subjectivity. This is viewed firstly through the transcendent structure of knowledge. Human beings experience an infinite horizon of questioning about themselves even if they do not always explicitly engage in it. This questioning is openness to a beyond oneself, a totality which is grounded in what Rahner calls a “pre-apprehension (*Vorgriff*) of being,” something that is “preconceptual” or “unthematic.”⁷⁴ Because it would make no sense that this be an experience of nothingness, Rahner concludes that it is a positive infinity, an absolute which later on will be recognized as the holy mystery or God. Human beings experience themselves as not being *absolute* beings but at the same time as necessarily receiving from an Absolute Being and being oriented toward it. However this experience is not an escape from the reality of being-in-the-world. On the contrary it is lived only through this reality. As Rahner insists, this radical openness constitutive of being human is “present precisely when a person experiences himself as involved in the multiplicity of cares and concerns and fears and hopes of his everyday world.”⁷⁵

⁷³ Ibid., 30.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 33. Carr, “Starting with the Human,” 21.

⁷⁵ Rahner, *FCF*, 35.

What is experienced through the transcendental of knowledge is also experienced in actions. This is why Rahner says that personhood and subjectivity are also expressed in freedom and responsibility. Rahner distinguishes the originating transcendental freedom from the categorical manifestations of freedom it originates: “freedom is not the power to be able to do this or that, but the power to decide about oneself and to actualize oneself.”⁷⁶ The object of freedom is the person as such, not a mere tool in her hands. However, once again, it is only in the world, through everyday actions always limited and not entirely free, that the human becomes aware of the “more” of transcendental freedom.⁷⁷ There is a similar inherent movement of the human person toward self-realization through acting as there is a movement toward self-consciousness through knowing.

With those features of the human being driven to self-consciousness and self-realization in freedom, Rahner can then offer a Christian understanding of salvation. A theological notion of salvation is not only a concern for a future afterlife but rather “the final and definitive validity of a person’s true self-understanding, and true self-realization in freedom.”⁷⁸ And because human subjectivity and freedom cannot take place elsewhere than in the world, Rahner concludes again that the history of salvation is “co-extensive” with world history.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 38.

⁷⁷ It is not only the case that transcendental freedom is always real as enacted categorical encounter with or action in the world. It is also the case that the world itself is being “realized” and becoming definitive in and through human actions. Karl Rahner, “The Theological Problems Entailed in the Idea of the ‘New Earth,’” in *TI* Vol. 10 (New York: Seabury, 1977), 260-272; “Immanent and Transcendent Consummation of the World,” Ibid., 273-289.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 39.

In *PP* the salvific mission of the church is expressed in terms of promoting the integral development of humanity. This can be seen as the concrete expression of this Rahnerian notion of co-extensive histories. As a commentator stated about the encyclical's promotion of a transcendent humanism: "to rise above what one is in order to tend toward what one ought to be: in Christian formulation this means to orient oneself toward the Kingdom... and it is the collective walk of the whole of humanity toward divine life."⁷⁹

In brief, the vision of the human being in terms of transcendentality and freedom, which we have seen highlighted through practical considerations in the encyclical and more systematically exposed in Rahner, is a theological vision. It starts from, and therefore it also points to, the mystery of God's creation of and salvific encounter with humanity. This vision insists on the grace of God working from within the nature of humanity rather than from without and it is expressive of the main theological framework that we see at work in the encyclical. This, however, is only one aspect of the theological anthropology offered by the encyclical. We now turn to a second one which is the social dimension of being human.

b) Social Being

The human being is not an isolated being. On the contrary the human person can flourish only within a society and in relation to others. The social dimension of being human, a key anthropological feature, is constantly highlighted in the encyclical alongside the stress put on personal growth and freedom and it is done through the fostering of the notion of solidarity. Integral human development is development in human solidarity. In this sub-section I describe

⁷⁹ Georges Jarlot, "L'Eglise et le développement, l'encyclique 'Populorum progressio,'" *Études* 326, no. 5 (May 1967): 680. Translation mine.

how the promotion of solidarity in the encyclical highlights the social dimension of being human. Being human implies a dynamic movement of becoming truly brothers and sisters. Then I expose the theological foundation of this dimension as it is offered in the document. Finally I suggest that Rahner's theological anthropology provides us with a rich notion of the human person as both transcendent and relational which confirms the theological weight of the encyclical approach.

From the very beginning of the document, the pope affirms that the church is concerned with the development of "peoples" not of mere isolated individuals and he intends to convince everyone that "solidarity in action...is a matter of urgency" (*PP* 1). Human "complete development" which is the title of Part One cannot be separated from "the development of the human race in the spirit of solidarity" reflected upon in Part Two.⁸⁰ In the more theoretical section about a Christian vision of development, the considerations about human self-fulfillment are immediately followed by the statement:

But each man is a member of society. He is part of the whole of mankind. It is not just certain individuals, but all men who are called to this fullness of development (*PP* 17).

The first thing to recognize is that we have inherited from previous generations and we are benefitting from our contemporaries. This inherent vertical and horizontal solidarity is a source of duty: "we cannot refuse to interest ourselves in those who will come after us to enlarge the human family" (*PP* 17). The possession of material goods and the desire for what is necessary are legitimate in order to permit personal development but they can become a trap when they turn to greed and avarice which replace bonds of friendship and solidarity by bonds of mere self-

⁸⁰ "It is to all that we address this solemn appeal for a concrete action toward man's complete development and the development of all mankind" (*PP* 5).

interest. Indeed, “both for nations and for individual men, avarice is the most evident form of moral underdevelopment” (*PP* 19). True solidarity, which implies a duty to work for a fairer distribution of material and immaterial goods, is the realization of the social vocation of the human being. Just like human freedom, the realization of solidarity is a never-ending process on the journey of humanization or integral human development.

Solidarity is promoted in a very concrete fashion in the section dealing with the aid which more wealthy nations ought to provide to those less well-off. For example the duty of solidarity requires taking action against the situation of hunger which still concerns whole continents. Here the pope supports the work done by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (*PP* 45-46).⁸¹ Further in the same section, he advocates for the constitution of a World Fund for development which could be partly fed by the money spent on arms (*PP* 51). Solidarity needs to be expressed at the institutional level and at the level of relations between countries: “the superfluous wealth of rich countries should be placed at the service of poor nations” (*PP* 49). However the call is also addressed directly to individuals. Recalling the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the pope challenges the rich man of today:

Is he prepared to support out of his own pocket works and undertakings organized in favor of the most destitute? Is he ready to pay higher taxes so that the authorities can intensify their efforts in favor of development? Is he ready to pay a higher price for imported goods so that the producer may be more justly rewarded? Or to leave his country, if necessary and he is young, in order to assist in this development of the young nations? (*PP* 47)

Solidarity is manifested and develops itself through concrete actions.

⁸¹ The director of FAO even declared, “If the FAO did not exist, the encyclical could be the base for its foundation.” Lopez Jordan, *El manifiesto de Paulo VI*, 138. Translation mine.

Solidarity has also to prompt more equitable relationships. It is not simply a matter of a duty of aid from the rich to the poor but a matter of justice in righting distorted trade relations that are detrimental to the poor nations. Here the encyclical highlights that the rule of free trade is no longer sufficient because when there is such a great difference of powers between the two parties of a contract, prices “freely” set are unfair (*PP* 56-61). Finally the spirit of solidarity is at work in the promotion of more universal charity fighting against what the pope calls “the lack of brotherhood among individuals and peoples” (*PP* 66). Here the pope restates the duty of welcoming migrants (*PP* 67-70), the duty for business people to apply the same social sensitivity abroad as in their own industrialized countries (*PP* 71), the importance of fighting racism and avoiding undue nationalist pride (*PP* 72), and the role of dialogue to increase fraternity (*PP* 72).

The expanding movement from solidarity with those closest to us to universal solidarity, from individual charity to universal charity, animates the whole encyclical. This is prompted by the fact that “the social question has become worldwide” (*PP* 3). So, “the rule, which up to now held good for the benefit of those nearest to us, must today be applied to all the needy of this world” (*PP* 49).⁸² People living in better-off countries cannot remain blind and deaf to the struggling of those living in developing ones. This means that what is demanded in terms of solidarity and fraternity between individuals is also valid at a wider level between nations.⁸³

⁸² “El amor del prójimo implica la doble exigencia de lo próximo y de lo lejano.” Louis ter Steeg, “Nuestra responsabilidad común ante el problema del desarrollo. Fundamentos y necesidad colectiva,” in *La proyección de la Populorum progressio en la sociedad contemporánea*, ed. Luis Sanchez Agesta (Madrid: Centro de estudios sociales de la Santa Cruz del Valle de los Caidos, 1969), 218.

⁸³ For example, as already noticed previously, the encyclical uses Leo XIII’s teaching about fair wages and the idea that a contract accepted by both employer and employee is not sufficient to

For the anthropological question with which we are concerned, this rich promotion of solidarity in acts stresses the social dimension of being human. However *PP* does not merely restate this “social” feature as a natural characteristic – one of the primary natural law principles⁸⁴ – it rather offers it as a dynamic call to be fulfilled. To become truly human, human beings are called to live their social dimension in developing a true solidarity which extends to the whole of the human race and aims at building a universal fraternity. All the particular concrete recommendations, though embedded in their particular context, point to this more fundamental dynamism of becoming brothers and sisters.

This, as previously with the transcendent dimension of being human, pertains to a theological vision of the human being. That human beings are brothers and sisters and therefore ought to work at the realization of this fraternal solidarity is rooted in the affirmation that all are children of God. At the beginning of Part Two Paul VI recalls a previous declaration he made at Bombay:

Man must meet man, nation meet nation, as brothers and sisters, as children of God. In this mutual understanding and friendship, in this sacred communion, we must also begin to work together to build the common future of the human race (*PP* 43).

Then he mentions that the duty of better-off nations stems from “a brotherhood that is at once human and supernatural” (*PP* 44). It is in Christ that people are made children of God and therefore brothers and sisters, so in the conclusion of this second part of the encyclical, the pope restates again in explicit form the theological grounding of what he has reflected upon, and this time he introduces Christological components:

guarantee the fairness of wages, in order to call for the reform and regulation of international trade relations.

⁸⁴ Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I-II, Q. 94, a. 2.

Some would consider such hopes [of peace and fraternity] utopian. It may be that these persons are not realistic enough, and that they have not perceived the dynamism of a world which desires to live more fraternally – a world which, in spite of its ignorance, its mistakes, and even its sins, its relapses into barbarism, and its wanderings from the road of salvation, is, even unaware, taking slow but sure steps toward its Creator. This road toward greater humanity requires effort and sacrifices... Christians know that union with the sacrifice of our Savior contributed to the building up of the body of Christ in its plenitude: the assembled people of God (*PP* 79).

The whole dynamism of the world striving toward greater fraternity is put in relation with the building up of the body of Christ.

Because Rahner was helpful in understanding the theological meaning of a transcendent humanism, it is interesting to come back to him concerning the social dimension of being human. In my first chapter I already noted that the social dimension is not absent from Rahner's anthropology. What is interesting here is to highlight with several commentators that this relational and social dimension, though taking a more explicit form in the later essays, is central to the theological anthropology of the German theologian from the beginning.⁸⁵ This makes us perceive that a vision of the human being which stresses freedom and transcendence is not necessarily in contradiction with the social and relational dimension, nor downplaying it, but on the contrary could be foundational for the latter. With Rahner we come to understand why the two pillars of the anthropology developed by *PP* are solidly connected when envisioned from a theological perspective.

Gregory Brett argues that Rahner's theological notion of the human person is that of being inherently relational and oriented to being an agent of communion. In his seminal works, *Spirit*

⁸⁵ Andrew Tallon, *Personal Becoming* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1982); Gregory Brett, *The Theological Notion of the Human Person: A Conversation between the Theology of Karl Rahner and the Philosophy of John McMurray* (New York: Peter Lang, 2013).

in the World and *Hearer of the Word*, Rahner introduces the idea that the core of being human is a dynamic movement of becoming a free subject oriented toward the absolute other which grounds and directs freedom and subjectivity.⁸⁶ But because the human being is spirit and matter, embedded in world and history, this movement is necessarily realized within the world and through the encounter with others in love. What started as a “subject-other-God” paradigm for the human person becomes a “person-community-God” paradigm. In later reflections about freedom and love, always in the framework of a world “graced” by God – a world recipient of God’s self-communication – Rahner states more clearly that love is the integrating action that unites persons to each other and that this same action intimately involves the love of God.⁸⁷ Then, “from the time of Vatican II, Rahner’s notion of person becomes more clearly interpersonal and more obviously socially aware.”⁸⁸ Rahner is adamant in showing the unity of the love of God and love of neighbor and in one of his latest works he offers the notion of communion as the most realized expression of this love because “it is communion with others that enables us to enter into communion with the triune God of life.”⁸⁹

Rahner himself has endorsed this idea that the person as relational and social is at the core of his transcendent anthropology. In the foreword of Tallon’s *Personal Becoming*, Rahner states:

⁸⁶ Karl Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, trans. William Dych (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968); Karl Rahner, *Hearer of the Word: Laying the Foundation for a Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Andrew Tallon (New York: Continuum, 1994).

⁸⁷ Brett, *Human Person*, 71-92.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 111.

The transcendence of man as finite spirit toward God, the absolute being in person, toward mystery in the fullest sense, is necessarily mediated through the (finite) other, through matter, body, the surrounding world of things, the social world, through history and word.⁹⁰

In the same foreword, Rahner also insists on the theological grounding of his anthropology:

I could give a straightforward answer “yes” to the question [whether personal becoming, becoming a person, is the central idea of my philosophico-theological anthropology], on the condition ... that the concept of becoming a person...does not exclude but rather includes the concept of an original constituting of the person through the creative act of God, by which act the person already *is*.⁹¹

To sum up, in Rahner’s theological vision of the human being, starting with the reflection on the necessary structure of the human in order to be recipient of God’s self-communication, transcendence and freedom are inseparable from embeddedness in world and history and relationship with others because the latter are the mediations through which becoming human can be realized. The dynamism of becoming human through knowing oneself and being responsible for oneself which includes opening oneself to the Absolute Other – in other words the dynamism of transcendental knowledge and transcendental freedom – is the dynamism of striving in love toward fullness of communion. In *PP*, clearly situated in an historical context where a form of transcendental reasoning and its stress on personal freedom were appealing, we see this connection between the transcendental and social dimensions of being human at work.

⁹⁰ Rahner, “Foreword,” in Tallon, *Personal Becoming*, 2-3. Rahner adds: “mediations which I myself certainly neither sufficiently nor thoroughly worked out in their unity and difference.” This gives a certain validity to critiques such as Metz’s but also highlights that a transcendental anthropology in itself is not a blindness to those social and historical dimensions but on the contrary contains a solid grounding to approach them. The recognition by Metz and also some liberation theologians of their indebtedness to Rahner gives a powerful confirmation to this argument.

⁹¹ Ibid., 2.

The call to solidarity and fraternity is rooted in the aspiration to personal freedom and self-fulfillment.

c) Conclusion

PP offers a rich contribution to theological anthropology. The issue of the development of peoples and the challenge posed by growing inequalities, enduring poverty, rising globalization at the dawn of a post-colonial era are addressed by the church through the offering of its vision of the human being and humankind. The promotion of integral human development through all the various judgments and practical appeals made by the encyclical is rooted in and points to a global understanding of being human. Being human, more than a static natural feature, is a dynamic process of becoming more human or fulfilling a vocation to be human. It implies growing in multiple dimensions, material, intellectual and spiritual, personal and social. It requires fostering the conditions for persons to “do more, learn more, and have more” but always in order “to be more” (*PP* 6) and to be more in solidarity and fraternity within the human family (*PP* 43). Being human according to *PP* is fulfilling a vocation to transcendence, freedom and solidarity. This is a theological vision which is rooted in the faith that all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God and that they are made children of God, and therefore brothers and sisters, in Christ. In Rahner’s transcendental approach we have seen a more systematic grounding of the anthropological accents highlighted in *PP*. This detour by the German theologian has helped us to grasp better the theological insights present in the encyclical and to be more conscious of how this social reflection allows us to be more greatly seized by the mystery of “God for us.” This does not suggest that *PP* provides a full self-contained theology or that it is an expression only of Rahner’s theology. Much more modestly it shows that *some* theology is produced in a document whose main topic is social ethics. It has also confirmed that

this theology is principally situated in the theological framework we have earlier qualified as “neo-Thomist,” a framework which stresses that God’s grace is at work in this human world by its very human nature.

Remembering that Rahner strongly insisted that, from a Christian perspective, questions about human beings are always to be looked at from the mystery of the Absolute Savior who realizes fully the human vocation, we now turn to Christology.

IV. CHRISTOLOGY

There are not many direct references to Christ in *PP* but they are significant and they will guide us in our attempt to shed light on the theological contribution of the encyclical concerning Christology. This contribution is obviously not systematic and comprehensive. Compared to what was developed in the previous section about anthropology, it is much thinner. It consists in hints and leads rather than full arguments. However, it is far from being irrelevant because the few explicit mentions of Christ authorize us to read the whole document through a Christological lens. The general question to be addressed can be formulated this way: what elements of Jesus Christ’s portrait, of his message, and what aspects of the Christological dogmas are highlighted through addressing the issue of the development of peoples? Through its central concern *PP* sheds light on some aspects of the mystery of Jesus Christ for us. First, I point out how looking at the current inequalities and injustices at work in the world prompts the church to highlight some aspects of the message and the person of Jesus Christ such as his involvement in the world and his commitment to the poor. This way of reading *PP* is justified a posteriori by the theoretical framework developed by Latin American liberation theologians in the following decades in support of a Christology from below. Second, I describe how the encyclical also relies

on the notion of union with Christ, who reveals the fullness of humanity, in order to ground its transcendent and social anthropology. Turning once again to Rahner here will be helpful in order to expand on the meaning of what *PP* touches only quickly when it speaks of the union with Christ as the path to personal and collective human fulfillment (*PP* 16, 28, 79). We are also dealing with a form of ascending Christology but an existential one, which recognizes Christ in any humanizing process.

a) Jesus and the Poor

In *PP*, Jesus Christ appears first and foremost as a teacher and an example prompting to action in the world (*PP* 12). It was “urged by the love of Christ” that many missionaries committed themselves to economic development, health care, or education as part of their mission to bring faith in Christ to people.⁹² Now, it is with the same will to “carry forward the work of Christ himself” who “entered this world to give witness to the truth, to rescue and not to sit in judgment, to serve and not to be served” (*PP* 13) that the church addresses the issue at a more global and structural level. It is with a “renewed consciousness of the demands of the Gospel” (*PP* 1) that it finds it is its duty to serve humanity by helping to address the problem of development in all its dimensions. Throughout the document, Jesus’ words and parables challenge the current situation and call for action. To the rich nations accumulating wealth, it reminds them of the parable of the rich man: “Fool, this night do they demand your soul of you” (Lk 12:20, *PP* 49). To youth who are encouraged to consider a time of service abroad, it reminds

⁹² The encyclical recognizes, as well, the ambiguities of the missionary endeavor: “Without doubt [the missionaries’] work, inasmuch as it was human, was not perfect, and sometimes the announcement of the authentic Gospel message was infiltrated by many ways of thinking and acting which were characteristic of their home country” (*PP* 12).

them of the parable of the last judgment: “I was hungry and you gave me to eat” (Mt 25:35, *PP* 74). To warn of the dangers for developing countries of sacrificing their culture in search of mere economic growth, Jesus’ question is recalled: “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world if he suffers the loss of his soul” (Mt 16:26, *PP* 40)?

All these elements highlight that Jesus was involved in the world and not merely announcing an other-worldly salvation. Although he was not a political leader aiming at conquering an earthly power (so the church follows him in respecting the distinction of powers), this does not mean that the Christian faith has to remain merely in the personal sphere.⁹³ The bringing about of the kingdom of heaven, which Jesus announces, calls for involvement in political, social and economic realms.

The core of Jesus Christ’s teaching highlighted in the encyclical concerns the poor and this leads us to stress a second trait of Jesus portrait: his commitment to the poor. Jesus himself “cited the preaching of the Gospel to the poor as a sign of his mission” (*PP* 12). This is a reference to Jesus using the prophecy of Isaiah to define his own mission:

“Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them” (Lk 7:22).

Everything *PP* does in promoting greater solidarity among nations, greater justice in international exchanges, urgent action against hunger, misery, and lack of education and

⁹³ “Founded to establish on earth the kingdom of heaven and not to conquer any earthly power, the Church clearly states that the two realms are distinct, just as the two powers, ecclesiastical and civil, are supreme, each in its own domain. But since the Church lives in history she ought to ‘scrutinize the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the Gospel’ (*GS* 4). Sharing the noblest aspirations of men and suffering when she sees them not satisfied, she wishes to help them attain their full flowering” (*PP* 13).

healthcare, or, in brief, in promoting integral human development, is to pursue the mission of Christ to the poor. In this way, this particular aspect of Jesus' portrait is implicitly but constantly recalled throughout the document.

Moreover, at one point the encyclical refers explicitly to the image of Jesus having compassion for the crowd:

No one can remain indifferent to the lot of his brothers who are still buried in wretchedness, and victims of insecurity, slaves of ignorance. Like the heart of Christ, the heart of the Christian must sympathize with this misery: "I have pity on this multitude" (Mk 8:2) (*PP* 74).

Jesus' commitment to the poor and marginalized begins with his looking with compassion at the multitude and it is the same type of looking at the world which is at work in the church when following the impulse of the council and of *GS*, it recognizes itself as sharing "the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age especially those who are poor and afflicted" (*GS* 1). The first paragraph of *PP* sets a similar tone when it speaks of the people "who are striving to escape from hunger, misery, endemic diseases, and ignorance" (*PP* 1). Later it states:

Today the peoples in hunger are making a dramatic appeal to the peoples blessed with abundance. The Church shudders at this cry of anguish and calls each one to give a loving response of charity to his brother's cry for help (*PP* 3).

To look at the current situation with a special awareness of the sufferings and the injustices endured by the poor, individually but also (more importantly in *PP*) considered in the collective reality of the developing nations, is to adopt Christ's way of looking at the world.

In all of this we find some premises for the Christological foundation of what will soon be called "the preferential option for the poor," and which will be developed first in the church of Latin America before being explicitly integrated in the universal magisterium with John Paul II's

SRS. In the wake of Vatican II, and a few years after *PP*, Latin American liberation theologians developed a systematic “ascending” Christology, a Christology which starts from the concrete historical Jesus and the context of the current human quest for salvation.⁹⁴

For them, there is no neutral Christology, or neutral theology in general, because theologians who attempt to formulate the contents of the faith are always situated somewhere. There is a subjective point of departure for Christology which is the social and ecclesial locus of theological reflection. In Latin America at this period, liberation theologians viewed the need to opt for the poor and to struggle with them against situations of poverty and oppression as the social locus of their reflection and the church of the poor as the ecclesial locus.⁹⁵ Nonetheless, for Christology to be Christology, this subjective point of departure ought to be in dialectic circularity with an objective point of departure which is the search for an access to the totality of Christ. This access is best given through consideration of the historical Jesus. In the context of Latin America, the historical Jesus is not so much an object of investigation in order to ascertain a belief than it is a criterion for true discipleship, sustaining the transformation of the current unjust situations of the world.⁹⁶

With this methodological approach to a Christology which is embedded in the reality of poverty and oppression and oriented toward transformative action, liberation theologians will

⁹⁴ Julio Lois, “Christology in the Theology of Liberation,” in *Mysterium Liberationis. Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, eds. Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 168-194. Significant examples of Christological investigations in the decade following *PP* include: Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1978); Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology for Our Time*, trans. Patrick Hughes (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1978).

⁹⁵ Lois, “Christology in the Theology of Liberation,” 170-172.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 174.

highlight several key aspects of the mystery of Jesus Christ: Jesus as herald and mediator of the reign of God which is the bringing about of liberation from all oppressions and of life in just relationships, the historical dimension of the cross and its significance for the crucified of today, the resurrection as a response to situations of injustice and oppression and the promise of full liberation.⁹⁷

There is no such elaborated Christology in *PP* which provides only a few Christological hints. However, the theoretical framework developed by liberation theologians explains and justifies the type of reading of the encyclical we have just made. Concern for the situation of so many people around the world aspiring for more integral development prompts one to highlight some aspects of the mystery of Jesus Christ that are particularly relevant to support transformative actions, namely his involvement in the world and his mission to the poor.

Nonetheless, this approach to Christology is not exclusive of other types. As we shall see now, a survey of the mentions of Christ in the encyclical leads us also to highlight the presence of a more transcendental or existential Christology which focus on union with Christ as the promise and realization of the fullness of humanity.

b) Union with Christ

Mentions of Christ in the encyclical underscore that Jesus Christ reveals the fullness of humanity and that union with him is the path to its realization. In the exposition of the Christian vision on development, it is affirmed that “by reason of his union with Christ, the source of life, man attains to new fulfillment of himself” (*PP* 16) and later, among “the conditions that are

⁹⁷ Ibid., 175-186.

more human” we find “unity in the charity of Christ” (*PP* 21). The reflection about work ends with a Pauline reference to the building up of the perfect human being “who realizes the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13; *PP* 28). Finally, at the end of the second part about development in solidarity, reference is made to the “building up of the body of Christ in its plenitude: the assembled people of God” (*PP* 79).

As a commentator rightly pointed out, *PP* is written from the theological perspective of “God who says ‘yes’ to human history through Christ.”⁹⁸ The encyclical looks at the human situation with the help of faith and offers “the irradiation of the Gospel on the humanity of today.”⁹⁹ Faith in Jesus Christ, human and divine, savior of the world, sheds light on the current situation of humanity. Through addressing the issue of development, there is a convergence in the encyclical between an “explicit gospel” and an “implicit gospel.” From the explicit gospel comes the affirmation that there could not be any integral human development without a form of openness to God and also the building of a true universal fraternity. However, there is also the sense that the process of integral development to which many people of good will are committed reveals an attitude which believers can recognize as “evangelical.”¹⁰⁰ The movement toward integral human development is a path to greater union with Christ, it is a path toward recognizing Christ revealing the fullness of humanity. The explicit gospel can be seen as confirming what is already currently at work in humanity as when the encyclical, in a manner like that of *GS*, mentions Christ only at the end of reflections expressed in non-explicitly theological arguments.

⁹⁸ Alfonso Álvarez Bolado, “Evangelio y Desarrollo,” in *Teología y sociología del desarrollo*, 82. Translation mine.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 78.

Nonetheless, Christological faith is not merely a confirmation, through the positive aspects of development, of what the human being is, it is also a denunciation of all that is inhuman in personal behaviors and social structures.¹⁰¹ Let us look at both movements at work in the encyclical through the two particular anthropological themes we encountered in the previous section.

First, human beings are called to fulfill their human vocation through developing all the dimensions of their life, material, human, and spiritual, and each one has a responsibility in “becoming more a person” which should be acknowledged, respected and promoted. The crowning of this personal development and the highest goal it seeks is “union with Christ the source of life” (*PP* 16). On the contrary, avarice, greed, the “insatiable desire for more” and for “increased power” (*PP* 17), threatens human development. This is why, for example, industrialization is seen as a positive phenomenon because it is the sign of the human ability to use intelligence in order to organize work in a more efficient manner and to produce the goods needed for everyone. It is also a sign of creativity and responsibility (*PP* 25). However, when profit becomes “the key motive for economic progress,” competition “the supreme law of economics” and private ownership of the means of production “an absolute right that has no limits and carries no corresponding social obligation,” which is the case in an “unchecked liberalism,” then the goal of industrialization is distorted and those situations need to be condemned in the name of faith (*PP* 26).

Second, human beings are also inherently social beings and cannot achieve the fullness of personal development outside a social setting. Christ realizes also the fullness of humanity in

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 79.

being this body which strives to encompass the entire human family. Highlighting “the dynamism of a world which desires to live more fraternally” (*PP* 79) against those who consider his call for peace through development as merely utopian, Paul VI identifies this difficult road, not exempt from sufferings, with the building up of the body of Christ through union with him on the cross. In the same passage we find a mention of the “human family.” This can be seen as reflecting the Christian faith in a universal brotherhood and sisterhood – we are all children of God, brothers and sisters in Christ – which is at the root of the work “to build the common future of the human race” (*PP* 43). Christological faith, therefore, supports and grounds all that is said in the second part about developing a spirit of solidarity among nations. Consider as examples in this regard the necessity of providing aid for development but also more just trade relations, or the search for true peace through development and the bringing about of an order “intended by God, which implies a more perfect form of justice among men” (*PP* 76), or the call for greater international collaboration and the necessity of institutions to coordinate it (*PP* 78). On the contrary, exacerbated nationalism and all forms of racism are to be fiercely denounced as obstacles to the development of all humanity (*PP* 62-63).

Once again, it can be argued that Christological statements concerning the full realization of humanity in Christ are scarce in the encyclical and not theologically developed. However, I believe that they are highly significant and give us a direction which authorizes us to read the whole document as illustrating this Christological doctrine. All the reflections, analysis, recommendations and urgent calls formulated bear the mark of the faith in Christ revealing and realizing the fullness of humanity, and in their own way they testify to this faith.

For a more systematic content about the notion of Christ realizing the fullness of humanity we can recall Rahner’s transcendental Christology already presented in the first chapter of this

dissertation. Jesus Christ is the “absolute savior” who realizes both the promise of God’s self-revelation and the full acceptance of this revelation in freedom. He thus has an “exemplary significance” for the whole of humanity. He assumed entirely the human condition as his own and brought it to its full realization. In Rahner’s wording:

The Incarnation of God is the *highest* instance of the actualization of the essence of human reality which consists in this: that man is insofar as he abandons himself to the absolute mystery whom we call God.¹⁰²

This Rahnerian presentation of Christological faith is not necessarily implied or presupposed in *PP* but it is a possible development about the meaning of expressions we find in the encyclical and which associate fulfillment of humanity with the fullness of Christ (*PP* 16, 28, 80). This helps us to perceive that the anthropology which we studied in the previous section is strongly connected with the Christological affirmation of Jesus Christ’s humanity as path for the fulfillment of our own humanity.

c) Conclusion

In this section I have argued that although explicit Christological statements are not numerous in *PP*, they are nonetheless significant in that they invite and legitimate a “Christological reading” of the encyclical. Such a reading highlights some aspects of the mystery of Jesus Christ for us emerging from the context of the issue of development in the 1960s. Jesus is portrayed as calling us by words and by deeds to act for the transformation of this world. More specifically he appears as one missioned first to the poor. Union with Christ is also presented as the path toward realizing the fullness of humanity in freedom and solidarity and it grounds the

¹⁰² Rahner, *FCF*, 218.

vision of human beings called to flourish in all their dimensions. This does not constitute a full portrait of Jesus Christ nor a full deployment of the Christological faith, but it does become a contribution to the expression of the mystery of Jesus Christ and of its meaning for us, from a particular historical setting.

The Christology at work here pertains mainly to a basic type of Christology “from below” or Christology “of saving history.”¹⁰³ In entering the mystery of Jesus Christ, the starting point is the consideration of human beings encountering him in their quest for salvation. At some moments the focus is on the historical Jesus and its proximity to the poor. At other moments the focus is more on the movement of humanization which is transcendental in its aspiration toward the divine and is recognized as a movement of union with Christ. That Christ is God become human, the incarnate Word, is of course implied but it is not the methodological starter. We find here another illustration of the neo-Thomist framework at work in *PP*. It comes also with some traces of a more liberationist one thanks to the noticeable seeds of an emerging “option for the poor.”

V. CONCLUSION: THE THEOLOGY OF *POPULORUM PROGRESSIO*

If we gather together the various theological contributions which our reading of *PP* has highlighted, we end with a theology which can be qualified as strongly incarnational. It fits mainly in the framework we call “neo-Thomist” which takes a positive look at the world and humanity where God’s grace is at work since creation. The adoption of an inductive see-judge-

¹⁰³ I use here the distinction established by Rahner between “Christology of saving history” and “metaphysical Christology” on which I say more in the last chapter of this dissertation. Karl Rahner, “The Two Basic Types of Christology,” *TI* Vol. 13 (New York: Seabury, 1975), 213-223.

act approach stresses the reality of the incarnation still at work in the contemporary world: “the kingdom of God is among you” (Lk 17:21). The signs of the kingdom ought to be recognized positively and negatively and its bringing into reality urges people to take action for the integral development of peoples. Humanity is the locus of God’s revelation and the recipient of God’s grace bearing fruits for the kingdom, so it is through dialoguing with others inside and outside the church that believers can seek for God. Any process of true humanization bears the mark of God. Created in the image of God and made adoptive children in Christ, human beings have a vocation to become more human by flourishing in all their personal and social dimensions. They are called to an authentic freedom liberated from material and moral servitudes. This is what, ultimately, true integral development aims at. Jesus Christ shows us the way. The encyclical highlights his involvement in the world and his proximity with the poor. It also offers him as the full realization of the human vocation, shedding light on the mystery of humanity. This incarnational and neo-Thomist theology is put forward by *PP* through its dealing with very concrete historical issues like hunger, unjust international trade relations, aspirations to political freedom, the balance of powers, threats of racism and nationalism, scandalous waste of money in the arms race, land reform, state planning, technical cooperation, etc.

However, Christian theology is not a matter of either/or but rather of both/and. Jesus Christ is *both* human *and* divine. The kingdom of God is *both* already here *and* yet to come. The human being is *both* sinner *and* offered salvation. By highlighting incarnation, *PP* is not dismissing eschatology. The urgency of what has to be done, the cry of so many peoples, or the stress on the sickness of a world which lacks fraternity point to the “not-yet-there” reality of the kingdom. Not everything that human beings do or are reflects their humanly divine vocation. There is greed and thirst for power, selfishness and avarice, disunity and conflicts among peoples. All those

terms appear in the encyclical. They recall the dimension of sin also at work in humanity.

Nonetheless, undoubtedly, the incarnational dimension of the mystery of God for us is more strongly highlighted than the eschatological one. *PP*'s theology pertains pretty clearly to the neo-Thomist trend.

That *PP*'s theology took this path is easily understandable when we recall the context. The church had just moved out of a long period of confrontation with the modern world. At the council it engaged itself in dialoguing with "the world of this time," with other Christian confessions and other religions. The church made a pastoral turn by taking more strongly into account that God is already at work in the world to which salvation in Jesus Christ is to be announced. *PP* is pursuing this movement. Moreover, the global situation of the world was one of strong human hopes despite great anxieties. It is true that the Cold War situation and the threat of a nuclear apocalypse were over all heads but at the same time the perspective of economic growth, more efficient production of goods to remedy misery, progress in education and health were sources of great hope. Western countries were still in a post-war period of boom.¹⁰⁴ Developing countries had to face big challenges but, for a lot of them, they were still young so a lot seemed possible. Overall, reflection and research about development were in their early stages so it was possible to believe that by implementing the right policies, things would very soon change for the better. This rather optimistic framework, which should certainly not be

¹⁰⁴ For example, they were enjoying almost full employment which allowed French economist and colleague of Fr. Lebreton, François Perroux to say that it was now time to move forward from full-employment to "full development of human capacities." François Perroux, "L'encyclique de la résurrection," in *L'Église dans le monde de ce temps*, ed. Y.-M. Congar and M. Peuchmaud, vol.3 (Paris: Cerf, 1967), 201-212 at 204. Only a few years later the situation changed with the crisis following the first oil shock. Even today, Western countries continue to struggle with unemployment. It is unfortunately not *dépassé*!

quickly identified with Christian hope, made nonetheless the type of incarnational theology produced by *PP* more easily relevant.

Subsequent Roman CST during the pontificate of Paul VI will confirm many of the elements we have highlighted in *PP*. The overarching concern for justice steered by the desire to listen to the cry of “those who suffer violence and are oppressed by unjust systems and structures”¹⁰⁵ is at the heart of *Octogesima adveniens* (*OA*), the letter addressed to the head of the Pontifical Commission *Justice and Peace* in 1971 for the 80th anniversary of *Rerum novarum*, and of *Justicia in mundo*, the document produced by the Synod of Bishops that same year. In particular, in *OA*, Paul VI goes further in recognition of the necessity of an inductive approach by raising awareness about the complexity of the issues and inviting each particular Christian community to analyze the situation “proper to their own countries” in order to “shed the light of the Gospel’s unalterable words and to draw principles of reflection, norms of judgment and directives for action from the social teaching of the church” (*OA* 4). The Synod, in a formula that will attract a lot of comments, reaffirms that the Gospel is to be preached in deeds as much as in words, and in deeds that are not merely personal good works but also structural changes:

Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as constitutive of the preaching of the Gospel.¹⁰⁶

However, what is even more striking for our theological investigation is to note the evolution coming from Latin America and which will contribute to a certain rebalancing of the neo-Thomist framework. Gathered in Medellín, Colombia, in 1968, the Latin American bishops

¹⁰⁵ Synod of Bishops 1971, *Justicia in mundo*, in D.J. O’Brien and T.A. Shannon, *Catholic Social Thought, The Documentary Heritage* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010), 288.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 289.

appropriated for themselves the call of the council to discern the signs of the times. In their context, the framing sign is the scandal of the growing poverty in which the majority of people of the continent live. God's salvation proclaimed by the church is better expressed in the category of liberation from various forms of oppression. This category is also preferred to the one of development when it comes to speaking about economic, social and political challenges. The obstacle to development in Latin America is the situation of dependency generated by neocolonialism and source of a high level of violence. In this analysis by the Latin American bishops the reality of sin at work at a structural level and of conflicts in the bringing about of the kingdom are much more present than in *PP*. This is a good precursor of the topics that will become more prevalent in subsequent CST and which will bring in what we call a "liberationist" theological framework.

In the next chapter we move forward twenty years after *PP* with the study of John Paul II's *SRS*. The context will be very different, far less optimistic in terms of the capacity of this present world to bring about justice, development, and peace. The theological contributions of CST will thus highlight some other dimensions of the mystery of God for us. As we will see, theological reflections from Latin America will play a decisive role by raising debates but also finally offering some key categories to be incorporated into the Roman magisterium of the church. Elements of a more "Augustinian" theological framework whose vision of the world is more attentive to the presence of sin and the need of a redemption coming from without will also become more visible.

CHAPTER THREE

JOHN PAUL II'S *SOLLICITUDO REI SOCIALIS*: DEVELOPMENT IN FREEDOM AND SOLIDARITY

“In order to be genuine, development must be achieved within the framework of *solidarity* and *freedom*, without ever sacrificing either of them under whatever pretext” (*SRS* 33). Twenty years after *PP*, John Paul II dedicated his second major social encyclical to the topic of development wishing to spotlight and to update the reflection offered by his predecessor.¹ In *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, solidarity is a major concept used by the Polish pope in order to elaborate his vision of full development and the appropriate responses to the challenges of the late-twentieth-century world concerning this question. However, this concept appears in constant articulation with another fundamental anthropological characteristic in need of purification from deceptive understandings: freedom.²

SRS begins by asserting that the social concern of the church is manifested in a special way through its social teaching. This teaching as it appears in the body of documents published since Leo XIII's *Rerum novarum*, always bears within it some continuity in its fundamental principles and some renewal prompted by new situations. Commemorating the twentieth anniversary of *PP*,

¹ *SRS* is dated December 31st, 1987 in order to stress the twentieth anniversary of *PP*, although it was actually released only in February, 1988.

² Strikingly, two collections of essays about the encyclical edited in the United States in the immediate aftermath of its publication chose to focus on one or the other of those concepts in their titles. Gregory Baum and Robert Ellsberg, eds., *The Logic of Solidarity: Commentaries on Pope John Paul II's Encyclical on Social Concern* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1989); Kenneth A. Myers, ed., *Aspiring to Freedom. Commentaries on John Paul II's Encyclical The Social Concerns of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988).

SRS then highlights three major contributions of Paul VI's encyclical which are still crucial in the late 80s: the issue of development is not a mere economic and social question but a moral one; the social question has become worldwide; and development is "the new name for peace."

In chapter three, the pope moves on to a long survey of the current situation of the world. Hopes of development have very often not been fulfilled. The gap between rich countries and poor ones is widening in social and economic but also cultural terms. Unemployment, housing crises, and international debt are some among many signals of failure affecting not only developing countries but some parts of the population in the richest ones as well. Rights of people are not respected and among them, in clear reference to state-controlled communist countries, the right of economic initiative and religious freedom is too often denied. Among the reasons for the lack of progress in development, the pope stresses the logic of blocks. It is a geopolitical opposition which is also ideological and conceptual in nature as it is rooted in the opposition between liberal capitalism and Marxist collectivism. This fuels a devastating arms' race, many local conflicts, outbursts of the number of refugees around the world, terrorism, and many other plagues. Nonetheless, amidst this dark overview, positively noted are an increasing awareness of and concern for human dignity, the potential to transform interdependence into true solidarity, a growing concern for ecological challenges, and a commitment of many to work for peace.

In a fourth chapter *SRS* offers its vision of authentic development rooted in a reading of the first chapters of Genesis and humanity created in the image of God, and in the faith in Christ the redeemer. Full development is not unlimited material progress. "Super-development" is even denounced as a danger in Western consumer societies. On the other hand, true development includes the promotion of human rights and respect for the natural environment. In chapter five,

SRS provides a theological reading of the problems related to development. Obstacles are seen in terms of structures of sins, rooted in and fueled by the thirst for power and the desire for profit at any price. The path to overcome them is solidarity as a profoundly human and Christian virtue.

A sixth chapter offers some guidelines by stressing the social doctrine of the church as an important resource. It does not offer a third way or an alternative socio-economic system but rather some means for a moral discernment. This social doctrine thus pertains to *moral theology*. The adoption of an “option or love of preference for the poor” is another crucial guideline. It should orient some necessary reforms of institutions such as international organizations, or the international financial, monetary, and trade systems. There is also an accent put on the necessity of promoting participative democracy in developing nations.

Finally, in a concluding section, the pope associates development with liberation, reasserts the confidence of the church in humanity and calls everyone, inside and outside the church, to commitment to development in solidarity. The sacrament of the Eucharist is presented as the effective symbol and resource for this task.

This encyclical, thus briefly summarized, is the second case study for this dissertation’s attempt to highlight the theological contribution of CST. Once again the question to be answered is: how, through addressing the issue of development in the particular context of the mid-eighties and of Pope John Paul II’s church, does the encyclical contribute to approaching the mystery of “God for us”? What new insights do we get that are helpful to express better the mystery of salvation seizing humanity? With the study of *PP*, the previous chapter has already set a basis of theological elements present in the reflection of the church about development. As will be highlighted, *SRS* has a more explicitly theological tone which confirms many of these previous elements. However, this chapter will pay particular attention to those developments which

evidence a rebalancing or reshaping of previous magisterial documents because it is through them that complementary theological insights can be found. Because of a different context, there are some different theological accents in *SRS* than in *PP*. Crucially, this chapter will point out a retrieval of the category of sin. In addition to the developments between *PP* and *SRS*, attention will also be paid to shifts in John Paul II's own theology. Because *SRS* is a social encyclical, dealing with certain concrete social issues, it prompts some tweaking and rebalancing in the way the pope speaks of theological themes such as the mystery of Christ the redeemer.

Following the same path as with *PP*, I begin by highlighting some elements of context for the encyclical: the socio-economic and political situation of the world; the church living in the aftermath of the council; the emergence of the Latin American continent in the field of theology and the controversies associated with it; and a new pope coming from Eastern Europe. Then I address successively the themes of style and method, theological anthropology, and Christology, looking at the elements of continuity but also of change from *PP* and from previous contributions of Pope John Paul. In each case we will see that the three different theological frameworks presented in the introduction of this dissertation are interacting with each other: the neo-Thomist framework, insisting on humanity and the world as the locus and object of God's grace; a more Augustinian vision which stresses the reality of sin at work and the need for redemption; and a third framework brought by Latin American liberation theology whose main accents are the social and structural dimensions of the evil at work in the world and the liberating dimension of salvation.³

³ From Peru, Ricardo Antoncich notes: "The particular enthusiasm that *Sollicitudo rei socialis* has stirred in Latin America is due to the fact that it rehearses so many of our own ideas. A great

I. CONTEXT

In order to establish the background against which the encyclical addressed the challenge of development three major points of attention must be raised. The first concerns the global socio-economic and political situation of the world. Following the two Decades of Development declared by the United Nations, hopes of rapid development in many Third World countries⁴ had not been fulfilled. The gap between rich and poor countries continued to grow. The challenge of poverty was also visible in so-called developed countries through the reality of the “Fourth World.”⁵ International relations were still heavily shaped by the Cold War and the rivalry between the two super powers reverberated in many parts of the world.

The second point of attention concerns evolutions in the church and especially the emergence of new theological voices outside Europe in the dynamism initiated by Vatican II. Latin American theology of liberation and its tumultuous relations to the central authority of the church in the 70s and 80s played an important role for the context of *SRS*.

The last point of attention is the history and personality of Pope John Paul II himself who authored the encyclical. The first non-Italian pope for more than 450 years and the first Polish pope, he brought in his Eastern European vision and also his personal experiences of growing up

deal of the theological reflection that has developed in Latin America over the course of the two decades since Medellín now appears in the encyclical.” Ricardo Antoncich, “*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*: A Latin American Perspective,” in *The Logic of Solidarity*, 211.

⁴ In this chapter, as in the previous one, I continue to use the terminology of “Third World” because the encyclical and many commentaries did so. It refers to what is today more appropriately named the “global South” or “Two Thirds World.”

⁵ The expression “Fourth World” refers to the bands of great or extreme poverty in countries of medium and high income (*SRS* 14, note 31).

during World War II in occupied Poland, then living under a communist, Soviet-Union-driven, regime, and finally travelling all over the world as Pope.⁶

a) The World in the Mid-Eighties

SRS's third chapter, dedicated to a survey of the contemporary world, begins with a stark statement: "the hopes for development, at the time [of *PP*] so lively, today appear very far from being realized" (*SRS* 12). Indeed, despite a few signs of progress for some countries in Asia such as South Korea, Taiwan or Singapore, the overall situation was rather bleak. Poverty, wars, disorganization and corruption in state structures, lack of proper healthcare and education, exploding international debt, denial of human rights: the list of the plagues affecting "Third World" countries seemed not to have receded much during the twenty years separating *PP* and *SRS*. For example, in Latin America and the Caribbean in 1985, 15% of the population did not get basic nourishment, 32% had no regular access to health services, 700,000 children died annually before reaching one year, 44% of the working force was without jobs or underemployed.⁷ The situation was no better in Africa or South Asia.

⁶ For an overview of the context of *SRS*: Charles E. Curran, Kenneth R. Himes, and Thomas Shannon, "Commentary on *Sollicitudo rei socialis*," in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth R. Himes (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 416-420. See as well, Fernando Garcia de Cortazar, "Veinte años de historia presente," in *Solidaridad, nuevo nombre de la paz. Comentario interdisciplinar a la encíclica Sollicitudo rei socialis* (Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto, 1989), 71-90; Pierre de Charentenay, "*Sollicitudo rei socialis*. Présentation," in *Discours social de l'Église*, ed. CERAS (Paris: Bayard, 4th ed., 2009), 755-759; Roberto Suro, "The Writing of an Encyclical," in *Aspiring to Freedom*, 159-169.

⁷ Gabriel Ignacio Rodriguez, "Contenido temático de la encíclica *solicitud por lo social*," in *La urgencia de transformaciones personales y sociales para la paz. Análisis y comentarios sobre la encíclica Sollicitudo rei socialis* (Bogotá: CINEP, 1989), 52-53.

What is even more striking is that the gaps between developed countries and developing countries and between rich and poor inside any one country were still increasing. The situation was also marked by many conflicts and the idea that development is the new name for peace, so strongly underlined by Paul VI, seemed, sadly but overwhelmingly, confirmed by its contrary. The many efforts prompted by the raising of the issue of development during the 60s and 70s had not produced the results expected, at least not as quickly as hoped. *SRS* was written in a context far less optimistic than *PP* and much more aware of the complexities surrounding the question of the development of peoples.

The socio-economic situation of the world in the mid-eighties was also marked by the crisis provoked by two oil shocks and which signaled the end of the period of rapid economic growth in Western countries prompted by the post-World War II reconstruction.⁸ Many so-called developed countries had to deal with repeated economic crises and rising levels of unemployment.⁹ In those countries as well, there were segments of the population who remained in dire poverty. This reality had begun to be referred to as the “Fourth World” and it is mentioned in *SRS*’s survey of the contemporary world.¹⁰ In their pastoral letter, *Economic Justice for All*, published just one year before *SRS*, the US bishops pointed out that

⁸ In 1972-1973, an agreement between major oil producers gathered in OPEC lead to a multiplication by 7 of the price of crude oil. In 1979-80 a new wave of increases resulted in multiplying the price by 3. Repercussions on economies heavily relying on oil energy but without reserves on their territory, such as most of the European countries, were huge. Garcia de Cortazar, “Veinte años de historia presente,” 74.

⁹ A footnote in paragraph 18 of the encyclical mentions the statistic given by a U.N. publication. “The percentage of unemployed in the developed countries with a market economy jumped from 3 percent of the work force in 1970 to 8 percent in 1986” (*SRS* 18, footnote 36).

¹⁰ Cf *SRS* 14.

Harsh poverty plagues [the] country despite its great wealth. More than 33 million Americans are poor; by any reasonable standard another 20 to 30 million are needy. Poverty is increasing in the United States, not decreasing.¹¹

It had become clear, as *SRS* acknowledged, that addressing the issue of integral development was not merely a matter of helping developing countries but also of challenging the incomplete and flawed notion of development at work in so-called developed countries.

In the overall picture of the world at the time of *SRS*, the Cold War had still a huge impact. This is a blatant manifestation of what the pope named the “logic of blocks.”¹² The encyclical was published merely one year before the pacific overturn of communist regimes in Eastern Europe but almost no one had predicted such an outcome, at least in such a short time. The mid-eighties saw a promising process of negotiations between the US and the USSR for the reduction of strategic nuclear arms, following on previous attempts at the beginning of the seventies with the SALT I and II treaties. Mikhail Gorbachev, the leader of the Soviet Union, had engaged in a process of reform and liberalization of his country known as *Perestroika*. All of this diminished greatly the threat of an apocalyptic war between the two super powers. However, the ideological, political, and military clash between the two was by no means over and was continuously waged by proxy. The Cold War was still very much affecting the world and the processes of development.

Three examples among many illustrate this reality. In the Philippines, the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos was overturned by the People Power Revolution in February 1986. However,

¹¹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All* (1986), no.16, in *Catholic Social Thought. The Documentary Heritage*, eds. David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010).

¹² *SRS* 20.

the restored democracy had to deal in the following years on one side with a continuing communist guerilla supported by foreign powers and on the other side with the wish of the United States to maintain military bases on Filipino soil including the presence of a nuclear arsenal.¹³ In Angola, independence was achieved in 1975 from Portugal but since then it was the scene of a civil war fueled on one side by USSR and Cuba and on the other side by South Africa and the US. In Central America, the Nicaraguan Sandinista regime which took power over the military dictatorship of Somoza in 1979 was at war with the US-backed guerilla whereas in Salvador it was the military regime which was supported by the US in order to fight the communist guerilla helped by Cuba. All these conflicts resulted in thousands of victims, mainly civilians, and were only symptomatic of the broader situation to be found in most of the global South. This situation, of which he had firsthand experience through his many travels, is the setting of John Paul II's analysis of the logic of East-West confrontation and its effect on the whole world.

b) Latin American Liberation Theology

Looking at the church, a key element of context for *SRS* is the emergence of liberation theology in Latin America during the two decades separating John Paul II's encyclical from *PP*.¹⁴ The council had invited the church to discern the signs of the times in order to proclaim

¹³ Many Filipino commentators read *SRS* as applying perfectly to their situation: "Perhaps it is self-flattery of the crassest kind to say so, but *Sollicitudo rei socialis* could have been written with precisely the Philippines in mind." Bp. Francisco F. Claver, "*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*: an Anthropological-Pastoral Perspective," in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, Philippine Reflections and Response* (Manila: Bahay Maria, 1988), 32. The other essays in the book confirm this statement.

¹⁴ Cf. Roberto Oliveros, "History of the Theology of Liberation," in *Mysterium Liberationis. Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, eds. Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino

Christ's message of salvation. Gathered in Medellín in 1968 for their second general conference the Latin American Bishops recognized that the poor and poverty were the foundational experience lived in their continent. What did loving God and neighbor mean in Latin America in the late 60s? It meant loving the poor, becoming sisters and brothers with and among them and being committed to work for their cause.¹⁵ So the best way to express the Christian doctrine of salvation for the suffering peoples of Latin America became the notion of liberation: "In the economy of salvation the divine work is an action of integral human development and liberation, which has love for its sole motive" (*Med Justice* 4). At Medellín, adoption of the option for the poor and of the category of liberation constituted a starting point for liberation theology.

In 1971, Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez published *A Theology of Liberation*.¹⁶ This ground breaking work in fundamental theology opened the way for a large variety of theological productions from biblical exegesis and systematics to ethics and spirituality, readdressing traditional questions and taking up new ones always from the perspective of the poor in Latin America. As Gutiérrez noted in a discussion with European colleagues, in Latin America the mission of theology in the aftermath of Vatican II and its openness to the current world was not to respond to the challenge of the nonbeliever but rather the challenge of how to proclaim God as Father in a context of dehumanization and injustice.¹⁷ Liberation theology developed not as mere intellectual and academic discussion but rather as a second order reflection about the reality of

(Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 3-32; Peter Hebblethwaite, "Liberation Theology and the Roman Catholic Church," in *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, ed. C. Rowland (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 209-228.

¹⁵ Oliveros, "History of the Theology of Liberation," 6-8.

¹⁶ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation. History, Politics and Salvation*, 2nd edition in English (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988).

¹⁷ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), 36-74.

what was happening in Christian communities struggling for justice and peace and doing it with their faith. It challenged the unjust structures of the South American societies but also some of the traditional positions of the church historically close to the wealthy elites. On the other hand it put the theologians in proximity with various revolutionary movements and Marxist currents of thought. Inside the Latin American church and also in the Vatican, opposition to liberation theology grew along with its blooming.

The third general conference of the Latin American Bishops at Puebla (Mexico) in 1979 marked a crucial stage. During its preparation attempts were made by some bishops and especially the secretariat of CELAM to move away from Medellín and to oppose liberation theology. However the conference ended up with a rather solid confirmation of the orientation initiated ten years earlier. In his opening speech Pope John Paul II issued warnings against the danger of a Christology which would depict Jesus as a political activist or which would tend to reduce the kingdom of God to socio-political realizations, or an ecclesiology carrying a problematic distinction between an institutional church heavily criticized and a new church springing from the people. Though he did not mention liberation theology, those warnings were undoubtedly directed to it. However the pope also clearly endorsed the central concern for social justice and the poor at the heart of liberation theology and highlighted the reality of human dignity “crushed under foot” in so many Latin American countries. He also insisted on Medellín being a point of departure and a solid basis.¹⁸ Indeed, though some commentators and media

¹⁸ John Paul II, “Opening Address at the Puebla Conference,” in *Puebla and Beyond*, 57-76. Hebblethwaite, “Liberation Theology and the Roman Catholic Church,” 212-216. Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor and the Environment* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2012), 241-244.

talked of this speech as a condemnation of liberation theology, most of the theologians themselves found in it a vindication of their approach.¹⁹

The years following Puebla saw growing tensions between the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) and Latin American liberation theologians. Two instructions were issued by the former in 1984 and 1986, the first very negative and the second more positive.²⁰ Some theologians such as Leonardo Boff had to leave their teaching positions. The tension was also fueled by the nomination of a new generation of bishops unsympathetic to liberation theology. However, if warnings were expressed, no condemnation was ever issued and on the contrary Pope John Paul II declared in a letter to the Brazilian bishops in 1986, shortly after the second instruction of the CDF and in a clear confirmation of its positive tone, that liberation theology was “not only timely but useful and necessary.”²¹

Because of its focus on development, *SRS* is situated at the heart of the debates concerning Latin American theology. As will be seen in further analysis, not only liberation theology’s fundamental concerns but also some key notions such as liberation, the preferential option for the poor and the structures of sin are endorsed by and incorporated into the Roman magisterium,

¹⁹ “The words of the pope on the necessity of the whole truth should not basically be understood as a warning, an admonition, or a restraint. Rather they should be viewed primarily as a spur to ever fuller expression of the whole Christian truth. And this expression should be based on the praxis of liberation and an ever-increasing commitment to the suffering faces of humanity.” Jon Sobrino, “The Significance of Puebla for the Catholic Church in Latin America,” in *Puebla and Beyond*, 289-309 at 309.

²⁰ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Libertatis Nuntius. Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation* (1984); *Libertatis Conscientia. Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*. (1986); www.vatican.va.

²¹ John Paul II, “Letter to Brazilian Episcopal Conference” (April 9, 1986), in *Liberation Theology: A Documentary History*, ed. Alfred T. Hennelly (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990), 498-506 at 503.

although with some nuances. This is an important contribution from a new voice in the world church that Vatican II enabled to flourish, a contribution which should not be forgotten in favor of the popular, but historically distorted, narrative of a black and white clash between Rome and liberation theology.

c) A Pope from Eastern Europe

In order to portray the context in which *SRS* was elaborated, the last point which needs to be raised is the personal history of the pope who authored it. The election of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła came as a surprise to many although he had participated in the council, took an active part in the elaboration of *Gaudium et spes*, and then had also important roles in several of the synods of bishops. After almost five centuries of Italian popes, the newly elected pope recognized at the balcony of Saint Peter's Basilica, that the cardinals had "called him from a far country."²² This marked a significant new step in the development of a world church. Coming from Poland, John Paul II brought with him a different perspective on the church and the world, one which enriched the magisterium and more specifically CST.

Karol Wojtyła was born in 1920 and grew up in the short and fragile period of independence of Poland before its invasion by Germany in 1939. The future pope experienced World War II in an occupied country and had to work for a while in a quarry before entering clandestinely the seminary of Kraków. After the liberation by the Soviet forces in 1945, Poland rapidly fell under

²² John Paul II, *First Greeting*, October 22, 1978. Quoted by George Weigel, *Witness to Hope* (New York: Harper Collins, 1999), 255. Pope Francis, coming 35 years later from an even further country, will have a similar comment: "It seems that my brother Cardinals have gone to the ends of the earth to get [a bishop for Rome]." Francis, *First Greeting*, March 13, 2013, www.vatican.va.

a communist regime controlled by the neighboring USSR which had even annexed one third of the country. Both during the German occupation and then under the communist regime, Catholic faith and the Catholic church of Poland were crucial places of resistance and of defense of the Polish identity. In such a context, unity and visible fidelity to the institution were primordial. This is a very different situation for the articulation of church-state relations from Western Europe where growing secularization meant that the church had to struggle to remain relevant in the public sphere. Far different too were the military dictatorships of Latin America where those exercising oppressive powers very often were still church goers and a political divide ran across the church.

Paul VI had initiated papal travels outside Italy but in comparison to John Paul II he seems not to have seen very much of the world. By 1987, when *SRS* was written, John Paul had already visited all the continents and most of them several times. We can remember here three images from his Latin American journeys. During his first trip to Mexico in 1979, after addressing the Latin American bishops at Puebla, John Paul II spoke to more than half a million Indians from Oaxaca and Chiapas at Cuilapan. He declared that he wanted “to be [their] voice, the voice of those who cannot speak or who are silenced.”²³ In Nicaragua in 1983, upon his arrival at the airport where the whole Sandinista government welcomed him, the pope had words of reproach to the minister of culture, Fr. Ernesto Cardenal: “regularize your position with the church!”²⁴ For John Paul II, there was a clear incompatibility in being a priest and holding such a political position in a government. Just a few months before the publication of *SRS*, the pope visited Chile

²³ Weigel, *Witness to hope*, 286.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 454.

under the military regime of General Pinochet. During a mass held in Santiago, anti-government protesters clashed with police. “The air in Parque O’Higgins smelled of tear gas, not incense, and guns instead of bells sounded in the distance.”²⁵ Undoubtedly such experiences inform *SRS* which highlights the social concern of the church but with a special insistence on the divine root of this concern and on the differentiation of the church’s mission from the socio-political transformation of the world as such.

As a Pole, Pope John Paul II followed very closely the evolution of his homeland and took an active part in the process which would lead to democracy in 1989, especially through the visits he made, during which huge crowds gathered around him in obvious challenge to the authorities. At the heart of the Polish opposition movement was the trade union *Solidarność* (Solidarity) whose name both identifies a program and resonates with the central theme of *SRS*. Fighting for freedom of speech and the right to unionize, the strikers of Gdansk who started *Solidarność* in the early 80s were certainly in the mind of the pope when he offered solidarity as the appropriate tool to overcome structures of sin (*SRS* 37).

Only twenty years separate *SRS* from *PP* but the points just mentioned about the socio-political situation of the world, about the evolution of the church with the emergence of liberation theology and the debates associated with it, and about the newness of a pope coming from Eastern Europe, designed a very different background for writing an encyclical about development. It is against this background that older theological insights were confirmed and new ones emerged.

²⁵ Robert Suro, “The Writing of an Encyclical,” 161.

II. METHODOLOGY AND STYLE

Looking at the methodology and style of *SRS* and their theological significance we face two interpretative options. On one hand, an inductive approach, which takes seriously the current world situation for the proclamation of the Gospel, can be stressed. A dialogical engagement with this world, with philosophical reflections, and with various theories and practices in the fields of politics and economics is also very much at work. On the other hand, in comparison with Paul VI and *PP*, one can highlight a stronger assertion of the authority of the magisterium of the church and of the pope as well as some more deductive forms of reasoning. The variety of opinions to be found in commentaries reflects very much the contrast between those two aspects and how much each commentator weighs one or the other.²⁶

However, in this section I would like to show that they can be articulated together when we consider the theological accents which they bear. *SRS* confirms Vatican II's turn to the world, its incarnational theology and its understanding of God's self-revelation in this world. However, in a framework less optimistic than *GS* and *PP* – more Augustinian and less neo-Thomist – the encyclical is concerned about recognizing that rejection of God is also at work in this world and that human reason can fail to judge it rightly. To put it bluntly, the world is graced but it is also in need of grace because sin is still very much at work. The global and ecclesial context of the encyclical and the personality of its author prompt a reshaping of *CST* with a greater stress on the latter.

²⁶ For example, see the positive assessment of Land and Henriot or Antoncich and the critical one of Elsbernd. Peter J. Henriot and Philip S. Land, "Toward a New Methodology in Catholic Social Teaching," in *The Logic of Solidarity*, 65-74; Antoncich, "A Latin American Perspective," *Ibid.*, 211-226; Mary Elsbernd, "What Ever Happened to *Octogesima Adveniens*?" *Theological Studies* 56, no. 1 (1995): 39-60.

In this section I address first the debates about the methodology at work in *SRS* and the points of departure from Paul VI's documents. Then I look in the same way at the dialogical dimension. Finally I attempt to interpret theologically these evolutions.

a) Reframing the See-Judge-Act Approach

In order to analyze the methodology at work in *SRS*, a good starting point is the discussion about the notion of "social doctrine of the church." How to refer to the body of documents of the church dealing with social, political, and economic issues? In *SRS*, John Paul II uses several times, but not exclusively, the term "doctrine" or "social doctrine of the church." "Social teaching" occurs also many times.²⁷ Clearly, in this authoritative document, the pope did not want to decide definitively on what had become for a while an object of controversy directly connected to the methodology at work in social encyclicals.²⁸

In the late 70s French Dominican Marie-Dominique Chenu criticized the use of the term "social doctrine." For him it referred appropriately to the type of discourse the church had previous to Vatican II. The church then was proposing its conception of the world and the society based on natural law reflection and put into fixed and ahistorical principles and directives to be deductively applied to concrete changing situations. However, at Vatican II, the church defined itself as "church-in-the-world-and-in-history," therefore, according to Chenu, the notion of social doctrine "is no longer operative and has become outdated methodologically and

²⁷ This is the case in all the translation in modern languages although in Latin it is always 'doctrina' which is used.

²⁸ Henriot and Land, "Toward a New Methodology," 67.

pastorally.”²⁹ On the contrary the church is engaged in a constant discernment of the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel and of its social dimension. The changing situations are the “theological locus” of this discernment and no longer the mere points of application of a preconceived “doctrine.”³⁰ In fact in *GS* and in the two following decades the term “social doctrine” almost disappeared from the Roman documents.

John Paul II revived it shortly after his election when, in his address to the Latin American bishops at Puebla, he encouraged them “to place responsible confidence in this social doctrine” and “to teach it and to be loyal to it.”³¹ Does this mean a comeback to a form of timeless dogmatism and to what the critics of the term “doctrine” feared: social teaching as fixed and unchangeable, deductive, and a kind of all-encompassing ideology meant to replace other current ideologies? On those three points, fears are dismissed by the elements of definition of “Catholic social doctrine” given by *SRS* and the way this “doctrine” is offered in the encyclical.

First, in the introduction, John Paul II defines social doctrine as having both a dimension of continuity and a dimension of constant renewal. The renewal comes from the “necessary and opportune adaptations suggested by the changes in historical conditions and the unceasing flow of the events which are the setting of the life of people and society” whereas the continuity lies in the “fundamental inspiration [of the social doctrine], in its ‘principles of reflection,’ in its ‘criteria of judgment,’ in its basic directives for action’ and above all in its vital link with the Gospel of the Lord” (*SRS* 3). Clear then, that we are not dealing with a fixed corpus of doctrine

²⁹ M-D Chenu, *La “doctrine sociale” de l’Église comme idéologie* (Paris: Cerf, 1979), 12. Translation mine.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 80.

³¹ John Paul II, *Opening Address at Puebla* (Jan 28, 1979), III, 7.

but with one in constant evolution. Some might object that the stress is on the changing situations to which rather immutable principles ought to be applied.³² However it is obvious that the formulation of the principles or even what counts as a significant principle for a particular time is changing and evolving. For example in *SRS*, solidarity takes a central and integrative role unknown in previous documents of the social magisterium. More importantly, the continuity is placed in “the vital link with the Gospel,” which suggests that what remains constant is not to be confused with a mere fixed and dead set of principles and rules.

Second, *SRS* does not show either a return to a fully deductive approach in which some general principles would be applied to particular situations. The see-judge-act approach from Catholic Action, which was implemented in *PP*, is again largely endorsed. After the introduction and a short review of some significant points of *PP*, chapter three is dedicated to a large survey of the contemporary world, then chapters four and five offer a theological analysis and finally chapter six and the conclusion lay down some guidelines. Peter Henriot found here confirmation of the methodology he had set up with Joe Holland and coined *the pastoral circle*.³³ Latin American liberation theologians received also enthusiastically what they perceived as the adoption of the same methodology which was used at Medellín. Ricardo Antoncich stresses that it is from the concrete reality of the situation of development, with its positive and negative

³² Elsbernd, “What Ever Happened to *Octagesima Adveniens*?” 54-56.

³³ “A major contribution of *Sollicitudo* to the development of Catholic social teaching is, precisely, its methodology. Experientially in touch with today’s reality through a reading of the signs of the times, analytically focused on the global structures of underdevelopment, theologically sensitive to both tradition and scripture, and pastorally open to whatever system respects authentic human development, the encyclical demonstrates an approach to social teaching that will have long-term consequences.” Henriot and Land, “Toward a new Methodology,” 74. About the pastoral circle, see Peter Henriot and Joe Holland, *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983).

aspects, that the pope expounds the insufficiencies in certain concepts and enriches them with the perspective of the faith. He also notes an approach which deals with the concrete situations of persons and not abstract statistics.³⁴

Finally, in section 41, John Paul II makes it clear that the church's social doctrine is "not a 'third way' between *liberal capitalism* and *Marxist collectivism*, nor even a possible alternative to other solutions" (SRS 41). It is not a global all-encompassing ideology offering a unique vision of what society ought to be and of the path to get there. Rather it belongs to the field of "moral theology." 'Theology' because it is done from the perspective of faith and 'moral' because it aims at "guiding people's behavior." The latter is crucial because it situates the social doctrine in the realm of discernment ordered toward decision and action in freedom. The social doctrine is about "careful reflection on the complex realities of human existence." Its aims are "to interpret" these realities in the light of the Gospel and "to guide Christian behavior." It gives rise to "a 'commitment to justice,' according to each individual's role, vocation and circumstances" (SRS 41).

Obviously, the use of the term 'doctrine' by John Paul II in SRS, cannot be interpreted as entirely going backward into a pre-Vatican II understanding of the church's way of teaching.³⁵ In

³⁴ Ricardo Antoncich, *La Preocupación social de la Iglesia. La encíclica Sollicitudo rei socialis y sus proyecciones en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Latinoamérica Libros, 1988), 6, 9, 25-27; "A Latin American Perspective," in *The Logic of Solidarity*, 211-226. For another positive assessment of the methodology of SRS and its proximity with the process initiated at Medellín, see as well G. Rodriguez and M. Franco, *La urgencia de transformaciones*, 200-201.

³⁵ After the controversies of the late 70s, it has become a rather shared opinion that the term itself is not problematic. Henriot and Land, "Toward a New Methodology," 67; Matthew Kilior, "'Social Doctrine' in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*," *The Month* (June 1988): 711-714; Luis González-Carvajal, "Aportación de la *Sollicitudo rei socialis* a la doctrina social de la Iglesia," in

line with what I presented in chapter one about the blurring of the frontiers between pastoral and doctrinal in *GS* and about the turn to a world-and-history-conscious doctrinal discourse at Vatican II, we find here that it is the very meaning of doctrine which continues to be renewed. Speaking of “doctrine” for CST is a reminder that it deals with core points of the faith but it does not mean a set of unchangeable, ahistorical pronouncements. The doctrine, as seen in the social doctrine, can be formulated through engagement in the world and history.

There is, however, an element of evolution from Paul VI to John Paul II in matters of methodology which cannot be ignored.³⁶ It concerns the articulation between the universal and the local in the development of CST and the question of who produces it. Undoubtedly, John Paul II strongly reaffirms the role of the papal magisterium and the necessity of universal pronouncements. In the passage of the introduction already mentioned, the pope speaks of the “principles of reflection,” “criteria of judgment,” and “directives of action,” which are the foundational inspiration of the church’s social teaching. He makes a clear, footnoted, reference to paragraph 4 of *Octogesima adveniens* (*OA*). However, in the latter document Paul VI stated that due to the variety of situations around the world “it is difficult to utter a unified message and to put forward a solution which has a universal validity” (*OA* 4). Consequently, Pope Paul was urging Christian communities to “analyze with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own countries, to shed the light of the Gospel’s unalterable words and to draw principles of reflection, norms of judgment and directives for action from the social teaching of the church” (*OA* 4). There was a clear recognition of the role played by local communities. John Paul II,

Comentario a la “Sollicitudo rei socialis” (Madrid: Acción Social Empresarial, 1990), 16; Dorr, *Option for the poor*, 244-247.

³⁶ Cf. Elsbernd, “What Ever Happened to *Octogesima Adveniens*?” Kilioroor, “Social Doctrine.”

although referring to his predecessor, stresses rather the role played by the universal magisterium found in the rich body of documents produced by the various popes. Contrary to *OA*, there is little emphasis in *SRS* on the local communities contributing to the development of CST through evangelical discernment about their particular situations.

The affirmation of a central authority in the church is an obvious feature of the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI and it finds its expression in CST as well as in other aspects of the life of the church. However, it should not hide the fundamental methodological option taken by the social teaching in favor of historicity and a dimension of induction. We are facing a reframing rather than a movement backwards. A general theological framework less optimistic about the world and more concerned about the dangers of division could well explain this reframing. I will explore this hypothesis later, after having made a few remarks about the dynamism of dialogue in *SRS*. In much the same fashion as what appeared for the inductive approach, it remained present in *SRS* but in a far more discreet way than in *PP*.

b) Dialogue Tempered

In *PP* the church's engagement in dialogue with the world was noticeable in the explicit references made to non-magisterial documents in the footnotes. Some philosophers, economists or social scientists appeared as interlocutors and contributors to the reflection offered by the pope. Looking at the almost hundred footnotes of *SRS*, except for two documents of the United Nations only church documents are cited and they are principally conciliar or recent papal

pronouncements.³⁷ Does this mean that John Paul II's encyclical is written in isolation from the current debates and in ignoring what secular disciplines or others outside the Vatican have to bring to the discussion about development? This seems far from being the case.

All through the encyclical we find signs of a reflection articulated with other lines of thought. *SRS* is engaged in a critical evaluation of the two socio-economic and political systems of the West and the East and addresses the ideologies which sustain them. Liberal capitalism and Marxist collectivism are analyzed from the perspective of development and they are both found wanting.³⁸ Addressing the issue of international debt, the encyclical is not afraid of making an incursion into the field of economics with the support of the work previously done on the topic by some experts in the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace.³⁹ At a more conceptual level, it should be noted, for example, the way *SRS* distinguishes the concept of development from a limitless progress philosophically derived from the Enlightenment⁴⁰ or the adoption of the concept of solidarity. The latter is not in itself a biblical concept and could seem rather foreign to the Catholic tradition.⁴¹ John Paul II is endorsing it in large part out of the experience of *Solidarność*, the Polish workers union, and gives it a solid theological grounding. As already noted in the preceding section about the context, *SRS* is also inscribed in an ongoing debate with

³⁷ Not counting the biblical references which are cited inside the text and amount to 63, there are 20 citations of *GS* and 5 of other Vatican II documents, 33 citations of *PP*, and 15 citations of other encyclicals or speeches of John Paul II.

³⁸ Cf. *SRS* 21.

³⁹ Cf. *SRS* 19. Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, *At the Service of the Human Community: An Ethical Approach to the International Debt Question* (Dec. 27, 1986) (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1987).

⁴⁰ Cf. *SRS* 27.

⁴¹ To French ears, it sounds more like the French Revolution ideal or the mottos of communist-inspired workers unions. Charentenay, "Présentation," 757.

liberation theologians which is particularly visible in the sections dealing with the structures of sin (*SRS* 35-38), the option for the poor (*SRS* 42), or the category of liberation (*SRS* 46). *SRS* thus appears, although implicitly, in constant discussion and critical dialogue with various lines of thought related to development.

It should be added that the process of elaboration of the encyclical implied a level of real dialogue. Because of the nature and complexity of their object, social encyclicals usually require various sorts of expertise and rely on the advice of many people engaged in the issues at stake. *SRS* was no exception.⁴² During the summer of 1987, Pope John Paul II wrote a first schema in Polish with the help of some professors of the University of Lublin, Poland. “More than a simple outline but much less than a first draft, it laid out the basic ideas of the documents in chunks of prose.”⁴³ It was then developed into a real draft in Spanish by the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace under the responsibility of its president, French Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, and its secretary, Argentinian Archbishop Jorge Maria Mejía. In the following six months, the document went through several rounds of comments by various members of the curia and revisions under the close control of the pope. In addition to the two already mentioned, several senior curia officials played a role, among them Agostino Casaroli, the secretary of State, Achille Silvestrini, the head of the Council for Public Affairs of the church (the Vatican’s Foreign Office) and Josef Tomko, prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (the office for missionary activities). The Commission for Justice and Peace had also elicited a global survey of bishops about the situation concerning development since *PP* and the pope had various

⁴² On the process of elaboration of the encyclical: Curran, and alii “Commentary on *SRS*,” 419-420; Suro, “The Writing of an Encyclical,” Charentenay, “Présentation.”

⁴³ Suro, “Writing of an Encyclical,” 163.

conversations on the topic with visitors to the Vatican including Michel Camdessus, director of the International Monetary Fund and bishops from all over the world participating in the 1987 ordinary synod.⁴⁴

Undoubtedly, compared to John Paul II's encyclicals on other topics or even to his first social encyclical *Laborem exercens*, *SRS* is the fruit of a lot more discussion and consultation. However this is not a dimension put forward in the final document and it is clear that there was no desire to engage a public or widely open debate during its elaboration. In this respect, the methodology adopted by the US bishops for the elaboration of their two letters on peace and economic justice in 1984 and 1986, stands in stark contrast.⁴⁵

Considering this last remark and what was noted earlier about the lack of explicit references outside the magisterium, it seems that, although the reality of dialogue so emphasized after Vatican II remains present in *SRS*, it is rather tempered and made more discreet. A comment made by George Weigel incidentally points to a possible explanation:

Drafting assistance does not compromise the teaching authority of a papal document, which receives its authoritative "form" from the Pope's signature, an act that completes the project in a definitive way and without which any draft is just that: a draft.⁴⁶

That the famous biographer of John Paul II feels so much the need to reaffirm the authority of the encyclical shows, paradoxically, that when dialogue, discussion, multiple contributions are

⁴⁴ Curran et al., "Commentary on *SRS*," 419.

⁴⁵ In the elaboration of those two letters, there was a large process of submission of the drafts to groups of experts and to public consideration followed by evaluation and rewriting.

⁴⁶ Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 557.

visible there is a danger, according to some, of downplaying authority.⁴⁷ The way the dialoguing dimension is made more temperate in *SRS* can be seen as a reaffirmation of authority. Likewise, not making explicit citations of non-magisterial works can be seen as a way of avoiding the risk of losing authority by taking a side in a particular debate. As already noted concerning a certain reframing of the see-judge-act approach, the issue at stake in tempering the dimension of dialogue is very much the perceived necessity to reaffirm the authority of the church's teaching. This needs to be interpreted theologically.

c) Theological Interpretation

John Paul II's first and programmatic encyclical, *Redemptor hominis* (*RH*), offers a good overview of the theological framework in which he develops its subsequent teaching. Its focus is on Jesus Christ, "the redeemer of man" and "the center of the universe and history" (*RH* 1). In Jesus Christ, God entered into the world and gave human life its fullness. This movement of the incarnation is the starting point for all the reflections of the pope about the world and the church. Very significantly, in the first lines of his encyclical he also mentions the state of humanity marked by sin and limitations:

Through the Incarnation God gave human life the dimension that he intended man to have from his first beginning; he has granted that dimension definitively... and he has granted it also with the bounty that enables us, in *considering the original sin and the whole history of the sins of humanity*, and in *considering the errors of the human intellect, will and heart*, to

⁴⁷ Interestingly, despite asserting the authority of the whole encyclical because it is signed by the pope, Weigel constantly makes a selective reading of it, emphasizing what comes directly from the pope and downplaying what, in his opinion, comes from elsewhere. For example, he states: "It cannot be denied that *Sollicitudo* showed the influence of those Catholic intellectuals and activists who did believe in 'moral equivalence' between 'the blocks'... These ideas found their way into an encyclical whose most original elements were far more congruent with John Paul II's thinking." *Ibid.*, 560.

repeat with amazement the words of the Sacred Liturgy: "O happy fault... which gained us so great a Redeemer!" (*RH* 1, emphasis mine).

Further on, the pope evokes the "difficult post-conciliar period" and praises his predecessor for leading it in balance "even in the most critical moments, when the Church seemed to be shaken from within" (*RH* 3). In another section he speaks of the possibilities of human progress offered by modernity but also of the ambiguities associated with it and the threat of humanity regressing because what human beings are producing ends up being directed against them.⁴⁸ It is against this background that God's presence in history through incarnation is understood. Humanity marked by sin and limitation, is in need of God's revelation: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16, quoted in *RH* 1). The coming of Jesus Christ into humanity is "this act of redemption [which] marked the highest point of the history of man within God's loving plan" (*RH* 1). The mission of the church is to be the sign but also the instrument of this redeeming union of Christ with humanity.⁴⁹ The church then fulfills its mission in an important way by teaching and professing the truth of faith.⁵⁰ In this theological framework – a rather "Augustinian" framework – there is a strong sense that in a world marked by sin, ambiguities, and divisions, God's revelation announced by the teaching of the church is the manifestation of the ongoing mystery of the incarnation and the redemption. What revelation brings *into* the world and humanity is more highlighted than what can be experienced *from* a world and humanity where God's grace is at work.

⁴⁸ Cf. *RH* 15-16.

⁴⁹ Cf. *RH* 3, 7; Vatican II, *Lumen gentium*, no.1.

⁵⁰ Cf. *RH* 19.

It comes as no surprise in this framework that the teaching authority of the church is reasserted. The church brings God's revelation into the world by announcing Jesus Christ, fulfillment of humanity, and also denouncing what opposes this fulfillment.⁵¹ This is the case in social teaching. Antoncich suggests that this teaching pertains to the "prophetic office" of the church which has to point out "human sin and God's grace."⁵² This requires a level of authority and the explicit affirmation that what is said is not merely an opinion among others but has the pretention to pertain to truth. Having noted the more explicitly confessional language used in *SRS*, other commentators highlight that this is not a retreat into an enclosed church audience but rather the move into some form of public theology. By providing an explicitly theological reading of the situation of the world, the pope is speaking to those who accept the Christian message and wish to make the connection between their faith and social teaching but he also explains "to people outside the Christian community the deeper motivation and rationale for the Church's public role."⁵³ It could be added that, due to his experience of a resisting church facing an oppressive atheist regime in Poland, Pope John Paul II's understanding of fidelity to the church implies a high level of formal submission to the institution and avoidance of visible signs

⁵¹ "Since this man is the way for the Church, the way for her daily life and experience, for her mission and toil, the Church of today must be aware in an always new manner of man's 'situation.' That means that she must be aware of his possibilities, which keep returning to their proper bearings and thus revealing themselves. She must likewise be aware of the threats to man and of all that seems to oppose the endeavor 'to make human life ever more human' and make every element of this life correspond to man's true dignity – in a word, she must be aware of *all that is opposed* to that process" (*RH* 14).

⁵² Antoncich, *La preocupación social de la Iglesia*, 23.

⁵³ Curran et al., "Commentary on *SRS*," 426.

of dissension in it.⁵⁴ Once again the stress is more on division as expression of a sinful condition than on diversity of positions as expression of an ongoing discernment in which the Spirit is at work.

Having understood the reframing in style operated by *SRS* as reflecting an “Augustinian” theological framework more concerned about the limits and sinfulness of the human condition, it is all the more striking that the general methodological features of induction and dialogue are still very present.⁵⁵ They carry the same theological meaning exposed in the previous chapter about *PP*. The centrality of the mystery of the incarnation in the Christian faith is brought into light when the magisterium reaffirms the social dimension of the Gospel and connects peoples’ lives and the life of society with the word of God.⁵⁶ The “social concern” of the church is the expression of Christ the redeemer’s penetration into the mystery of humanity.⁵⁷ Moreover “dialogue” is what forms the church’s self-awareness and what enables “the church and all

⁵⁴ This is a point highlighted by Jon Sobrino in a comment about John Paul II’s address at Puebla. “We must mention [the pope’s] emphasis on devotion to Mary and fidelity to the church. In a country like Poland even the mere formality of such things is important. In Latin America, however, the emphasis is more on the content to which the concrete church must remain faithful.” Sobrino, “The significance of Puebla,” 293.

⁵⁵ A Spanish commentary is significant in this regard. Teodoro López maintains that “the importance of the inductive methodology should not compromise the sense of truth which the church learns from the genuine sources of theological knowledge and which require therefore the utilization from time to time of a deductive approach necessary in the social doctrine of the church as well.” However in the same article he highlights inductive approach and dialogue as two major methodological features of CST. Teodoro López, “Doctrina Social de la Iglesia: estatuto teológico,” in *Estudios sobre la encíclica Sollicitudo rei socialis* (Madrid: AEDOS, 1990), 41-61, at 46. Translation is mine.

⁵⁶ “The social doctrine of the Church has once more demonstrated its character as an application of the word of God to people’s lives and the life of society, as well as earthly realities connected with them, offering ‘principles for reflection,’ ‘criteria of judgment,’ and ‘directives for action’” (*SRS* 8).

⁵⁷ Cf. *RH* 8.

Christians to reach a more complete awareness of the mystery of Christ” (*RH* 11). That the practice of dialogue reflects the manifestation of the very self of a triune dialoguing God, as I noted in concluding the section on methodology in the previous chapter, is still at stake when, in a different context, dialogue continues to be a key feature of magisterial CST.

Once again, the previous reflections have shown that style and methodology are theologically meaningful. In this regard, *SRS* continues to reflect the mystery of the incarnation and of God at work in history, while highlighting more the dimension of sin also at work and the need for redemption. The neo-Thomist vision of the world is still the primordial foundation for John Paul II’s social encyclical but a more Augustinian vision of the conflict brought about by sin is provoking a reframing. Turning now to the theological contributions of *SRS* in the field of anthropology we will encounter, again more explicitly than in *PP*, the reality of sin. The liberationist theological framework will then appear as a crucial third element alongside the neo-Thomist and Augustinian ones.

III. THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

What does *SRS* say about the human being? What is the contribution of the encyclical to theological anthropology? Through a renewed reflection about development, the two main features which were highlighted in the previous study of *PP* remain central. Transcendent humanism and the social dimension of the human being constitute the basis of the anthropology developed.⁵⁸ What, however, marks an evolution from *PP* is the more explicitly biblical and

⁵⁸ “Development cannot consist only in the use, dominion over and indiscriminate possession of created things and the products of human industry, but rather in subordinating the possession, dominion, and use to man’s divine likeness and to his vocation to immortality. This is the

theological grounding given to these features. There are also some new developments about the notion of solidarity as a response to the existence of structures of sin and about the concept of liberation. Tweaks and new accents occur because of a different context and often through the incorporation in the universal magisterium of more recent theological reflections, especially some elements of language coming from Latin American liberation theology. This makes the encyclical the bearer of an important theological weight or, to use the terminology now familiar in this dissertation, a point of access into the mystery of God. In what follows I will try to highlight both continuities and shifts from *PP* by presenting *SRS*' contributions around four themes: the vocation to be human, sin and structures of sin, solidarity, and liberation.⁵⁹

a) The Vocation to Be Human

The transcendent humanism presented in *PP* is assumed by *SRS* with nonetheless a more theological accent. Chapter four of the encyclical, concerned with presenting an “authentic human development,”⁶⁰ is constructed around the reading and commentary of biblical passages, especially the first chapters of Genesis, and some letters of Paul.⁶¹ It is easy to retrieve the three characteristics of the transcendent humanism highlighted in the previous study of *PP*.

transcendent reality of the human being, a reality which is seen to be shared from the beginning by a couple, a man and a woman (cf. Gn 1:27) and is therefore fundamentally *social*” (*SRS* 29, emphasis mine).

⁵⁹ For an overview of *SRS*' anthropology see Luis Maria Armendáriz “Un proyecto de hombre para un ‘plan de desarrollo’ (La antropología de la encíclica *Sollicitudo rei socialis*),” in *Solidaridad, nuevo nombre de la paz* (Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto, 1988), 187-213.

⁶⁰ Cf. title of the English version.

⁶¹ 13 explicit references to Gn 1-4; 9 references to Pauline letters (1 Cor, Eph, Col). For an in-depth analysis of the biblical references in *SRS*, see Mario Franco E., “Comentario bíblico a la

First, being human is not a static condition but a process of becoming human oriented toward fulfilling a divine (or transcendent) vocation. This dynamism is what is at work in the promotion of an authentic human development and it is that to which the first chapters of Genesis point.

SRS affirms:

The fact is that man was not created, so to speak, immobile and static. The first portrayal of him, as given in the Bible, certainly presents him as creature and image, defined in his deepest reality by the origin and affinity that constitute him. But all this plants within the human being – man and woman – the seed and requirement of a special task to be accomplished by each individually and by them as a couple...The story of the human race described in sacred scripture is, even after the fall into sin, a story of constant achievements, which, although always called into question and threatened by sin, are nonetheless repeated, increased and extended in response to the divine vocation given from the beginning to man and woman (Gn 1:26-28) and inscribed in the image which they received (*SRS* 30).

The development which the church is promoting is to be seen as the continuation of this movement initiated at the creation. This development “fundamentally corresponds to the first premise” (*SRS* 30). However the reality of sin threatens the fulfillment by human beings of their vocation to be in the image and likeness of God. Therefore it is also faith in Christ the redeemer which sustains this vocation of becoming fully human because he is “the perfect ‘image’ of the Father” and opens the way toward fullness of humanity. He “prepares us to share in the fullness which ‘dwells in the Lord’” (*SRS* 31).

A second feature of this transcendent humanism and a consequence of this fundamental vocation are that human beings cannot be reduced to a single dimension. There are multiple dimensions to being human and all those dimensions are called to develop. This is what is at stake in denouncing a purely economist or materialist vision of development and in promoting a

encíclica *Sollicitudo rei socialis*,” in Rodríguez and Franco, *La urgencia de transformaciones*, 183-231.

“full development, one which is ‘more human’ and able to sustain itself at the level of the true vocation of men and women” (*SRS* 28). Already, while surveying the situation of the world, the encyclical added to the “economic and social indices” of underdevelopment, underscoring the growing gap between rich and poor, other indices such as illiteracy, impediments to participation in political life, various forms of exploitation and of denial of human rights, discriminations and racism.⁶²

In the extended reflection on authentic human development, the encyclical reiterates the distinction between “having” and “being”:

To “have” objects and goods does not in itself perfect the human subject, unless it contributes to the maturing and enrichment of that subject’s “being,” that is to say unless it contributes to the realization of the human vocation as such (*SRS* 28).

This does not mean that “being” and “having” are opposed. Clearly in face of the scandal of crass poverty there is the urgency to work for a more just sharing of the earth’s resources intended for all. The many who have little or nothing and are deprived of essential goods are in need of having more. Undeniably, there is an economic and material dimension to development. The danger lies in the “cult of having” and in the forgetting of the subordination of having to true human being. Significantly, *SRS* introduces the notion of “superdevelopment” in order to speak of the situation of people and countries trapped into “the so-called civilization of ‘consumption’ or ‘consumerism’ which involves so much ‘throwing away’ and ‘waste’” (*SRS* 28).⁶³

⁶² Cf. *SRS* 15.

⁶³ “A disconcerting conclusion about the most recent period should serve to enlighten us: side-by-side with the miseries of underdevelopment, themselves unacceptable, we find ourselves up against a form of super-development, equally inadmissible, because like the former it is contrary to what is good and to true happiness. This super-development, which consists in an excessive

Authentic development must be social, economic, political, and cultural, which means conscious also of the spiritual and religious dimension of the human being. This evokes a traditional anthropological feature recalled by *SRS*: human beings are not mere bodies but they are also spiritual. This is why,

in trying to achieve true development we must never lose sight of that dimension which is in the specific nature of man, who has been created by God in his image and likeness (cf. Gn 1:26). It is a bodily and a spiritual nature, symbolized in the second creation account by the two elements: the earth, from which God forms man's body, and the breath of life which he breathes into man's nostrils (cf. Gn 2:7) (*SRS* 29).

The last feature of the transcendent humanism underscored in both *PP* and *SRS* is the centrality of human freedom. This will be addressed more at length in the later section about liberation. For now it suffices to highlight a significant point made in the chapter we are focusing on. Insistence is made on the connection between development and personal and collective rights:

Peoples or nations too have a right to their own full development, which while including – as already said – the economic and social aspects, should also include individual cultural identity and openness to the transcendent. Not even the need for development can be used as an excuse for imposing on others one's own way of life or own religious belief... Nor would a type of development which did not respect and promote human rights – personal and social, economic and political, including the rights of nations and of peoples – be really worthy of man (*SRS* 32-33).

People ought to be actors and responsible for their development. The latter cannot be imposed from outside or justify the violation of cultural and personal identities. Action in favor of

availability of every kind of material goods for the benefit of certain social groups, easily makes people slaves of 'possession' and of immediate gratification, with no other horizon than the multiplication or continual replacement of the things already owned with others still better. This is the so-called civilization of 'consumption' or 'consumerism,' which involves so much 'throwing-away' and 'waste.' An object already owned but now superseded by something better is discarded, with no thought of its possible lasting value in itself, nor of some other human being who is poorer" (*SRS* 28).

development means action to provide the conditions for nations or individuals to exercise their “right to their *own* development” in conformity with the fullness of their human vocation. This demands a “rigorous respect for the moral, cultural, and spiritual requirements, based on the dignity of the person and on the proper identity of each community, beginning with the family and religious societies” (*SRS* 33). The encyclical’s hearty plea in favor of human rights and especially religious freedom is a pointer toward a central feature of being human: freedom and responsibility.

b) Sin and Structures of Sin

In comparison with *PP*, the anthropological elements just recalled are enriched by a substantial reflection about the sinful condition of the human being. Not that Paul VI’s encyclical was denying this dimension but rather it was simply assumed and not much reflected upon.⁶⁴ In contrast, the context of *SRS* prompts the usage of the category of sin in the theological reading of the challenges concerning development. The theme here is not merely personal sin but what the encyclical names “structures of sin” in articulation with the former. In this regard *SRS* offers an important contribution to the theological understanding of sin and it does so through adopting, with nuances, a language first brought to the fore in Latin America.⁶⁵ This section will expose

⁶⁴ Compare 14 mentions of the term “sin” in *SRS* and only one in *PP*.

⁶⁵ Gregory Baum, “Structures of Sin,” in Baum and Ellsberg, *The Logic of Solidarity*, 110-126. Luis González-Carvajal, “Las estructuras de pecado y su transformación en estructuras de solidaridad mundial,” *Sal Terrae* 76, no. 9 (1988): 601-611. Michel Schooyans, “Dérives totalitaires et structures de péché,” *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 110, no. 4 (1988), 481-502. For more global studies about the social dimension of sin see for example: Mark O’Keefe, *What are they saying about social sin?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990); Mathias Nebel, *La catégorie morale de péché structurel* (Paris: Cerf, 2006).

this contribution by studying the first part of chapter five of the encyclical, “A Theological Reading of Modern Problems.”

In the twenty years following the publication of *PP* very little progress had been made in terms of integral development in most of the world. Obstacles were obviously still very strong. However, because development is not purely mechanical but has a moral character – it is the result of human decisions – these obstacles as well should be singled out as having a moral character.⁶⁶ The behavior of individuals is at stake when bad decisions are taken which are slowing or hindering the course of development despite the scientific and technical resources available. From the perspective of faith this should be referred to as sin which is the refusal of God through the negation of the neighbor. However, there are also “economic, financial and social *mechanisms* which, although they are manipulated by people, often function almost automatically, thus accentuating the situation of wealth for some and poverty for the rest” (*SRS* 16).⁶⁷ There is the division of the world into blocks with their ideologies and there are various forms of imperialism at work. Here the pope speaks of “structures of sin” (*SRS* 36). It is a matter of sin because there is an obstacle to “the will of the triune God, his plan for humanity, his justice and his mercy” but it is not merely personal sin because it deals with “influences and obstacles which go far beyond the actions and brief life span of an individual” (*SRS* 36).

This way of speaking about sin was not new. Following Vatican II, there was a growing sense among theologians and others that the injustices confronting the poor in both developing and industrialized countries needed to be envisioned under the category of sin. It is not an evil

⁶⁶ Cf. *SRS* 35.

⁶⁷ See as well other usages of the terminology of “mechanisms” qualified as “perverse” or “evil”: *SRS* 17, 35, 40.

suffered in the same manner as the evil of natural disasters. Rather the evil they suffer is caused by social factors rooted in human institutions and ultimately, though perhaps indirectly, in human choices. This means that good and sincere people begin to realize that they are implicated in institutions causing the suffering of others.⁶⁸ Latin American liberation theologians, in particular, highlighted the reality of unjust and sinful structures at work in the relations between “First” World and “Third” World countries and between the rich and the poor in the latter.⁶⁹ At Medellín the bishops spoke of “the *unjust structures* which characterize the Latin American situation” (*Med Justice 2*, emphasis mine) and of injustice as “those realities that constitute a sinful *situation*” (*Med Peace 1*, emphasis mine). At Puebla they stated more explicitly that “sin, a force making for breakdown and rupture... will always be operative, both within the hearts of human beings, and within the various structures which they have created and on which they have left the destructive imprint of their sinfulness” (*Pue 281*).

This way of speaking stresses that, because the Gospel’s message has an inherent social dimension, sin, as refusal of this message, has a social dimension as well. Nonetheless the question arises of what exactly it means to speak of “structures of sin” or of “structural sin” since it is not possible to ascribe agency and freedom – and therefore responsibility – to a structure in the same way it is to a person. Another issue is what happens to individual persons and their freedom when they are viewed as entirely trapped within those structures. Social sciences teach us the dialectical nature of human beings: both free and fated, creating and being created by their

⁶⁸ O’Keefe, *What are they saying about social sin?* 1-5.

⁶⁹ See for example, José Ignacio González Faus, “Sin,” in Ellacuría and Sobrino, *Mysterium Liberationis*, 532-542.

culture.⁷⁰ However, does the language of “structures” reduce human beings merely to their fated state? In the end, the crucial point is how to articulate personal sin and structures of sin.

Following the Synod of Bishops of 1983 in which this question was debated, John Paul II in his post-synodal exhortation, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* (RP), stressed the personal responsibility in the notion of sin. “In the proper sense, sin is always a personal act, since it is an act of freedom on the part of an individual person and not properly of a group or community” (RP 16). The notion of social sin can then be understood in three ways. First, it refers to the intrinsic human solidarity which makes every single sin, even the most intimate one, affect mysteriously the whole of humanity. Second, it can refer to the many sins against one’s neighbor which directly or indirectly affect a particular social group or the general common good, and sins which are perpetrated collectively by a group of persons. And third, in an analogous way, it can refer to the unjust relationships between groups and societies.⁷¹ In this case moral responsibility is hard to attribute to one person in particular because the phenomenon has become generalized and almost anonymous, with causes complex and not always identifiable. Nonetheless, “social sin [is] the result of the accumulation and concentration of many personal sins” (RP 16). As González-Carvajal points out, “the intention of the pope was to legitimize (against a privatized and intimate Christian faith) the notion of ‘social sin’ but at the same time to make it clear

⁷⁰ Himes, “Social Sin and the Role of the Individual,” *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* (1986): 183-218.

⁷¹ The way social sin is understood as “analogous” to personal sin is very similar to many contemporary understandings of original sin as “analogous” to personal sin. It stresses that the real effect of sin does not remain at the level of the external world but that it also affects the very being of the freedom of the persons which are part of the world. John R. Sachs, *The Christian Vision of Humanity. Basic Christian Anthropology* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 63-65.

(against structuralist and determinist conceptions) that the ultimate root of evil is not in the structures themselves but in the hearts of the persons who originated them and maintain them.”⁷²

This approach to social sin is confirmed in *SRS*, but, because it is a document dealing immediately with social issues and not a global reflection about sin, the affirmation of the reality of “social sin” which is designated under the terminology of “structures of sin” gains much more weight. We do not find first a presentation of personal sin and secondly a derivative reflection about its social dimension. In *SRS*, it is first recognized that a world divided into blocks and subject to various forms of imperialism is “a world subject to structures of sin” and only then the connection is made with personal sin by recalling that those structures “are rooted in personal sin, and thus always linked to the concrete acts of individuals who introduce these structures, consolidate them and make them difficult to remove” (*SRS* 36).

The pope denounces two key sinful attitudes at work among individuals and nations and which are fuelling structures of sin: “thirst for power” and “all-consuming desire for profit,” “*at any price*” (*SRS* 37). The moral and theological analysis of the obstacles to integral development allows one to see that “behind certain decisions, apparently inspired only by economics or politics, are real forms of idolatry: of money, ideology, class, technology” (*SRS* 37).

The personal sins which have to be considered in relation to the reality of the “structures of sin” are not merely the far distant ones which have produced the actual structures. Not acting against them or remaining voluntarily blind in front of them is sinful as well:

It must be said that just as one may sin through selfishness and the desire for excessive profit and power, one may also be found wanting with regard to the urgent needs of multitude of

⁷² González-Carvajal, “Estructuras de pecado,” 604. Translation mine.

human beings submerged in conditions of underdevelopment, through *fear*, *indecision*, and basically, through *cowardice* (*SRS* 47).⁷³

The encyclical underscores what Armendáriz calls a “new form of radical sin”: cowardice and inaction.⁷⁴

In brief, by reading theologically the situation of the world, *SRS* puts forward the traditional notion of sin but stresses its social dimension by speaking of “structures of sin.” However, insistence is also put on the reality of personal sin which originates and perpetuates those structures. Antoncich captures well the balanced position of the encyclical which certainly does not pretend to be exhaustive on the topic but offers two crucial landmarks:

Social sin does not exist as something independent from concrete personal responsibilities, but from this affirmation it cannot be deduced that sin is only to be encountered in private and individual matters.⁷⁵

Of course, in Christian theology, speaking about sin is meaningful only as an opening door for speaking about salvation and how God’s grace overcomes sin. The way one speaks of sin

⁷³ See as well: “Notable among [the various causes of the worsening of the situation concerning development] are undoubtedly grave instances of omissions on the part of the developing nations themselves, and especially on the part of those holding economic and political power. Nor can we pretend not to see the responsibility of the developed nations, which have not always, at least in due measure, felt the duty to help countries separated from the affluent world to which they themselves belong” (*SRS* 16).

⁷⁴ Armendáriz, “Un proyecto de hombre,” 210. Concerning more generally the articulation between personal and social sin, it is to be noted that the list of personal sins contributing to social sin given in *RP* finds a good illustration in *SRS*’ analysis of the causes of failures in integral development: “cases of social sin are the result of the accumulation and concentration of many personal sins. It is a case of the very personal sins of those who cause or support evil or who exploit it; of those who are in a position to avoid, eliminate or at least limit certain social evils but who fail to do so out of laziness, fear or the conspiracy of silence, through secret complicity or indifference; of those who take refuge in the supposed impossibility of changing the world and also of those who sidestep the effort and sacrifice required, producing specious reasons of higher order” (*RP* 16).

⁷⁵ Antoncich, *La preocupación social de la Iglesia*, 20. Translation mine.

dictates the way one speaks of salvation and vice-versa. The diagnosis made by John Paul II when he points out “the structures of sin” allows him to suggest then, “the path to be followed in order to overcome [the evil diagnosed]” (*SRS* 37). This path is conversion and solidarity.

c) Solidarity

Already present in the anthropological vision offered by *PP*, solidarity becomes the central notion of John Paul II’s renewed vision of development.⁷⁶ It reflects the social nature of being human and is the path for the fulfillment of this social vocation. Moreover, in *SRS*, it becomes a theological affirmation thanks to the connection made with charity and the Trinity. We find here a new contribution to theological anthropology.

The second part of chapter five of *SRS* deals with the path to overcome the structures of sin. It begins with a greater awareness “of the urgent need to change the spiritual attitudes which define each individual’s relationship with self, with neighbor, with even the remotest human communities, and with nature itself” (*SRS* 38).⁷⁷ In Christian language this change in behavior in response to sin is called “conversion” and it is well evoked by the biblical image of the transformation of “hearts of stone” into “hearts of flesh” which is promised by God.⁷⁸

This conversion is at work when solidarity is recognized and fostered. This is the path to overcome the structures of sin. Indeed solidarity brings attitudes that are diametrically opposed

⁷⁶ Donal Dorr, “Solidarity and Integral Human Development,” in Baum and Ellsberg, *The Logic of Solidarity*, 143-154. Evencio Cofreces Merino, “Nuevo concepto de la ‘solidaridad’ en la ‘Sollicitudo rei socialis,’” in *Comentario a la Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 301-330.

⁷⁷ Baum notes that, although the term “conscientization,” dear to liberation theologians, is not used, the mention of the need to be fully aware suggests the need for a social analysis. Baum, “Structures of sin,” 118.

⁷⁸ Cf. Ez 36:26. *SRS* 38.

to them and especially to the thirst for power and the all-consuming desire for profit which are hindering full development. Solidarity is not “a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people... it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say the good of all and each individual, because we are all responsible for all” (SRS 38). It is already in germ in the growing awareness of interdependence which is noticeable, for example, in the fact that many people feel personally affected by the injustices and violations of human rights committed elsewhere in the world.

The encyclical calls for the exercise of solidarity within society through the recognition of all members as persons entitled to rights and not “just some kind of instrument, with work capacity and physical strength to be exploited at low cost and then discarded when no longer useful” (SRS 39). Solidarity implies that the more powerful or influential, those who have a greater share of goods, should feel responsible for the weaker but also that the latter “should not adopt a purely *passive* attitude” (Ibid.). The idea that people should be the first actors of their own development but not abandoned to themselves is at the heart of the exercise of solidarity. The same is applicable at the level of international relationships where “every type of imperialism” or “determination to preserve [one’s] hegemony” needs to be surmounted and on the contrary “a real international system may be established which will rest on the foundation of the equality of all peoples and the necessary respect for their legitimate differences” (SRS 39). This is particularly at stake in applying the principle of the universal destination of the goods of creation. Solidarity then is “the path to peace and at the same time to development” (Ibid.). Peace will be achieved “through the putting into effect of social and international justice, but also through the practices of the virtues which favor togetherness, and which teach us to live in unity” (SRS 39). The transformation of interdependence into solidarity calls for fostering collaboration

and abandoning “the politics of blocks” and of “all forms of economic, military, or political imperialism” (Ibid.).

All of this is founded on and points to a theological vision of the human being, image of God and redeemed in Christ. *SRS* makes this clear when it underscores that it is possible “to identify many points of contact between solidarity and charity, which is the distinguishing mark of Christ’s disciples (cf. Jn 13:35)” (*SRS* 40). What is exposed in concrete appeals for the exercise of solidarity is an expression of the concretization of the commandment of love.

The pope goes further by pointing to the mystery of the Trinity:

Awareness of the common fatherhood of God, of the brotherhood of all in Christ – “children in the Son” – and of the presence and life giving action of the Holy Spirit will bring to our vision of the world a new criterion for interpreting it. Beyond human and natural bonds, already so close and strong, there is, discerned in the light of faith, a new *model* of the *unity* of the human race, which must ultimately inspire our *solidarity*. This supreme *model of unity*, which is a reflection of the intimate life of God, one God in three Persons, is what we Christians mean by the word *communion* (*SRS* 40).

Images of a triune God,⁷⁹ human beings are called to realize this true solidarity and communion of which the unity in God and the loving relationships between the divine persons is the ultimate inspiration. The Trinitarian model of unity is both the source and the end.

By making this connection between human solidarity and the Trinity, *SRS* enriches a theological vision of the human being and at the same time contributes to the apprehension of the mystery of a triune God. Rahner once noticed that the doctrine of Trinity, despite being confessed with orthodoxy by Christians, was most of the time ignored in their practical life. It

⁷⁹ “One’s neighbor is not only a human being with his or her own rights and a fundamental equality with everyone else, but becomes the *living image* of God the Father, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and placed under the permanent action of the Holy Spirit” (*SRS* 40).

remained entirely abstract.⁸⁰ On the contrary by pointing out that the exercise of human solidarity has something to do with the realization of the vocation to be in the image of a triune God, *SRS* suggests how much the doctrine of Trinity has practical implications.⁸¹

d) Liberation

To have identified the obstacles to integral development as “structures of sin” sets the ground for speaking of this development as liberation. *SRS* achieves this move at the beginning of its seventh and conclusive chapter.⁸² Once again a category central to Latin American liberation theology is adopted, with qualifications, by the universal magisterium.⁸³ It enriches the

⁸⁰ “Despite their orthodox confession of the Trinity, Christians are, in their practical life, almost mere ‘monotheists’... We must be willing to admit that, should the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major of religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged.” Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (Wellwood, UK: Burns and Oates, 1970), 10-11.

⁸¹ Some theologians have developed at length this theme of the practical dimension of the doctrine of the Trinity and its meaning for the consideration of the social nature of the human being. See for example: Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: the Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991).

⁸² Cf. *SRS* 46.

⁸³ This is stated explicitly in the encyclical itself. “Recently, in the period following the publication of the encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, a new way of confronting the problems of poverty and underdevelopment has spread in some areas of the world, especially in Latin America. This approach makes liberation the fundamental category and the first principle of action. The positive values, as well as the deviations and risks of deviation, which are damaging to the faith and are connected with this form of theological reflection and method, have been appropriately pointed out by the Church's Magisterium. It is fitting to add that the aspiration to freedom from all forms of slavery affecting the individual and society is something noble and legitimate. This in fact is the purpose of development, or rather liberation and development, taking into account the intimate connection between the two” (*SRS* 46). According to Armendáriz, “Even with reminders of some possible reductive understandings of the concept of liberation, by assuming this language the encyclical gives it a status of ecclesial citizenship. Thus, it welcomes at the center of catholicity (because it is an ‘encyclical’) the Latin American church’s experience.” In other words, the reception of *GS* by a ‘periphery’ is in return received by the ‘center’. Armendáriz, “Un Proyecto de hombre,” 207 (Translation mine).

theological anthropology offered by the encyclical with a dynamic approach of human freedom as a process rather than a mere state.

In his *Theology of Liberation*, G. Gutiérrez offers important insights about the notion of liberation and its theological meaning.⁸⁴ He distinguishes three reciprocally interpenetrating levels of meaning for the notion of liberation. First it “expresses the aspirations of oppressed peoples and social classes, emphasizing the conflictual aspect of the economic, social, and political process which puts them at odds with wealthy nations and oppressive classes.”⁸⁵ Second, it can be applied to an understanding of history in which human beings are assuming their own destiny. The aim of liberation is “the creation of a new humankind and a qualitatively different society.”⁸⁶ Third, in a biblical and theological perspective, it can be recognized that salvation in Christ from sin is actually liberation from “the ultimate root of all disruption of friendship and of all injustice and oppression.”⁸⁷ In the context of poverty, oppression, and violence characterizing the Latin American continent, the category of liberation becomes the most appropriate means to express the reality of salvation offered by God in Jesus Christ.

In this context, this category of liberation is meant also to replace the terminology of development which is often referred to pejoratively as “developmentalism.” What is critiqued is an approach which reduces development to its economic component, views it in terms of catching up a delay in modernization, and ignores the reality of dependency in which the development of some is dependent on the continuous underdevelopment of others. However,

⁸⁴ Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* 13-25, 83-105.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 24.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 25.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

most Latin American liberation theologians recognize that the notion of integral development exposed in *PP* and *SRS* is compatible with what they intend in pushing forward the category of liberation.⁸⁸

Reciprocally, in the context of the tense relations between Latin American liberation theology and Rome, the section of *SRS* speaking of liberation sounds like a solid recognition of the validity of such language.⁸⁹ The encyclical states that:

Peoples and individuals aspire to be free: their search for full development signals their desire to overcome the many obstacles preventing them from enjoying a “more human life” (*SRS* 46).

Then,

It is fitting to add that the aspiration to freedom from all forms of slavery affecting the individual and society is something *noble* and *legitimate*. This in fact is the purpose of development or rather liberation and development, taking into account the intimate connection between the two (*SRS* 46).

Development and liberation are given very close meanings as they take a concrete shape “in the exercise of solidarity, that is to say, in the love and the service of neighbor, especially the poorest” (*SRS* 46).

Merely economic development – in the sense of catching up to the material development of Western countries – cannot bring freedom. On the contrary it will enslave more. But neither should liberation be reduced to a mere social, economic and political process of structural change. It concerns the “cultural, transcendent and religious dimension” of the human being and

⁸⁸ Antoncich, *La preocupación social de la Iglesia*, 28-29.

⁸⁹ The tone and content is very similar to *Liberationis conscientia* (1986), the second instruction of the CDF concerning liberation theology. This document is cited seven times, *Libertatis nuntius* (1984), the first and far more negative one, only once.

society as well. “Human beings are totally free only when they are completely *themselves*, in the fullness of their rights and duties” (*SRS* 46). Authentic liberation is the overcoming of sin and the structures of sin and it is Christ who sets us free.

Freedom appears here as a continuous process. The human being is free but always needs to be liberated from the threats of sin. Moreover, this is a freedom oriented to an end. “[This] freedom with which Christ has set us free (cf. Gal 5:1) encourages us to become the *servants* of all” (*SRS* 46). It is the freedom to exercise solidarity, to be committed to the common good. It is not a purely individual freedom and certainly not the mere absence of constraints and limits allowing one to do whatever he or she wishes. Elsewhere in the encyclical this distinction between two freedoms – freedom *for* the common good *vs.* unlimited freedom *from* any constraints – is already at work. Considering the relation of humanity to its natural environment, *SRS* reminds us that “the dominion granted to man by the Creator is not an absolute power, nor can one speak of a freedom to ‘use and misuse,’ or to dispose of things as one pleases” (*SRS* 34). The danger of “superdevelopment” faced by a “civilization of ‘consumption’ or ‘consumerism’” (*SRS* 28) is also connected with a distorted sense of freedom generated by the almost unlimited access to material goods. An often noticed call of *SRS* is the respect for the freedom or “right of economic initiative.”⁹⁰ In the context of State-controlled economies where it is obviously denied, this is a crucial locus for affirming human freedom and “the creative subjectivity of the citizen” (*SRS* 15). However this should not be mistaken as the consecration of the particular economic

⁹⁰ Cf. *SRS* 15. Reading some North-American commentators, it seems sometimes that this is the most important thing to be retained from the encyclical. This appreciation, however, reflects more an ideological position looking for the commendation of economic liberalism as it exists in this part of the world – and avoiding to be challenged by the critiques expressed also in the encyclical against it – than an objective reading of *SRS* in its complexity. See for example, Myers, *Aspiring to Freedom*.

system (liberal capitalism) at work in Western countries. The exercise of economic initiative is subject to some limiting criteria. At least two are underscored: profit should never be the unique criterion and solidarity should be an active principle in the exercise of economic initiative.⁹¹

One can recognize in this insistence on human freedom *for* the common good the personalism at work in John Paul II's thought.⁹² The combination of this philosophical influence with the notion of liberation inherited from liberation theology brings in a rich notion of human freedom. It is a freedom which knows the limits of being a creature and not the creator. It is also a freedom which is never individualistic or to be confused with pure autonomy because it is oriented toward fulfilling the social nature of being human and is aware of the structural dimensions of the obstacles to it. It is a freedom in constant need of liberation.⁹³

e) Conclusion

Created in the image of God and redeemed in Christ who united himself with them, human beings are called to freedom in solidarity in a world still marked by sin and structures of sin.

⁹¹ Bp. Jorge Mejía, "L'Église et l'économie : les enseignements de l'encyclique *Sollicitudo rei socialis*," in *Sociétés et développement, à propos de l'encyclique Sollicitudo rei socialis* (Paris: Desclée, 1989), 63-65.

⁹² On the influence of personalism in the thought of John Paul II see, John Hellman, "John Paul II and the Personalist Movement," *Cross Currents* 31, no.4 (Winter 1980-81): 409-419. According to Mounier, freedom is a central feature of the human person but it is a freedom "under conditions," "situated," not pure choice but rather "act of association," of "adhesion." Emmanuel Mounier, *Personalism* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1952), 54-63. This approach to freedom has roots in Thomas Aquinas. Another expression of it is the distinction made by Servais Pinckaers, commenting on Aquinas, between "freedom of indifference" and "freedom for excellence." Servais Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics* (Washington DC: Catholic University Press, 1995), 327-378.

⁹³ In his reading of this passage of the encyclical, Armendáriz has this suggestive definition of a Christian: "A freedman or freedwoman by Christ who put themselves at the service of the liberation of others." Armendáriz, "Un proyecto de hombre," 207. Translation mine.

Through the study of four anthropological themes – being human as vocation, structures of sin, solidarity, and liberation – this section has made more explicit how *SRS* offers important contributions to a theological reflection about the human being. Without pretending to be exhaustive or systematic, the theological anthropology offered here – we could rather call it an approach to the mystery of the human being within the mystery of God – is rich and complex because it is produced by the encounter and mixing of various theological frameworks.

The neo-Thomist vision of the world very much at work in *PP* continues to be present through the fundamental anthropological features that Paul VI's encyclical highlighted and which are confirmed by *SRS*. Being human is not a static state but a continuous process of fulfilling a vocation to be free and in just and loving relations with others, a vocation to be individually and collectively in the image and likeness of God. Transcendent humanism and the social dimension of the human condition cannot be separated. The historical context of *SRS* and the personality of Pope John Paul II then brought in a more Augustinian perspective as well. The world is the place of God's transformative grace at work but it is also the place of sin and of a conflict between the love of God and the refusal of this love. Sin is part of the human condition and ultimately only God can liberate human beings from sin. In this framework the explicit affirmation of the theological grounding of the human vocation, not only through the creation motif but also through the redemption brought by Christ, bears more weight. The Trinity is also an ultimate inspiration for authentic human solidarity. And, of course, a thorough reflection on sin cannot be avoided. This prompts the important development of *SRS* about the structures of sin in their articulation with personal sin. Finally, a third theological framework is at work as well through the adoption by *SRS* of the categories which came to the fore in South American liberation theology. The evil at work in the world has a social and structural dimension and

God's salvation is liberation from it. For anthropology, this reminds us that the social dimension of being human is not merely a matter of inter-personal relations but really of social realities, of structures and institutions, in which sin and grace ought to be revealed.

To recognize those three theological frameworks at work in the contribution of *SRS* to theological anthropology is not to ignore the tensions or elements of contradiction existing among them. This opens us to a variety of interpretations depending on where the stress is put. The reading I offered in this section prioritizes the basis given by *PP* (and *GS*) and looks at the evolutions brought in by other frameworks in terms of “reframing” or “rebalancing” in a manner quite similar to the way I interpreted the evolutions in methodology and style in the previous section. Turning now to Christology, I will carry on with the same logic but with a different starting point. I will stress how the addressing of social issues and incorporating of insights from Latin American liberation theology, tweak and reframe John Paul II's reflection about Jesus Christ.

IV. CHRISTOLOGY

Concerning the contribution of *SRS* to approaching the mystery of Christ – or rather being seized by it – it is possible to highlight two complementary movements. The first is akin to a descending Christology. Christ reveals God and redeems humanity and a world marked by sin. This aspect is the expression of the Christology of the incarnate Word central in the programmatic *Redemptor hominis*. However, the specificity of producing a social encyclical prompts the pope to complement this Christological approach with other aspects induced especially by the reflection about the poor. Once again, the contribution of Latin American theology is crucial. Consecrating the “preferential option for the poor” which is called “love of

preference for the poor,” *SRS* then points to Jesus Christ as the one to be imitated in his relation to the poor and to be encountered in them. Christ leads to the poor and the poor lead to him. In those aspects more akin to an ascending Christology, the concreteness of Jesus’ human life takes on a greater depth. What is at stake here with the articulation of the two movements is not simply a matter of knowledge about Christ or of various complementary means to apprehend his mystery. It is also a question of soteriology or of understanding the ways in which God saves humanity and brings about the kingdom.

a) Christ the Redeemer and the Revealer

As seen previously, *SRS* reads the reality of the obstacles to full development in terms of sin. It is therefore only logical that the dimension of redemption brought about by Christ would be highlighted. All throughout the encyclical there is a strong sense that this world is in need of the saving revelation which comes with Christ. The movement of Christ bringing salvation, in a certain sense *from without*, is particularly striking when surveying the mentions of “Christ,” “Jesus,” and “Lord.” I gather those Christological notes around four points: Christ fully reveals the Father to humanity and humanity to itself; Christ reconciles and frees; not only individuals are at stake but the kingdom; Christ teaches the truth. I will then turn to *RH* in order to make more explicit the Christology and the notion of redemption at work.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ For a more in-depth analysis of the Christological elements in the social encyclicals of John Paul II see Victor Lee Austin, “A Christological Social Vision: the Uses of Christ in the Social Encyclicals of John Paul II,” PhD diss. (Fordham University, 2002), Proquest (AAT 3045119). Austin points to four distinctive emphases in the Christological elements present in the social encyclicals: Christ reveals God; Christ does not exert political rule; Christ is in profound solidarity with human beings; and Christ is both subject and object of the Church’s activity. His demonstration of the profound coherence between the pope’s Christology and his social

Christ is associated with the fullness of revelation and of the realization of humanity. Christ reveals the Father and thereby reveals and fulfills true humanity. Already in the introduction, Jesus Christ is mentioned as the one who reveals the “fullness of the Word” (*SRS* 1). Christ is “the perfect image of the Father” and the history of humanity – created to be in the image of God – is part of the divine plan which begins and culminates in him; this “thus prepares us to share in the fullness which ‘dwells in the Lord’” (*SRS* 31). This is why “faith in Christ the Redeemer, while it illuminates from within the nature of development, also guides us in the task of collaboration” (*SRS* 31). For example, the notion of development, distorted when conceived as a mere automatic and limitless progress of technologic and economic nature⁹⁵ can be recovered. After the quotes just mentioned, the encyclical asserts,

The dream of “unlimited progress” reappears, radically transformed by the new outlook created by Christian faith, assuring us that progress is possible only because God the Father has decided from the beginning to make man a sharer of his glory in Jesus Christ risen from the dead, in whom “we have redemption through his blood...the forgiveness of our trespasses” (Eph 1:7) (*SRS* 31).

It is also because of “the redemptive influence of Christ who ‘united himself in some fashion with every man’” (*SRS* 47), that the church affirms strongly the possibility of overcoming the obstacles to development.

Christ reconciles and liberates. This is the expression of the redemption. “Sin, which is always attempting to trap us and which jeopardizes our human achievements, is conquered and

teachings supports my claim of the theological weight of social encyclicals and the Christological emphases to which he points are well founded (maybe the second one less than the other three). In my opinion, however, the role played by the several evocations of Jesus’ relation to the poor is not really taken into account. As I try to show later in this section, it is an important Christological note as well.

⁹⁵ Cf. *SRS* 27.

redeemed by the ‘reconciliation’ accomplished by Christ (cf. Col 1:20)” (*SRS* 31). This reconciliation finds its expression in the solidarity that is promoted in response to the challenge of the structures of sin. This solidarity is rooted in “the common fatherhood of God” and in “the brotherhood of all in Christ – ‘children in the Son’” (*SRS* 40). Christ sets us free in order to become “the servants of all” (*SRS* 46).

What is at stake is not merely a personal salvation but rather the realization of the kingdom with its social and even its all-encompassing cosmological dimension.⁹⁶ In section 31, the mention of the perspective that each human being becomes a sharer of God’s glory in Jesus Christ, is completed by the hope of the realization of the kingdom:

We can say therefore – as we struggle amidst the obscurities and deficiencies of underdevelopment and superdevelopment – that one day this corruptible body will put on incorruptibility, this mortal body immortality (cf. 1 Cor 15:54), when the Lord ‘delivers the kingdom to God the Father’ (v. 24) and all the works and actions that are worthy of man will be redeemed (*SRS* 31).

This is why by concerning itself with the question of integral development the church places itself “at the service of the divine plan” and it recognizes here its “fundamental vocation of being a ‘sacrament,’ that is to say ‘a sign and instrument of intimate union with God and the unity of the whole human race” (*SRS* 31). There is a “perennial value of authentic human achievements, inasmuch as they are redeemed by Christ and destined for the promised kingdom” (*SRS* 31).⁹⁷

⁹⁶ About the inclusion of the whole cosmos it is important to recall the concern shown by the encyclical about ecology (Cf. *SRS* 26, 34).

⁹⁷ *SRS* cites here some Fathers of the Church in support of a vision of history and human work in relationship with Christ’s work and oriented toward the realization of God’s kingdom. One can also mention here *GS* 39, though surprisingly the encyclical does not at this point and will do it only in one of the final sections (no. 48).

Finally, one last aspect worth being noticed in correlation with this insistence on Christ bringing redemption to the world and humanity is that Christ is the teacher of the truth about humanity. The church has as its mission the proclamation of this truth and does so by taking up the challenge of integral development.⁹⁸ The whole content of the encyclical can be envisioned as teaching the truth of the Gospel but we find also two explicit suggestions that Jesus is directly teaching us. To emphasize that it is always people themselves who ought to be the protagonists of development, *SRS* points out that “indeed, *the Lord Jesus himself*, in the parable of the talents, *emphasizes* the severe treatment given to the man who dared to hide the gift received” (*SRS* 30, emphasis mine). A little further on we find another expression of the same nature, this time in reference to the danger of forgetting moral, cultural, and spiritual requirements in processes of development:

The Lord clearly says this in the Gospel, when he calls the attention of all to the true hierarchy of values: “For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?” (Mt 16:26) (*SRS* 33, emphasis mine).

These quotes stress how much Jesus Christ is a teacher able to project, somehow directly, some truth on present situations.

All these Christological emphases which point to Christ bringing salvation into the world, in a certain sense *from without*, are in coherence with the Christology favored by John Paul II as we find it in *RH*.

⁹⁸ “This is why the Church has something to say today, just as twenty years ago, and also in the future, about the nature, conditions, requirements and aims of authentic development, and also about the obstacles which stand in its way. In doing so the Church fulfills her mission to evangelize, for she offers her first contribution to the solution of the urgent problem of development when she proclaims *the truth about Christ*, about herself and about man, applying this truth to a concrete situation (*SRS* 41) (emphasis mine).

Concerning this Christology, it is necessary to notice with Avery Dulles that the pope is not focused “primarily on the ontological constitution of Christ as God-man but rather on the work of Christ within the cosmos and human history.”⁹⁹ It is Christ, *the redeemer*, who is the focal point, “the center of the universe and of history” (*RH* 1). Christ is at work in the world and this is why he is the key for everything the church has to say. This Christocentrism is at the same time an anthropocentrism because Christ leads to the human person and it is a theocentrism because Christ reveals God, but the crucial point remains that all of this is envisioned through the work of Christ. John Paul II refuses “to separate the constitution of Christ from the work of Christ, the incarnation from redemption or Christology from soteriology.”¹⁰⁰ This explains why a social encyclical such as *SRS* can bear so much Christological content. Social issues are a perfect locus to envision the redeeming work of Christ or, to use the terminology of this dissertation, to be seized by the mystery of Christ savior.

What does it mean, in the context of the late twentieth century, that “Christ the redeemer is the center of the universe and of history?” According to the pope in *RH*, the world is “subject to futility”¹⁰¹ and today a great sign of this is given by some terrifying aspects of technical progress such as the damage done to the environment, the development of nuclear arms, the persistence of armed conflicts or the lack of respect for the life of the unborn. However it is “groaning in travail”¹⁰² longing for the redemption in Christ. Christ the redeemer penetrates into the mystery

⁹⁹ Avery Dulles, *The Splendor of Faith. The Theological Vision of Pope John Paul II* (New York: Herder and Herder, 2003), 40.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Rom 8:20.

¹⁰² Cf. Rom 8:22.

of humanity through his union with each human being (*RH* 8).¹⁰³ The divine dimension of the redemption is that Jesus Christ reveals and reconciles us with the Father, and reveals the outpouring of the Spirit. This revelation is love (*RH* 9). Then, the human dimension of the redemption is that Christ “fully reveals man to himself. Christ reveals true love and human beings are newly created in him as all in one (Gal 3:28). This is the Gospel, the Good News to be proclaimed by the church (*RH* 10). The fundamental task of the Church is to enable “the union [of Christ with each human being] to be brought out and renewed continually” (*RH* 13). This is the reason why the way of the church is “the human person” in her entirety, paying attention to human possibilities and also to threats and oppositions to what make ‘human life more human’ (*RH* 14). Already in this inaugural encyclical the Christological accent on the union between Christ and humanity had concrete consequences such as a plea for the respect of human rights (*RH* 17) and in particular for freedom of conscience in search for truth (*RH* 12).

In this more general presentation of Christ the redeemer in *RH*, we find the elements which were previously highlighted in *SRS*. Christ is the one who reveals humanity to humanity and reconciles the human race (in itself and with the Father). The first paragraphs of *RH* give us a way to qualify this Christology. It is principally a Christology of the incarnate Word. The two first citations from the Bible are from the gospel of John: “The Word became flesh and dwelt

¹⁰³ The quote of *GS* 22 is central here: “The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of Him who was to come, namely Christ the Lord. Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear... He Who is ‘the image of the invisible God’ (Col 1:15), is Himself the perfect man. To the sons of Adam He restores the divine likeness which had been disfigured from the first sin onward. Since human nature as He assumed it was not annulled, by that very fact it has been raised up to a divine dignity in our respect too. For by His incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every man. He worked with human hands, He thought with a human mind, acted by human choice and loved with a human heart” (*GS* 22).

among us” (Jn 1:14) and “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). The point of insistence is the movement of God entering into the world in order to save it. A movement of incarnation realized in Jesus Christ and which continues to be at work in the world we live in.¹⁰⁴

This responds well to the vision of the world put forward by the pope in this programmatic encyclical, a rather Augustinian vision which stresses many challenges, the reality of sin, and the fragility of human beings. Salvation needs to come, in a certain sense, *from without*. It is less obvious in this context to insist on another dimension of salvation connected with creation, a salvation which comes rather *from within*, a salvation already at work in the creation of human beings called to grow in the image and likeness of God and in the growth of the kingdom “already in our midst.”¹⁰⁵ The latter is more highlighted when one focuses on the human life of Jesus fulfilling the human vocation and on the continuous presence of Christ today especially in the poor.

¹⁰⁴ “We also are in a certain way in a season of a new Advent, a season of expectation: ‘In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son...’ (Heb 1:1-2), by the Son, his Word, who became man and was born of the Virgin Mary. This act of redemption marked the high point of the history of man within God’s loving plan. God entered the history of humanity and, as a man, became an actor in that history, one of the thousands of millions of human beings but at the same time Unique! Through the Incarnation God gave human life the dimension that he intended man to have from his first beginning; he has granted that dimension definitively – in the way that is peculiar to him alone, in keeping with his eternal love and mercy, with the full freedom of God – and he has granted it also with the bounty that enables us, in considering the original sin and the whole history of the sins of humanity, and in considering the errors of the human intellect, will and heart, to repeat with amazement the words of the Sacred Liturgy: ‘O happy fault... which gained us so great a Redeemer!’” (RH 1).

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Lk 17:21.

In *SRS*, however, and in contrast with *RH*, this other soteriological dimension associated with a more ascending Christology is explicitly present. This is a case of reframing and an important Christological contribution offered by the pope's reflection about development.

b) Jesus Christ and the Poor

Along with an incarnate Word Christology very much in the line of *RH*, *SRS* offers another Christological approach. It is especially noticeable in the Christological implications of the endorsement – for the first time so explicitly in a document of the universal magisterium – of the “preferential option for the poor,” once again a principle central to Latin American liberation theology.¹⁰⁶ Jesus Christ is the one to be imitated in his love of preference for the poor. He is also to be encountered in them.

Although the full expression “preferential option for the poor” is not in the final document of the bishops' assembly in Medellín in 1968, the main contents are already there. The chapter on poverty presents three notions of poverty.¹⁰⁷ Poverty as a lack of the goods and resources of this world necessary for a human life in dignity is an evil. Spiritual poverty is the attitude of openness to God and “the attitude of the one who hopes for everything from the Lord” (*Med Poverty* 4). A third notion of poverty is the commitment freely chosen to be in solidarity with those in need, following Jesus who “being rich became poor,”¹⁰⁸ in order to bear witness to and contest the evil of their situation. A call follows for the church to denounce “the unjust lack of this world's goods

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *SRS* 42-43. For an overview of the preferential option for the poor in South American liberation theology, see G. Gutiérrez, “Option for the poor,” in Ellacuría and Sobrino, *Mysterium Liberationis*, 235-250.

¹⁰⁷ *Med Poverty* 4. Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 162-173.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Phil 2:5-8.

and the sin that begets it,” to preach and live in spiritual poverty and to be itself bound to material poverty.¹⁰⁹ This leads to a “preference” for and “solidarity” with those most in need concerning the pastoral orientations to be taken locally and globally.¹¹⁰

A decade later, the bishops gathered at Puebla confirmed solemnly the centrality of the principle of “a preferential option for the poor” when they stated,

We affirm the need for the conversion on the part of the whole church to a preferential option for the poor, an option aimed at their integral liberation (*Pue* 1134).

From the beginning, this option did not come merely from social analysis or from human compassion – although they are good motives for a commitment to the poor and oppressed – but it is rooted in God. It is really “a theocentric, prophetic option that has its roots in the unmerited love of God and is demanded by this love.”¹¹¹ Its formalization in the reflection of Latin American theologians emerged from their taking into account the reality of their continent through the lens of the Christian faith. The preferential option for the poor is rooted in the retrieving of the theme of poverty in the Bible.¹¹² In the Old Testament God appears as taking sides with the indigent, the weak, the bent-over, the wretched, and the defenseless; and sending prophets to denounce injustices. Jesus’ mission is also “to bring the Good News to the poor” and

¹⁰⁹ *Med Poverty* 5.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9-11.

¹¹¹ Gustavo Gutiérrez, “Expanding the view, Introduction to the revised edition,” in *A Theology of Liberation*, 2nd edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), xxvii.

¹¹² Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 165-171.

“to free the oppressed” (cf. Lk 4:16-21). He preached that the last shall be first (cf. Mt 20:1-16).¹¹³

Despite the polemical context of the relations between Latin American liberation theology and the Vatican, in *SRS* Pope John Paul does not hesitate to endorse the principle of the “preferential option for the poor” which he also calls “love of preference for the poor.”¹¹⁴ He thus makes of it a fundamental guideline for the whole church and beyond.¹¹⁵ The pope asserts that this “option or love of preference for the poor” is

An option, or a *special form* of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness. It affects the life of each Christian inasmuch as he or she seeks to imitate the life of Christ, but it applies equally to our *social responsibilities* and hence our manner of living, and to the logical decisions to be made concerning the ownership and use of goods (*SRS* 42).

¹¹³ Gutiérrez, “Option for the poor,” 241-244.

¹¹⁴ Gutiérrez dismisses any substantial difference between the two phrases considering the content of the pope’s “love of preference for the poor” which is seen in the entire encyclical. “Some have claimed that the magisterium would be happy to see the expression *preferential option* replaced with *preferential love* which, we are told, would change the meaning. It seems to us that the matter has been settled by the latest encyclical of John Paul II. Listing certain points and emphases enjoying priority among the considerations of the magisterium today, the pope asserts: ‘among these themes, I should mention, here, the *preferential option or love* for the poor. This is an option or *special form* of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity’ (*SRS* 42).” Gutiérrez, “Option for the poor,” 240. See as well Rodríguez, *La urgencia de transformaciones*, 152-162. However, others like Curran and Dorr point out that ‘preferential love’ and ‘preferential option’ are not exactly the same thing, which suggests a certain hesitancy of John Paul II about accepting the concept of a preferential option for the poor. Dorr interprets it as a reluctance to admit that “if the poor and marginalized people are called to be key agents of change, it is unlikely that they can play this role without some confrontation... and if the church is committed to an option for the poor, then it too must face up the challenge of serious confrontation.” Dorr, *Option for the Poor*, 298. Charles Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching 1891-Present: a Historical, Theological, and Ethical Analysis* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 183.

¹¹⁵ The US bishops had already made it a central principle as well in their letter about economic justice in 1986. USCCB, *Economic Justice for All*, no. 16.

It must be used as a primary criterion of discernment in our daily life, in the political and economic fields and especially by the leaders of nations. It is given as the root principle for several more practical guidelines which are not new in the social teaching of the church but which receive here a renewed strength. The goods of this world are originally meant for all, therefore private property, which is a valid and necessary right, is always under a “social mortgage,” meaning that it has an intrinsically social function and is oriented toward the common good and the benefit of the least advantaged (*SRS* 42). Concern for the poor must be translated “at all levels into concrete actions” and in what is demanded by the situation of international imbalances. *SRS* highlights the reform of the international trade system and of the world monetary and financial system, the injustices existing in the field of transfers of technology, and the need for a reform of the international organizations in order to make them more efficient (*SRS* 43).

On all these topics the encyclical does not enter into much detail. To offer technical solutions is not its role. However it gives a crucial ethical and practical principle, “the love of preference for the poor” and connects it to a theological content. This love of preference has important Christological implications. Promoting it, in a certain sense, works as a pointer to some aspects of the mystery of Jesus Christ for us.

Jesus Christ is the one to be imitated in his relations to the poor. The option for the poor “affects the life of each Christian inasmuch as he or she seeks to imitate the life of Christ” (*SRS* 42). Indeed, Jesus’ mission as he indicated in the synagogue of Nazareth is “to preach good news to the poor... to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Lk 4:18-19). This reference is used in the call addressed to the faithful at the end of the encyclical in order to

encourage them to be leaders in the commitment to integral development and in working to “implement...the measures inspired by solidarity and love of preference for the poor” (SRS 47). They have to do it in order to be “in conformity with the program announced by Jesus himself.” This imitation goes even up to the radical love of one’s enemy, “with the same love the Lord loves him or her” (SRS 40) and the following of “the example of Christ, who... lays down his life for his friends (cf. Jn 15:13)” (SRS 48). All these mentions of “imitating” and “following” highlight an important sense in which Jesus is a teacher: not simply by words but by deeds. His life, in its historicity and concreteness, teaches us to opt first for the poor, the marginalized, the outcast...

Jesus Christ is also the one to be encountered in the poor, the one whose presence in them reveals God to us. Very significantly, SRS calls the poor, “the Lord’s poor” and adds in a footnote, “because the Lord wished to identify himself with them (Mt 25:31-46)” (SRS 43). This same identification is also mentioned earlier in the survey of the situation of the world when SRS asserts that “before these tragedies of total indigence and need, in which so many of our brothers and sisters are living, it is the Lord Jesus himself who comes to question us (cf. Mt 25:31-46)” (SRS 13). The option for the poor is not merely a moral obligation rooted in some commandments of the Lord, or even in his imitation, it is more profoundly the privileged locus to encounter him. The poor acquire here a sacramental dimension.

To go a little further in developing this aspect we can mention the reflection about sacraments made by Victor Codina in *Mysterium Liberationis*.¹¹⁶ In the context of Latin

¹¹⁶ Victor Codina, “Sacraments,” in Ellacuría and Sobrino, *Mysterium Liberationis*, 654-676. This development about the “sacramentality” of the poor is not contained in or strictly implied

American liberation theology, Codina points to the kingdom of God as “primordial mystery-sacrament.”¹¹⁷ In this framework “by analogy but truly, the poor can be called sacraments of the kingdom.” Not that they are morally superior or perfect or that, *per se*, they would incarnate better than others the kingdom in their persons, but because their cry is a denunciation of the anti-kingdom and their liberation is the manifestation of the kingdom at work. Codina writes:

In human history, inside and outside the church we find situations of sin that produce victims. These victims of the anti-Kingdom are the poor. They are sacraments of the Kingdom *sub contrario*, precisely to the extent that the privation of life, the sin of the world, and the negation of the Kingdom are manifest in them. Their cry is a cry for the Kingdom... They are a living prophecy of the Kingdom insofar as they denounce the anti-Kingdom, in anticipation of the eschatological judgment of God and proclamation of the mysterious presence of the Crucified One in them.¹¹⁸

In this light, the denunciation of the structures of sin and the promotion of solidarity made in *SRS* participate in the proclamation of the kingdom. The concern for the poor, which is at the root of the encyclical, makes them in some sense “a sacrament of the kingdom” and an inescapable privileged locus for encountering Christ and being seized by his mystery.

Undeniably, the adoption of the “option or love of preference for the poor” has effects on the Christology offered by John Paul II in *SRS*. This option is rooted in the imitation of Christ whose historical life and concrete relations to the poor and marginalized thus take a crucial importance. It also implies acknowledging the poor as a privileged locus of encounter with Christ and to deepen our perception of their sacramental dimension.

by *SRS*. It is however an inspiring reflection which is, in a certain sense, authorized by the encyclical which opens a door for it.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 660.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 665.

c) Conclusion

Like *PP*, *SRS* does not offer a full, self-contained, systematic Christology. However the study of its Christological references led us to highlight substantial contributions on the path to approach the mystery of Jesus Christ for us. In revealing humanity to humanity, Christ reveals the Father. He saves by reconciling and freeing. The truth he teaches and of which the church has the mission to bear witness is crucial for his redeeming work of bringing about the kingdom. Jesus Christ is also the model who, by his life, teaches us to be in solidarity with the poor for the liberation of humanity from all forms of slavery. In a privileged way, he is to be encountered in this solidarity with the poor.

These elements are brought about, once again, through the interplay of three theological frameworks. The Augustinian perspective certainly shapes the insistence of John Paul II on a Christology of the incarnate Word and on an understanding of Christ's redeeming work in terms of liberation from sin and reconciliation with the Father. However, the neo-Thomist approach is not entirely absent because of the intrinsic nature of a social encyclical. Social encyclicals promote a substantial transformation of this world and therefore recognize that such a transformation is possible through God's grace. The personalist and Thomist inclination of the pope is also perceptible in his stressing that the redeeming work of Christ is operative in history and brings about the kingdom through the mediation of human achievements. Finally, the central notion of the preferential option for the poor as a major contribution of Latin American liberation theology rebalances the incarnate Word Christology with some elements of an ascending Christology which underscores the concrete life of Jesus Christ and his continuous presence in the poor.

V. CONCLUSION: THE THEOLOGY OF *SOLLICITUDO REI SOCIALIS*

This chapter's reading of *SRS* has highlighted many theological aspects. The magisterial reflection about the challenges of development offers various ways of approaching the mystery of "God for us" or letting it seize us. Traditional theological themes such as incarnation, redemption, and salvation, sin and grace, or Trinity are addressed through offering some practical ways of discernment and action on social, political, and economic issues. These themes are not dealt with comprehensively and systematically but rather by way of sparks and hints complementing and balancing – sometimes even contradicting – each other and always opening various paths for further deepening. Their strength lies in their connection with concrete social issues. If theology is the "science of mystery," as Rahner suggests, then the many theological reflections brought about by the reading of the encyclical, in their diversity and also in their tensions, pertain to this science and are a real contribution for moving deeper into what is always both greater than us and more intimate within us.¹¹⁹ The very fact that they are not systematic and are sometimes in tension can even be seen as a good antidote against any temptation to "comprehend" the mystery of "God for us," or to enclose it into a single rational system.

At the end of the previous chapter about *PP*, I qualified the theology of Paul VI's encyclical as incarnational and stressed how it was the expression mainly of a neo-Thomist theological framework. This seemed possible even if this theology was not entirely unified. With *SRS* it is not possible to attribute in the same way a unique qualification. As this chapter has repeatedly underscored there are constantly at least three theological frameworks at play: the neo-Thomist,

¹¹⁹ "*Deus interior intimo meo et superior summo meo*" ("higher than my highest and more inward than my innermost self"). Augustine, *Confessions* III, 6, 11.

the Augustinian, and the liberationist. Some elements of historical context can explain the emergence of the two latter frameworks and why they become relevant. In the following of Vatican II, in a church becoming world church, the contribution of the South American continent makes its way even if it is not without turbulence. The global political, social, and economic situation of the world after two Decades of Development which have not produced the results hoped for can justify a more pessimistic view of the world. In addition the personality and background of a pope coming from Eastern communist Europe plays its role in reaffirming the divine and transcendent dimension of the church. This diversity of frameworks at play results in an enrichment of the theological insights. The reflection about the structures of sin, the understanding of development as liberation and its soteriological component, or the Christological implications of the preferential option for the poor are among striking examples.

However, a mere juxtaposition of the frameworks and acknowledgement of diversity in theological insights is a minimalist interpretative key. More can be suggested if we adopt a reading in terms of “reframing” and “rebalancing” as was done in this chapter. The neo-Thomist vision of the world as a world open to transformation under God’s grace and of human beings as instruments in this transformation remains the fundamental grounding for CST because it is necessary in order to justify that the church has something to contribute on social, political, and economic issues. The liberationist perspective brought in some corrective in what could be too much individualistic or merely inter-personal in the neo-Thomist, Enlightenment-marked vision. It also recalls the reality of sin at work in a world where the kingdom “is not there yet,” and stresses its structural and social dimension. The Augustinian vision offers as well some correctives in terms of a greater taking into account of sin but without so great an insistence on the social and structural dimension as the liberationist approach. Its main point of contribution

for rebalancing a neo-Thomist vision completed by a liberationist perspective is to insist on the transcendent dimension of God's salvation. The kingdom of God is never to be reduced to an earthly political and socio-economic liberation. God's revelation, of which the church testifies, has something substantial to teach this world marked by sin. This way of articulating the three frameworks guides a certain reading of *SRS* which focuses on the positive elements brought in by each perspective. This is a hermeneutical option. I do not pretend that it resolves all the tensions and the oppositions at work among them and especially between the Augustinian approach and the two others. However, I hope that this chapter has shown that it is a valid and fruitful hermeneutical option.

Moving to Benedict XVI and *Caritas in veritate*, the so-called "Augustinian" vision will become predominant. The objective of the theological reading of the encyclical will then be to show how the social nature of the issues addressed brings in some important reframing and rebalancing through which liberationist and neo-Thomist approaches come back.

CHAPTER FOUR

BENEDICT XVI'S *CARITAS IN VERITATE*: DEVELOPMENT IN CHARITY AND LOVE

Caritas in veritate – love or charity in truth – are not simply the initial three words of the Latin version of Pope Benedict XVI's 2009 social encyclical. This phrase is the interpretative key and the foundation for the reflection about integral human development offered by the pope in continuation of his two predecessors, forty years after Paul VI's *PP* and twenty years after John Paul II's *SRS*. Charity is the "principal driving force behind the authentic development of every human being and of all humanity" (*CiV* 1), but "only in truth does charity shine forth, only in truth can charity be authentically lived" (*CiV* 3). Therefore it is by proclaiming the truth of God's love and by shedding the light of the Gospel on present human situations that the church fulfills its mission in society. The church's social doctrine revolves around the principle of "charity in truth" (*CiV* 6).

The list of social, political, and economic issues addressed in the encyclical is large: markets, financial and economic crises, business enterprise, employment, workers' rights, inequalities, role of the state, international institutions, migrations, etc. Widely noted is a more lengthy treatment of the environment than in previous encyclicals and also the incorporation of topics related to the protection of life such as abortion, euthanasia, or bioethics, which were not previously developed in social encyclicals. The focus of the pope, however, is always to analyze the roots of the issues at an anthropological level by invoking the joint resources of faith and reason. In this regard, *CiV* is certainly the most explicitly theological encyclical in the series studied in this dissertation.

The encyclical is divided into eight parts. The introduction and conclusion establish solidly the principle of “charity in truth” as revealed by God in Jesus Christ and as the foundation for fostering integral human development in today’s world. They insist on the necessary openness of human beings and society to transcendence. Chapter one highlights the message of *PP* in connection with other teachings of Paul VI. True development understood in human and Christian terms is the development of the whole person and of the whole humanity. Chapter two looks at the present situation and the many challenges to be faced. Chapter three stresses gift and gratuitousness as components of a fully human life. From this perspective, the economic life, the role of markets, states, and civil society, and even the notion of globalization are reconsidered. Chapter four adopts the perspective of rights and duties to address issues around population growth, ethics in the economy, international cooperation and ecology. Chapter five highlights relation as a central anthropological and theological category. It points to the mystery of the Trinity in order to found various reflections about cooperation and solidarity within the human family. This includes themes as varied as international aid, migration, tourism, education, labor unions, employment, the financial systems, and international institutions. Chapter six looks at the challenge of a world marked more and more by a technological framework and recalls the moral dimension of all human decisions. Specific reflections here concern bioethics, peace-building, social communication and psychology.

This third case study in investigating the theological contribution of CST will follow the same pattern as the two previous ones. A first section will be consecrated to the context. The world has changed since *SRS* and is facing various crises, financial, economic but also energy and ecological, which are in the background of the encyclical. Benedict XVI is also particularly sensitive to the challenge of secularization which strikes Europe firsthand. Out of this context

emerge some specific theological accents which we will consider around our now familiar three themes: methodology and style, theological anthropology, and Christology.

The general theological framework in which Benedict XVI deploys his reflections is very much “Augustinian.” In a world marked by sin and the fragility of human reason, the church fulfills its mission of being a “sacrament” of salvation¹ by bringing in the truth of the revelation of God’s love. Insistence is put on what distinguishes the earthly city that we attempt to build and the city of God it prefigures. Focus is put on the redemption brought by the cross and on the eschatological dimension of the Christian faith. The social teaching of the church is concerned with discerning the signs of the times but very crucially it does so, “in the light of the Gospel” and by shedding “the light of faith.”² Such is the case because one of the central signs of the times for Benedict XVI is the emergence of modern and post-modern societies marked by relativism, individualism and the absence of God.³

In this framework, the theological insights brought by the reflection of the encyclical on integral human development will reinforce the vertical dimension of faith rather than the more horizontal, incarnational one. A deductive methodology and a conception of dialogue which stresses asymmetry are reminders of the absolute otherness of God, the source of our salvation. Anthropological reflections will insist on the necessity of openness to transcendence and on Christian-framed categories such as gift and communion. Incarnate Word Christology will be

¹ Cf. Vatican II, *Lumen gentium*, no. 1.

² Cf. *GS* 4, 11.

³ Edouard Herr, “L’encyclique *Caritas in veritate*. Une lecture,” *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 131 (2009): 728-748.

very much favored as well. This is the major theological contribution of *CiV*, the way by which it offers to enter more deeply into the mystery of “God for us.”

Nonetheless, the very nature of the topics addressed by the pope, prompts some nuancing, even some tweaking and reframing in the direction of a more incarnational or neo-Thomist framework and even sometimes with a liberationist flavor. It is visible when comparing *CiV* with Benedict’s first encyclical *Deus caritas est*. The struggle with the current issues of the world reveals a more historical understanding of salvation implying structural changes as much as personal conversion. This, in itself, is also a theological contribution of *CiV*.

I. CONTEXT

To get a sense of the context in which *CiV* was produced we need to recall the financial and economic crisis which shook the world from 2007 onwards and its inscription in a larger set of crises: food, energy, ecological... They are all evoked at one point or another in the encyclical. We then need to mention the continuous phenomenon of globalization in a post-Cold War world. A third important aspect of context is Benedict XVI’s central concern for the challenges of secularization in late- or post-Modernity, especially in Europe. Finally, in the same way we had noticed the influence on *PP* and *SRS* of particular groups of people such as Lebrecht and Cardijn or *Solidarność*, a word should be said about the Focolare movement and its promotion of an Economy of Communion.

a) Crises

The publication of *CiV* was initially scheduled for the year 2007 in order to put a special stress on commemorating the 40th anniversary of *PP*. It had been delayed several times until

finally being released on July 7, 2009 (even though it is signed June 29, 2009). The main reason for these delays was the desire to take into account the financial and economic crisis affecting the whole world.⁴ This does not mean that the crisis is the central theme of the encyclical or that the encyclical is written merely as a response to the then current situation. It has a much broader scope of presenting an articulated faith vision of the world and its challenges. The financial and economic crisis, nevertheless, affected the treatment of all the themes addressed in the encyclical because it works as a revelator of more profound anthropological questions. It is “an opportunity for discernment, in which to shape a new vision for the future” (*CiV* 21). Benedict insists that,

The current global financial crisis must be seen ... as a bench test: are we ready to interpret it, in its complexity, as a challenge for the future and not only as an emergency to which we must find short-term solutions? Are we prepared to undertake a profound revision of the prevalent model of development in order to correct it with concerted, far-sighted interventions? In reality, this is required by the state of the planet's ecological health and especially the cultural and moral crisis whose symptoms have been visible for some time in every part of the world, far more than by the immediate financial problems.⁵

The main stages of the financial and economic crisis are well known.⁶ It started in 2007 with the bursting of the real estate bubble in the USA. It quickly affected the banks and the whole

⁴ Benedict XVI himself explained the delays in this way. During his flight to Cameroon on March 17, 2009, responding to a question from a journalist about the current economic crisis, the pope said: “I should like to make an appeal first and foremost for Catholic solidarity, while also extending this to include the solidarity of all those who recognize their responsibility within today’s human society. Obviously I shall be speaking of this in the Encyclical too: this is a reason for the delay. We were almost ready to publish it, when this crisis broke out, and we looked at the text again so as to respond more fully, within our particular competence, and within the social teaching of the Church, but with reference to the specific details of the current crisis. In this way I hope that the Encyclical can also be an element that helps to overcome the difficult situation of the present time.” *Interview of the Holy Father Benedict XVI During the Flight to Africa* (March 17, 2009), www.vatican.va.

⁵ Benedict XVI, *Homily on January 1, 2009*, www.vatican.va.

⁶ See Bernard J. Laurens, “La crise économique internationale : origines et enseignements,” in *L’enjeu du développement en Afrique. Réflexions sur la base de l’encyclique Caritas in veritate*

financial world with the spectacular collapse of Lehman Brothers, the fourth investment bank in the USA in September 2008. The real economy was touched soon afterwards with a global recession affecting most of the world economies and growing unemployment.

Although the financial and economic crisis was a major concern from 2007 onwards, it is probably more appropriate to speak of crises in the plural to describe the world situation in this period.⁷ Indeed, many countries faced a food crisis provoked by an increase of almost 80% of the world prices of basic supplies (cereals principally) between 2005 and 2007. Immediate consequences in several countries in Africa, South America and Asia were food riots. A report of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) stated that in the year 2008 more than 100 million people newly fell into the category of hungry people. This put the overall number at 1,020 million meaning that one out of six persons in the world suffers hunger.⁸

The energy crisis is also always in the background. During the year 2008 the price of oil multiplied by four before falling down again.⁹ It raised the question of the limits of the earth's resources since oil is a fossil energy which is non-renewable. More generally, in the first decade of the 21st century there was a growing awareness of ecological challenges and especially global warming. Regular yearly meetings of the United Nations Climate Change Conference attempted

sur le développement humain intégral dans la charité. Actes du colloque international de Kinshasa (17-18 avril 2010) organisé par le Centre Africain de Formation et d'Action Sociale, ed. Raoul Kienge-Kienge Intudi (Montréal: Wilson & Lafleur, 2011), 3-68.

⁷ Luis González-Carvajal, *La fuerza del amor inteligente. Un comentario a la encíclica Caritas in veritate, de Benedicto XVI* (Santander, Spain: Sal Terrae, 2009), 83-104.

⁸ Cf. Darío Múnera Vélez, *La encíclica Caritas in veritate del Papa Benedicto XVI. Claves de lectura y comprensión desde la Universidad* (Medellín, Colombia: Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, 2010), 18.

⁹ González-Carvajal, *La fuerza del amor inteligente*, 87-88.

to push forward agreements among nations about the reduction of greenhouse gases such as the 1997 Kyoto agreement. However results were not yet at the level of the urgency of the challenge.

Finally, to this panorama of crises affecting the world in the background of *CiV* should be added the tensions provoked by international terrorism in connection with religious fundamentalism. The shock of the 9/11 attacks against the World Trade Center in New York and the emerging of fundamentalist groups such as Al Qaida undoubtedly affected the debates concerning the role and place of religion in political and social life.

For Benedict XVI, these crises require actions to be taken, especially in favor of those who most immediately suffer from them, but they also need, more profoundly, to be analyzed in moral terms. Human beings are affected by crises but they are also in a large measure actors and responsible for them. This is why it is necessary to shed some light, the light of the Gospel, on their mechanisms and to reveal some false anthropological assumptions which lie at their roots.

b) Globalization

John XXIII, Paul VI and the Second Vatican Council had already highlighted that the social question had become worldwide because of the ongoing process of interconnectedness or “socialization” far beyond national boundaries. However, half a century later, what is now called globalization has taken proportions unsuspected in the 60s. It is in large part the effect of huge technical progress in the areas of communication and transportation. The result is that more and more people around the world, even if separated by large distances, are nonetheless able to communicate and interact with each other and have become dependent on each other, whether they are conscious of it or not.

At the time of *SRS*, John Paul II pointed out the logic of blocs and the confrontation between Western capitalist societies and Eastern communist ones as affecting directly the rest of the world. He denounced it as a structure of sin. Twenty years later, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern European communist models, the situation looks very different.¹⁰ The Cold War is now history. This explains that *CiV*'s approach to economic activity is not framed by the ideological battle between capitalism and communism. Indeed, these terms are not even used in the encyclical.

The challenge, and the potential localization of a structure of sin (even if Benedict XVI does not use this terminology), is now rather in the dominant position of giant transnational companies. Globalization was seen first in the internationalization of trade and then of the production of goods but also in an increasingly rapid circulation of capital, the major part of it for speculative purposes. This means an increasing capacity to evade any type of local or national regulation. As the ex-president of a big multinational company puts it,

For the companies of my group, globalization means freedom to invest when and where they want, to produce whatever they want, to buy and sell wherever they want and to suffer the minimal limitations possible for what refers to labor legislation and the social pact.¹¹

In 2007 it was estimated that 500 multinational companies had each a turnover greater than 10 billion dollars a year, meaning greater than the annual national GDP of two thirds of the

¹⁰ However, Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator interestingly points out that for the African continent the demise of opposing blocs is not as perceptible because there are still many manifestations of external manipulations in a lot of places. This is visible for example in the exploitation of natural and mineral resources. Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, "*Caritas in Veritate* and Africa's Burden of (Under)Development," *Theological Studies* 71, no.2 (2010): 320-334 at 325.

¹¹ González-Carvajal, *La fuerza del amor inteligente*, 70. Translation mine.

countries in the world. In other words, each one of those companies is bigger, from an economic view point, than the majority of the countries of the world.

It is against this background of a new stage of globalization that *CiV* needs to be read when it deals with the role of entities like the state, international organizations, civil society, and business enterprises.

c) Secularization, Benedict XVI, and Europe

Crucial in the context shaping *CiV* is the reality of secularization in Europe. It is a fact that in the last half century the visible place of religion in Western European societies has dramatically changed. Participation at Sunday mass has dropped, vocations to the priesthood and religious life have shrunk impressively, and polls are confirming that churches have less and less influence on the lives of most people. However, how to interpret these facts, what causes to invoke, and even what content to give to this notion of secularization are the object of multiple discussions. As a theologian and as the prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Joseph Ratzinger had always shown a great concern for this issue which seems, for him, to be a major sign of the current times. Now become Pope Benedict, the challenges of secularization, which he associates with relativism and individualism, continue to frame his teaching.¹²

We have already noted in Chapter one of this dissertation that in the aftermath of Vatican II Ratzinger joined with others, like von Balthasar and de Lubac, in endorsing fully the agenda of *ressourcement* initiated at the council and nevertheless expressing worries about the turn taken in

¹² Lieven Boeve, "Europe in Crisis: A Question of Belief or Unbelief? Perspectives from the Vatican," *Modern Theology* 23, no. 2 (April, 2007): 205-227; Joseph A. Komonchak, "The Church in Crisis: Pope Benedict's Theological Vision," *Commonweal* 132, no.11 (June 3, 2005): 11-14.

the follow-up of *GS* toward positive dialogue with the world. Whereas someone like Chenu, who played a central role in the elaboration of *GS*, stressed the need to pay attention to God's liberating presence in the concrete history of humankind and to learn from engaging in dialogue with secular science and with other religions, Ratzinger highlighted rather the flaws in human thought on which the Christian faith ought to shed light. He was worried about identifying too quickly the "values of the kingdom" with values put forward by modern societies.

Ratzinger remained especially critical of a form of radical Enlightenment and of the path taken by Modernity as it is visible in various forms of liberalism and Marxism alike. He saw this as leading to the present situation of Europe. The combination of a culture of technological progress and of affirmation of the autonomous subject has led to the rejection of transcendence:

Europe has developed a culture that, in a way hitherto unknown to humanity, excludes God from public consciousness, whether he is totally denied or whether his existence is judged indemonstrable, uncertain, and so relegated to the domain of subjective choices, as something in any case irrelevant for public life.¹³

The concern about the forms which Modernity has taken is not limited to European secularization. In the North American context, discussions about individualism and moral relativism encapsulate it better. A passage of Ratzinger's last homily before entering the conclave of 2005 perfectly reflects his vision of the challenge to be faced:

How many winds of doctrine have we known in recent decades, how many ideological currents, how many ways of thinking? The small boat of the thought of many Christians has often been tossed about by these waves – flung from one extreme to another: from Marxism

¹³ Joseph Ratzinger, "Europe and the Crisis of Cultures," *Communio* 32 (Summer, 2005): 345-356 at 347.

to liberalism, even libertinism; from collectivism to radical individualism; from atheism to a vague religious mysticism; from agnosticism to syncretism and so forth.¹⁴

In this vision, the response of the Church has to be the affirmation of the truth of faith. In face of “the dictatorship of relativism that does not recognize anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one’s own ego and desires... we have a different goal: the Son of God, the true man. He is the measure of true humanism.”¹⁵ In talking about Europe, in the same article already mentioned, Ratzinger insisted, “what we most need at this moment of history are men who make God visible in this world through their enlightened lived faith.”¹⁶ This task so well defined by the then cardinal, will remain central for the pope. It definitely shapes the tone and the theological argument of *CiV* even if the encyclical has a broader audience than “the Western World” and if many outside this cultural world have found some relevance in it. We recognize here a context, and more precisely a way of framing this context, that fits perfectly with the Augustinian framework characteristic of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI.

d) Chiara Lubich, Focolare, and the Economy of Communion

A last element of context important to notice is the way *CiV* adopts some insights from the experience of the Focolare movement when it reflects on the economy. It is characteristic of CST that concrete experiences of groups of Christians precede and fuel the universal teaching. We saw this with the Young Christian Workers and their see-judge-act methodology or with the contribution of *Économie et Humanisme*, through Fr. Lebreton, at the time of *PP*. In *CiV*, there is

¹⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, *Homily at Mass Pro Eligendo Romano Pontifice* (April 18, 2005). www.vatican.va.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ratzinger, “Europe and the Crisis of Cultures,” 355.

no explicit mention of the Focolare or Chiara Lubich its founder, but when there is mention of “civil economy” and “the economy of communion” (*CiV* 46), undoubtedly they are in the background. One of the closest advisers of Benedict XVI on economic issues, Prof. Stefano Zamagni of the University of Bologna, is considered the inspirer of those parts of the encyclical and he is a key contributor to the Economy of Communion project of the Focolare.¹⁷

The Focolare Movement started in the midst of World War II in the city of Trent, in Northern Italy. Chiara Lubich, then a 23 year-old elementary school teacher gathered regularly with some friends, searching for some ideal to sustain hope amidst the hopelessness of war and destruction. Their discovery was that God was this ideal as God is love and God’s personal love envelops every aspect of life. The group thus began to focus on living the commandment of love and experienced it especially in the building of a community in profound unity. After the war the movement flourished, always with this aim of building unity with God, among themselves and in the whole human family. The initial tiny group grew up to encompass all ages and states of life (married people, priests, religious). Focolare houses, trying to develop a new lifestyle inspired by the spiritual reflections of Chiara Lubich, opened first in various cities of Italy, then throughout Europe, and in the 1960s in North and South America, Asia, Oceania, and Africa. When Chiara Lubich died in 2008, the movement operated in 182 nations and had over 100,000 adherents.

¹⁷ Stefano Zamagni, “Fraternity, Gift, and Reciprocity in *Caritas in Veritate*,” in Adrian Pabst, ed., *The Crisis of Global Capitalism. Pope Benedict XVI’s Social Encyclical and the Future of Political Economy* (Cambridge, UK: James Clark & Co, 2012), 155-171. On the relation between the Focolare movement and *CiV*, see Amelia J. Uelmen, “*Caritas in Veritate* and Chiara Lubich: Human Development from the Vantage Point of Unity,” *Theological Studies* 71, no.1 (2010): 29-45.

In order to grasp why the Focolare movement can contribute to the questions raised by *CiV*, Amelia Uelmen notes that,

What is especially interesting about Lubich's thought and work in this regard is not only the depth with which it has explored how a spirituality of unity might penetrate and transform social and economic structures, but also the fact that it has generated a global multicultural and even multireligious network of people who continuously engage in deep reflection on these principles, and who encourage one another to live accordingly.¹⁸

One of the fruits of this reflection is the Economy of Communion Project which is a concrete way to foster a culture of communion. It emerged in Brazil in the 1990s when Focolare members had the idea of creating for-profit businesses as a way to ensure that the most basic needs of the community were met. Those businesses were also to generate additional jobs and to voluntarily allot profits in three directions: (1) for direct aid to people in need; (2) for educational projects to help foster a culture of giving; and (3) for the continued growth and development of the business. As of 2010, over 750 Economy of Communion business initiatives were in operation in more than 50 countries. Central to the project is a reshaping of the notion of for-profit business but without abandoning it. Central as well is the idea of participation of all and the prioritizing of a certain quality of human relations marked by love and respect.

Though the weight of these Economy of Communion projects remains infinitesimal at the scale of the world economy, they are nonetheless useful in order to inspire reflection about economy and business because they show that the infusion of a logic of gift and gratuitousness inside, and not only alongside, economic activity is possible. *CiV* does not suggest that it is a solution to be generalized, but the very fact that those businesses exist is a prophetic testimony

¹⁸ Uelmen, "*Caritas in Veritate* and Chiara Lubich," 36.

that the path promoted by the encyclical can be taken in concrete situations.¹⁹ Undoubtedly the concrete realizations of the Focolare movement as much as the spiritual reflections of Chiara Lubich have contributed to bringing into CST this new and rich insight about the notion of gift and gratuitousness.

e) Conclusion

Like other documents of CST, *CiV* did not appear *ex-nihilo*, out of a vacuum. It was embedded in a particular context which contributed to shape it and to shape the theology which it developed. This context was made of various objective historical events and situations but also of a certain vision and interpretation of them. We have a clear sense of what counted for this context when we read the second chapter of the encyclical which gives an overview of the situation of human development forty years after *PP* and stresses the gap between expectations raised at that time and actual realizations. The simple enumeration of the topics mentioned in this chapter is significant: badly managed economy, financial speculation, large scale migrations, unregulated exploitation of resources, growing inequalities, transformation of the role and powers of state in an ever more integrated world, difficulties faced by welfare systems, outsourcing and mobility of labor weakening the workers' rights, cultural eclecticism and leveling, shortage of food and water, attacks against life in practices such as abortion and euthanasia, infringements of religious freedom, failures in decolonization and forms of neo-colonization.

¹⁹ Donal Dorr, *Option for the Poor and for the Earth. Catholic Social Teaching*, 3rd ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012) 374-377.

Undoubtedly, the vision which shaped *CiV* is the vision of a world in crisis, challenged by globalization, and, as illustrated by the situation of Europe, losing a sense of transcendence and of a foundational truth. In this context it makes sense to insist on the mission of the church to testify to the truth of salvation in Jesus Christ. The church, through its magisterial teaching, has something substantial to contribute to addressing the current situation by shedding the light of the Gospel on it. That the world, which is the place where God's grace is at work, has also something to contribute to the church in its journey toward God – as *GS* affirms – is not negated but it is downplayed. There is rather a focus on the antithetical dimension of the relation between church and world: the church has to resist the sin at work in the world. This is the mark of what we have called the “Augustinian” theological framework.

Two short additional remarks are needed here. First, it is rather obvious that this vision of the world adopted by *CiV* is only partial and some other perspectives are missing which could have framed it differently (a Global South perspective, a women's one, etc.). Second, the contribution of the Focolare experience is a good reminder that the overall Augustinian framework is not exclusive of other influences. On the contrary, as we will see more in the subsequent sections, this framework is nuanced and tweaked because of the very nature of a social encyclical. *CiV* insists on rather top-down expressions of God's revealed truth but, in a manner characteristic of CST, it also recognizes elements of truth already at work in what groups of Christians have already developed.

II. METHODOLOGY AND STYLE

In terms of methodology and style, *CiV* departs from the movement toward induction and dialogue with the world initiated in CST by John XXIII, *GS* and Paul VI, and still at work in

John Paul II's encyclicals. The approach to social, economic and political issues is principally deductive, starting with the exposition of principles and then using them to offer evaluative judgments on present situations and general guidelines for action. The dimension of dialogue with secular sciences or other lines of thought, though not entirely absent, is principally oriented toward contrasting the Christian faith with secular thinking rather than discerning the seeds of truth in the latter. This comes as the natural consequence of the analysis of the state of the world made by Pope Benedict XVI and evoked in the previous section. The modern world has lost sight of its transcendental foundation and so the mission of the church is to provide the light of the faith concerning the truth of what it means to be human. Beyond the mere contextual explanation of what many see as a drawback in CST, this section will attempt to grasp the theological meaning of *CiV*'s approach. The methodology and style of the encyclical highlight that God's grace is an absolutely free gift on the part of God and that the church, especially in its teaching office, rather than the world too much marked by sin, mediates the true image of God.

a) Deductive Methodology

Belgian theologian Edouard Herr notes that in the traditional schema see-judge-act, *CiV* is principally focused on the second step without developing much the step of analysis (see) and the one of action (act). Ultimately this step of judgment is based on one principle encapsulated in the formula, "charity in truth."²⁰ Indeed, even a cursory reading of the encyclical makes it obvious that applying the methodology dear to Fr. Cardijn is not the priority of Benedict XVI. He rather favors a deductive approach which highlights that the church has a substantial contribution to make on various issues by shedding the light of the truth of the Gospel.

²⁰ Herr, "L'encyclique *Caritas in veritate*," 733.

The introduction offers the exposition of the central principle: “Charity in truth, to which Jesus Christ bore witness by his earthly life and especially by his death and resurrection, is the principal driving force behind the authentic development of every person and all humanity” (*CiV* 1). It is a theological principle stressing that God revealed in Jesus Christ is both Love and Truth – *Agape* and *Logos*. In the following paragraphs explanations and precisions are given and more specifically it is highlighted that charity without truth risks being reduced to sentimentalism (*CiV* 3) and that the truth about charity takes practical form through justice and the common good (*CiV* 6-7). In the conclusion of the encyclical the centrality of the anthropological principle of openness to God and transcendence is restated with insistence (*CiV* 78-79).

In between the introduction and conclusion, all chapters address more concrete issues but always by applying the fundamental principle of “charity in truth” to them. As I already mentioned, the second chapter offers a large panorama of the situation of the world as regards development but this analysis is already shaped in the form of an evaluation according to what was exposed in the introduction. The next four chapters are all constructed in the same way. A first section exposes a theological and philosophical set of concepts: gift and gratuitousness; rights and duties; relationality; and technology. Then the remainder of the chapter draws consequences about particular situations. A clear sign that the reasoning goes from principle to application is the fact that the same particular issue, for example the financial and economic crisis, appears in various chapters. Different theoretical frameworks shed light on the same issue. The encyclical is organized around those theoretical principles not around the practical issues.

Of course this deductive methodology does not dismiss all sense of induction. Because the encyclical deals with concrete historical situations, they inform, at least indirectly, the choice and

formulation of the principles put forward. For example the challenge posed by the economic crisis and by a world more and more governed by an economic science disconnected from ethical concerns is certainly not foreign to the promotion of the categories of gift and of relation. Those categories are presented as central for the Christian vision of the human being. Nonetheless, as Drew Christiansen puts it, the *via doctrinae* of “moving from the full knowledge of truth to the judgments about experience” is preferred to the *via inventionis* as “a method of discovery from basic needs to our higher satisfactions.”²¹

b) Dialogue?

Concerning dialogue between Christian faith and other religions or secular sciences, which came so much to the fore at Vatican II and with Paul VI, undoubtedly *CiV* gives also an impression of drawing back. In the 159 footnotes there are references only to papal and conciliar documents with the exception of one citation of a Greek philosopher (Heraclitus of Ephesus), one citation of Saint Augustine, and one of Saint Thomas Aquinas. Of course, the encyclical was not written in isolation by the pope alone and the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace played an important role. Through this channel some specialists were consulted and, for example, as we have mentioned earlier, the influence of economists close to the Focolare movement is widely recognized. There are also underlying debates with philosophical theories. But nothing is made explicit. In addition, with Luk Bouckaert we can easily notice that “there is a glaring absence of

²¹ Drew Christiansen, “Metaphysics and Society: A Commentary on *Caritas in Veritate*,” *Theological Studies* 71, no.1 (2010): 3-28 at 10.

interreligious or interspiritual dialogue, a vital lever today in any attempt to alter the world around us.”²²

Nonetheless, if not conspicuously practiced, dialogue is advocated at several points in the encyclical. The complexity of the issues related to human development requires “that the various disciplines have to work together through an orderly interdisciplinary exchange” (*CiV* 30). The Church’s social doctrine is recognized as “having an important interdisciplinary dimension” (*CiV* 31). Benedict XVI also adamantly promotes a fruitful dialogue between reason and faith because “reason always stands in need of being purified by faith” and “religion always needs to be purified by reason” (*CiV* 56). The pope sees in natural law, an effective tool for acknowledging “examples of ethical convergence across cultures” in order to ensure “that the multi-faceted pluralism of cultural diversity does not detach itself from the common quest for truth, goodness and God” (*CiV* 59).²³

To make sense of what seems at first a discrepancy between what is said and what is practiced it is necessary to look at different ways of understanding the notion of dialogue. In *GS* the stress was put on a double and reciprocal movement in the dialogical approach of the church to the world. The church has something to provide to the world by proclaiming salvation in Jesus

²² Luk Bouckaert, “Tensions Between Proclamation and Dialogue,” in *The Moral Dynamics of Economic Life*, ed. Daniel K. Finn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 118.

²³ This understanding of natural law as a fruitful opportunity for encounter among cultures in the search for goodness is the starting point of the document on natural law written by the International Theological Commission upon the request of the Pope in 2009. International Theological Commission, *In Search of a Universal Ethic: A New Look at the Natural Law* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2012).

Christ and the church receives from the world insights in its quest for God.²⁴ The notion of “interpreting the signs of the times” includes the task of recognizing the seeds of truth already present in cultures, religions, and human aspirations outside the visible church.

With Benedict XVI, there is rather a stress on the asymmetry remaining in the dialogue between the church and the world. Dialogue ought to be rooted in truth: “*Truth*, in fact, is *logos* which creates *diá-logos*, and hence communication and communion” (*CiV* 4). There is no authentic dialogue possible without this reference to the truth beyond it and without a clear awareness of the specific identity of the various dialogue partners. Otherwise there is a danger of falling into relativism. This is what happens too often nowadays in the interaction between cultures. *CiV* affirms:

One may observe a *cultural eclecticism* that is often assumed uncritically; cultures are simply placed alongside one another and viewed as substantially equivalent and interchangeable. This easily yields to a relativism that does not serve true intercultural dialogue (*CiV* 26).

The church has the mission to give testimony to the truth of Christ, the *Logos*, in face of a growing relativism. Therefore, the principle of dialogue as understood by Benedict XVI “is not interpreted as a social dialogue between equals but as a way of disclosing already held truth through reason illuminated by faith.”²⁵ Dialoguing with others is not so much a way to reach out to some elements of truth which they would possess and which we would be missing but it is rather a way of refining and better expressing what the church founded in Christ already possesses. Indeed, it is noticeable that when Benedict XVI mentions explicitly secular thinkers –

²⁴ Cf. *GS* 40-45.

²⁵ Bouckaert, “Tensions Between Proclamation and Dialogue,” 119-120.

as he does in his two previous encyclicals – he generally uses them as opportunities to stress what is missing or flawed in their reflection and that the Christian faith is correcting.

Though not absent, the notion of dialogue between church and world takes a different tone in *CiV* than previously in *GS* and *PP*. In a similar fashion as the departing from an inductive methodology, it illustrates an important shift in the style of CST. Rather than simply seeing this shift as a drawback, it is possible to give it a theological meaning and to highlight the aspects of the mystery of God to which it gives testimony.

c) Theological Interpretation

The shift in style noticeable in *CiV* in comparison with *PP*, and some expressions of which we had already indicated in *SRS*, is significant of the vision of God, of the world, of the church, and of their relations, at work in the so called “Augustinian” framework. It stresses a dimension of opposition between the world and the church that then Cardinal Ratzinger perfectly described two decades earlier. He explained:

Vatican II was right in its desire for a revision of the relations between the Church and the world. There are in fact values, which, even though they originated outside the Church, can find their place – provided they are clarified and corrected – in her perspective. But whoever thinks that these two realities can meet each other without conflict or even be identical would betray that he understands neither the Church nor the world.

It is not Christians who oppose the world, but rather the world which opposes itself to them when the truth about God, about Christ and about man is proclaimed. The world waxes indignant when sin and grace are called by their names. After the phase of indiscriminate ‘openness’ it is time that the Christian reacquire the consciousness of belonging to a minority and of often being in opposition to what is obvious, plausible and natural for that mentality which the New Testament calls – and certainly not in a positive sense – the ‘spirit of the world.’ It is time to find again the courage of non-conformism, the capacity to oppose many

of the trends of the surrounding culture renouncing a certain euphoric post-conciliar solidarity.²⁶

To stress the crucial distinction and even a certain level of antithesis between the world and the church is a theological affirmation because, as Ratzinger mentions, it has to do with sin and grace. It offers an important reminder about one aspect of the mystery of God for us. The world is marked by sin, and grace is an absolutely free gift from God which the world and human beings cannot generate by themselves. Whereas solidarity with the world and the effort to recognize positive values outside the church underscores the dimension of human cooperation with God's grace, the more oppositional framework highlights the freedom of God's initiative and the creatureliness of the human being.

That grace is a gift is a central theological reminder made by *CiV*. It is explicitly exposed in chapter three. Benedict points out that "sometimes modern man is wrongly convinced that he is the sole author of himself, his life, and society... it is a consequence... of *original sin*." At this moment of history, this is particularly visible, for example, in the dreadful consequences of considering the economy as entirely autonomous and to be "shielded from 'influences' of a moral character" (*CiV* 34). On the contrary, Benedict continues, "as the absolutely gratuitous gift of God, hope bursts into our lives as something not due to us, something that transcends every law of justice. Gift, by its nature, goes beyond merit, its rule is that of superabundance" (*CiV* 34). Faith, hope and charity, which grow within authentic human development, are God's gifts beyond any merit on the part of human beings. These gifts need to be recognized as such against

²⁶ Joseph Ratzinger with Vittorio Messori, *The Ratzinger Report. An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1985), 36.

the sinful temptation of absolute autonomy prompted by the technological and modern era. Grace as gift is not something which human beings can secure by themselves.

By affirming in a rather top-down fashion the teaching office of the church and stressing the asymmetry at work when the church dialogues with the world, *CiV* pushes forward the dimension of absolute gift, absolute gratuitousness in God's salvation. The retrieval of this category of gift is undoubtedly a crucial contribution in a modern and post-modern world. This, however, runs the risk of downplaying cooperation within God's economy of salvation and its incarnational dimension which is another aspect of God's grace. Though sinful, the world is also graced and this grace is already at work in nature through the mystery of Creation.²⁷ *CiV*'s approach carries also a risk of too quickly identifying the institutional church and its magisterium with the truth of God's salvation. As Verstraeten writes, Benedict XVI offers "an image of God as exclusively mediated by the Church. And the Church in this view is a distinct socio-linguistic reality that brings God's love-in-truth to the world via truth propositions of the *magisterium*."²⁸ The qualification "exclusively" is certainly excessive, but undeniably the Belgian theologian captures the main paradigm at work in the encyclical and its implicit limits.

In conclusion, this study of the style adopted by *CiV* has made clear that Benedict XVI emphasizes the second part of what *GS* presented as the central task of the church: "scrutinizing the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel" (*GS* 4). The priority for him is the movement of shedding the light of the Gospel, which he understands as reminding us

²⁷ As Rahner puts it, "Nature is because grace had to be." Karl Rahner, "On the Theology of Worship," *TI*, Vol. 19 (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 147.

²⁸ Johan Verstraeten, "Dialogue in Light of the Signs of the Times," in *The Moral Dynamics*, 121.

of theological and philosophical key principles from the magisterium and applying them to the current situation. This constitutes a shift from the style of *PP*, and even of *SRS*. In coherence with the Augustinian framework within which he navigates, it expresses very well the dimension of absolute gift in God's grace and the distinction to be made between the *earthly city* in which we live and which is marked by sin and the *city of God* we hope for.

III. THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

“The social question has become a radically anthropological question” (*CiV* 75). *CiV* is adamant in underscoring that the many challenges the world faces in the economic, political, and social areas have their roots in a distorted vision of the human being. For example, it is a mistaken view of the human person which undermines the current economic order. In this view the person is reduced to a *homo economicus*, driven by self-interest, the pursuit of profit and accumulation of wealth.²⁹ In this context, the mission of the church to testify to charity in truth takes a central form in providing an articulated anthropology rooted in biblical revelation and developed throughout its tradition. At the heart of *CiV*'s argument lies a vision of the human being in the presence of God and in relation to others and the environment. Consequently there is much to recover from it in terms of contributions to theological anthropology.

In this section, I will limit myself to three themes which are reminiscent of what we found in the two previous encyclicals but are also exemplars of the particular “Augustinian” theological framework at play. First, human development is before all else a vocation. This vocation is a vocation to love which requires openness to God and transcendence and which is the source of

²⁹ Kenneth Himes, “Benedict’s View of the Person,” in *The Moral Dynamics*, 31-33.

authentic freedom. Second, gift and gratuitousness are crucial features of human life. They are rooted in the very nature of creatures engendered by the Creator's love. Economic and social life should not be estranged from this reality. Third, *CiV* also highlights the centrality of the category of relation in order to envision the development of the human person amidst the entire single human family. Interpersonal relations are rooted in the mystery of the Trinity and find authentic expression in various calls for fostering communion, a notion dear to theologians Hans Urs von Balthasar and Joseph Ratzinger.

Through these three themes, we will encounter the traditional balance in Christian anthropology between the personal and the social dimensions of being human. *CiV* stresses, in an even more striking manner, the theological aspect of these dimensions. It does not hesitate to affirm that “without God man neither knows which way to go, nor even understands who he is” (*CiV* 78). This is the mark of the “Augustinian” framework. Nonetheless, it will be interesting to note in some final remarks, how the specific content of the encyclical and the issues addressed, prompt the pope to foster many structural changes and not simply advocate for personal conversion. This is a tweak away from his favored approach, and it gives a little flavor of a more “liberationist” framework.

a) Development as Vocation

“Vocation” is a pre-eminent notion in *CiV*'s anthropological vision.³⁰ Charity in truth which is the driving force for authentic development, is a “vocation planted by God in the mind and heart of every human person” (*CiV* 1). The main truth that the encyclical borrows from *PP* is that

³⁰ There are no less than 26 occurrences of the word in the encyclical.

“integral development” which concerns “the whole of the human person in every single dimension” is “primarily a vocation” (*CiV* 11).³¹ This implies a dynamic vision of the human being having aspiration and desire to develop and to grow humanly in solidarity with others.

Crucially for *CiV*, human development as vocation requires openness to God. The transcendent dimension of the person is essential. Thus the encyclical posits that,

Such development requires a transcendent vision of the person, it needs God: without him, development is either denied or entrusted exclusively to man, who falls into the trap of thinking he can bring about his own salvation, and ends up promoting a dehumanized form of development. Only through an encounter with God are we able to see in the other something more than just another creature, to recognize the divine image in the other, thus truly to discover him or her and to mature in a love “that becomes concern and care for the other” (*CiV* 11).

The dynamism at work in the development of the human person – and of human societies – has a direction. It is oriented toward and rooted in God. To ignore this is to fall into the trap of thinking that we, as human beings are the source of who we are and are able to save ourselves. It also impedes the development of true relations of love and care among human beings recognized as bearing the image of God. On these two anthropological features we will say more later but this quote makes explicit their establishment in the fundamental recognition of the transcendent dimension of the human person.

In the conclusion of the encyclical, the pope comes back to his fundamental claim that authentic development cannot exclude God. He warns that “ideological rejection of God and an atheism of indifference, oblivious to the Creator and at risk of becoming equally oblivious to human values, constitute some of the chief obstacles to development today” (*CiV* 75). The

³¹ Cf. *PP* 15. See as well *CiV* 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 where the message of *PP* is retrieved around the notion of vocation.

reason is that “*a humanism which excludes God is an inhuman humanism*” (ibid.).³² On the contrary “awareness of God’s undying love sustains us in our laborious and stimulating work for justice and the development of peoples” (ibid.).

Expressing the centrality of human openness to God and transcendence, *CiV* reaffirms the importance of the right to religious freedom. Not simply is this right endangered by some forms of religious fanaticism in parts of the world, but it is also threatened by the “deliberate promotion of religious indifference or practical atheism” in many others. This deprives the task of authentic development of peoples from necessary spiritual and human resources (*CiV* 29).³³

Human development as vocation open to transcendence presupposes also “the responsible freedom of the individual and of people” (*CiV* 17). Individuals and peoples are the first agents of their development and they should not be deprived of this agency. This occurs too often in new forms of colonialism (*CiV* 33) or when subsidiarity is not respected in the implementation of development aid (*CiV* 58, 60). Speaking about peace building, the encyclical reminds us that “the voice of the peoples affected must be heard and their situation must be taken into consideration, if their expectations are to be correctly interpreted” (*CiV* 72).

Concerning freedom, *CiV* is clear in putting it as a central feature of being human in connection with the transcendent dimension. Thus, “human rights risk being ignored either because they are robbed of their transcendent foundation or because personal freedom is not

³² One finds the same type of affirmation in *PP* 42, to which *CiV* refers in a note. *PP* quotes Henri de Lubac: “Without God man can organize [the world] in the end only to man’s detriment. An isolated humanism is an inhuman humanism.” Cf. Henri de Lubac, *Le drame de l’humanisme athée* (Paris: Spes, 1945), 10.

³³ See as well *CiV* 11.

acknowledged” (*CiV* 56). This freedom is not pure, unlimited freedom of choice. It is responsible freedom to do the good, to practice charity in truth with and for others. The reflection concerning technology in chapter six offers an illustration of this meaning of freedom. Technological progress in fields such as biology and medicine, but also economics, or communications, has considerably extended the range of the possible. But not everything that is technically possible is good for humanity. Technology ought to remain the object of moral choices. Ethics can never be excluded. This is where the authentic meaning of freedom is to be found. Freedom is not the capacity to do whatever technology allows. This would mean falling under the domination of technology in the same way in previous decades ideologies exercised their domination. On the contrary, “*human freedom is authentic only when it responds to the fascination of technology with decisions that are the fruit of moral responsibility*” (*CiV* 70). Authentic freedom is rooted in the recognition of limits against any Promethean presumption. It is “a response to the call of being, beginning with our own personal being” (*CiV* 70). It requires a constant search for the truth of the moral law “which God has written on our hearts” (*CiV* 68).

b) Gift and Gratuitousness

A second anthropological motif deployed in *CiV* is the notion of gift and gratuitousness. This motif is the key principle of chapter three, “Fraternity, Economic Development, and Civil Society,” but it is also at work in what is said about our relationship to the natural environment in chapter four.

The recognition of the “astonishing experience of gift” at work in human life runs counter to a “purely consumerist and utilitarian view of life.” Making gift and gratuitousness integral parts of various dimensions of social life is an important reminder that the human person is not self-

sufficient. Human beings are not the sole authors of their lives. They are not creators of themselves but creatures. They are not “self-generated” (*CiV* 68) or the “product of their own labors” (*CiV* 74). Rather, gift “expresses and makes present [the] transcendent dimension” of the person (*CiV* 34), the fact that he or she depends on God (*CiV* 74). The principle of gratuitousness is also at the base of the building of a community in fraternity (*CiV* 34).

As a consequence, *CiV* affirms that the logic of gift, which does not exclude justice, should not be added to it from without, as a second element. On the contrary, “economic, social and political development, if it is to be authentically human, needs to make room for the *principle of gratuitousness* as an expression of fraternity” (*CiV* 34).³⁴ This is particularly true in the area of economics. The distinction between for-profit companies and non-profit organizations does not mean that the first cannot be informed by a dimension of gratuitousness. Indeed any business activity has a human dimension which bears significance “prior to its professional one.” Between the world of “non-profit” and the world of “for-profit” there is a possible cross-fertilization.³⁵ In support of this argument lies the Focolare’s experience of an economy of communion. Some commentators have also noticed that, far from being a mere idealistic dream, what is advanced here in the encyclical is already at work in businesses of service in which human relations are primary.³⁶ Other forms of inclusion of the dimension of gratuitousness in economic life evoked in the encyclical include greater awareness of corporate social responsibility (*CiV* 40), ethical

³⁴ See as well *CiV* 36.

³⁵ Cf. *CiV* 41, 46.

³⁶ James Franklin, “*Caritas in Veritate*: Economic Activity as Personal Encounter and the Economy of Gratuitousness,” *Solidarity: The Journal of Catholic Social Thought and Secular Ethics* 1, no.1 (2011), art. 3.<http://researchonline.nd.edu.au/solidarity/vol1/iss1/3>.

investments (*CiV* 40), micro-finance (*CiV* 65) and promotion of fair trade and consumer responsibility (*CiV* 66).

In another way of looking at the importance of bringing the principle of gratuitousness in all dimensions of human life, *CiV* retrieves the distinction made by John Paul II in *Centesimus annus*, between the market, the State and civil society. He thus highlighted the necessity of a balance between the three in front of the danger of an omnipotence of the market in the post-1989 world. As *CiV* notes, John Paul “saw civil society as the most natural setting for an *economy of gratuitousness* and fraternity, but did not mean to deny it a place in the other two settings” (*CiV* 38).

Repeated mentions of the need for a dimension of gift and gratuitousness are the concrete reminder of the moral dimension of economic life. Economic activity has its goal in the pursuit of the common good. The market is not bad *per se* but the way it is used can be – and too often in recent times has been – problematic. The economic sphere is not ethically neutral nor inherently inhuman. Traditional ethical principles such as honesty, transparency, and responsibility are important in the sphere of economics and finances, but so also is gratuitousness. It must find its place “*within normal economic activity*” (*CiV* 36).

When *CiV* deals with the challenge of development in relation to caring for the natural environment, the notion of gift is also central. The pope states,

The environment is God’s gift to everyone, and in our use we have a responsibility toward the poor, toward future generations and toward humanity as a whole... *Nature expresses a design of love and truth*. It is prior to us, and it has been given to us by God as the setting for our life. Nature speaks to us of the Creator (cf. Rom 1:20) and his love for humanity. It is destined to be “recapitulated” in Christ at the end of time (cf. Eph 1:9-10; Col 1:19-20)... Nature is at our disposal not as “a heap of scattered refuse” but as a gift of the Creator who has given it an inbuilt order, enabling man to draw from it the principles needed in order to “till it and keep it” (Gn 2:15) (*CiV* 48).

Recognition of nature as gift is recognition of the Creator and of the fact that we, as human beings, are not the Creator. In addressing this issue of environmental crisis, *CiV* reaffirms the traditional teaching of the Catholic church. It favors the principle of good stewardship.³⁷ The encyclical insists on the necessity not to situate the natural environment as something more important than the human person but it also strongly denounces “the opposite position which aims at total technical dominion over nature. The natural environment is more than raw material to be manipulated at our pleasure; it is a wondrous work of the Creator containing a ‘grammar’ which sets forth ends and criteria for its wise use, not its reckless exploitation” (*CiV* 48).

The recognition of the dimension of gift at the heart of the human condition opens the way for the connection between life, and social and environmental issues. “*The way humanity treats the environment influences the way it treats itself and vice versa*” (*CiV* 51). For the pope, whether it is the lack of care for the environment, the lack of care for the unborn or the dying, or the lack of care for the victims of unjust economic and social conditions, the root issue is a moral failure which lies in failing to recognize that, as human beings, we receive life, natural environment, and other human beings as gifts of God.³⁸ The proper consideration of the human person as a creature in relation to the Creator and to the rest of creation is the road toward authentic development, the road of truth in charity (*CiV* 52).

³⁷ Cf. Messages for the world day of peace in 1990 and 2010. John Paul II, *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation* (Jan. 1, 1990), www.vatican.va; Benedict XVI, *If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation* (Jan. 1, 2010), www.vatican.va.

³⁸ Cf. *CiV* 51. The encyclical speaks of “human ecology” as interrelated with “environmental ecology.”

This recognition of the dimension of gift as a central anthropological feature is seen in *CiV* as the path toward building solidarity and cooperation within the human family. It is thus tightly connected to the third anthropological theme to which we now turn: relationality.

c) Relationality and Communion

In chapter five, *CiV* deals with various concrete aspects of cooperation and collaboration within the whole human family. Topics range from international aid for development and greater access to education, to tourism, migrations, international finance, the role of consumer associations, and finally the reform of the United Nations. The treatment of these issues reflects one fundamental anthropological assumption. The human being is meant to be in relation. Isolation is a deep form of poverty. The development of peoples requires the “recognition that the human race is a single family” working toward true communion.

CiV offers a metaphysical and theological approach to the category of relation as the grounding for dealing with concrete issues in international cooperation. First, on the negative side it points to the phenomenon of isolation affecting modern human beings and highlights its connection with the illusion of self-sufficiency evoked in the previous section. Ignoring the dimension of dependence inherent in the nature of a creature leads to alienation and isolation. It is a form of poverty

often produced by a rejection of God’s love, by man’s basic and tragic tendency to close in on himself, thinking himself to be self-sufficient or merely an insignificant and ephemeral fact, a “stranger” in a random universe. Man is alienated when he is alone, when he is detached from reality, when he stops thinking and believing in a foundation. All of humanity is alienated when too much trust is placed in merely human projects, ideologies and false utopias (*CiV* 53).

Second, on the positive side, *CiV* recalls that “as a spiritual being, the human creature is defined through interpersonal relations” (*CiV* 54). Christian revelation has much to contribute

here especially in stressing how the human community does not absorb the individual, as in various forms of totalitarianism, but values her and allows her to flourish in proper relationship to the totality. As the encyclical affirms, “just as the Church rejoices in each ‘new creation’ (Gal 6:15; 2 Cor 5:17) incorporated by baptism into her living Body, so too the unity of the human family does not submerge the identities of individuals, peoples and cultures, but makes them more transparent to each other and links them more closely in their legitimate diversity” (*CiV* 53). Therefore, human beings are called to recognize that they constitute one single human family and to work toward ever greater “inclusion-in-relation of all individuals and peoples in the one community” this family is, “built on the basis of the fundamental values of justice and peace” (*CiV* 54).

Following on what *GS* 24 and *SRS* 40 had suggested, *CiV* makes even more explicit the connection between this endeavor of realizing the human family and the mystery of the Trinity. The encyclical continues,

This perspective is illuminated in a striking way by the relationship between the Persons of the Trinity within the one divine Substance. The Trinity is absolute unity insofar as the three divine Persons are pure relationality... God desires to incorporate us into this reality of communion as well: ‘that they may be one even as we are one’ (Jn 17:22)... *In the light of the revealed mystery of the Trinity*, we understand that true openness does not mean loss of individual identity but profound interpenetration (*CiV* 54).

A third aspect of the retrieval of a metaphysical and theological understanding of the category of relation at the heart of being human is the orientation toward communion. It is true that today humanity appears more and more interconnected with a greater level of interaction among people across the whole world. Nonetheless, the encyclical insists that “this shared sense of being close to one another must be transformed into true communion” (*CiV* 53). Communion

implies the notion of “working together” or “advancing together” and not merely being “a group of subjects who happen to live side by side” (*CiV* 53).

When *CiV* deals with very concrete issues, it implies and points to this vision of the human being in which relationality is essential and where all are called to build the human family in communion according to the Trinitarian mode. For example, when subsidiarity is not respected in international aid and when recipients are maintained in a state of dependence (*CiV* 58), it is the dignity of those who are members of the same human family which is not recognized. Or when a blind eye is turned on sex-tourism or in less extreme cases when “international tourism follows a consumerist and hedonistic pattern, as a form of escapism planned in a manner typical of the countries of origin,” this is “not conducive to authentic encounter between persons and cultures,” and therefore it is not fulfilling the human vocation toward authentic communion (*CiV* 61). On the other hand, greater consciousness of the specific social responsibility of consumers concerning what they buy, from whom they buy, and how much they pay for it, helps building solidarity and communion (*CiV* 55).

In all of this, what is put forward is simply the social and interpersonal dimension of being human. This is the basic anthropological feature that we encountered in the two previous encyclicals when dealing with the notion of solidarity. What is rather more specific with *CiV* is the insistence on the notion of communion in order to express what is central in the fact that human beings are meant to be in relation. A quick detour via a reflection from Hans Urs von Balthasar is here helpful to capture what is at stake.

When von Balthasar, alongside Ratzinger and de Lubac, departed from *Concilium*, the famous international journal of theology founded in the aftermath of Vatican II, they decided to

name their new publication *Communio*. In the opening article, Balthasar reflects on this notion of communion.³⁹ He writes,

Com-munio means community in the concrete expressive sense of being brought together into a common fortification... but also into a common achievement, task, administration, which at the same time can mean mutual satisfaction, gift, grace. Those who are in 'communion' therefore do not enter into such social relationship solely on their own initiative... They are already in it from the start, mutually dependent apriori, ... to carry out a common activity.⁴⁰

But in a community, with many different freedoms interacting, the struggle is to move forward beyond any crisis of diverging opinions and toward common and correct decision. For Balthasar, everything then depends on "how solidly the primary foundation is laid on which all the deliberative and critical processes are built."⁴¹ This foundation is to be found in Christian terms. It relies on God as absolute love coming out of the Trinity and on humanity created in the image of God. "The unity bestowed is not at our command; it springs from God, is realized in God, and God remains beyond our reach."⁴²

What is crucial in this approach is, first, the dimension of common work or common activity in the realization of communion. It is an active and dynamic process, not a static state. This is what makes the notion suitable for social ethics concerned with building stronger ties within the human family.

³⁹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Communio – a Program," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 33 (Spring 2006): 153-169. Originally published as "Communio – a Program," in *International Catholic Review* (the forerunner to *Communio: International Catholic Review*) 1 (January-February, 1972).

⁴⁰ Ibid., 155.

⁴¹ Ibid., 156.

⁴² Ibid., 160.

Second, the notion of communion implies the recognition of the transcendent dimension of the human person. Communion certainly fits well with what Paul VI or John Paul II highlighted when they spoke about solidarity but there is a strong insistence that communion is founded in God. Bounds of communion are a given and not merely the object of a personal initiative. Interpersonal and social relations are always considered in connection with the primordial relation to the Creator. It is by deepening their common relationship to the Creator that human beings strengthen the unity of the human family. This approach to the social dimension of being human which stresses a primary transcendent relation with God is certainly very much at work in *CiV*.⁴³ Here appears the connection with the dimension of gratuitousness about which the pope insists so much. Justice as expression of a reciprocal relation between equals is fostered and even exceeded by the recognition of its origin beyond human achievements in God's love alone. It fits in the overall "Augustinian" framework. On the contrary, more liberationist approaches would be less comfortable with a vision which somehow places the social dimension as second, even if not secondary, to individual relation to God.

d) Personal Conversion and Social Change

All that has been said thus far on the three key anthropological motifs put forward in *CiV* coheres with the overall "Augustinian" framework, its insistence on the discrepancy between

⁴³ David Schindler notes that "the idea of a single unified family deriving from a common relation to the Creator" is a central idea in the anthropology of Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI and also in John Paul II. "Man's relationality, his original being-with, is a being-with God, before it is a being-with other human beings. Or better: man's being-with God, as creaturely, is first a *being-from*, in the manner of a child who participates in being only as the fruit of the radical generosity of the One Who Is." David L. Schindler, "The Anthropological Unity of *Caritas in Veritate*. Life, Family, and Development," in Adrian Pabst, *The Crisis of Global Capitalism*, 209-218 at 214.

God's will and the world as it stands and the necessity to make the former heard. There is nonetheless some reframing which appears due to the very nature of a social encyclical. It is visible when looking at the articulation between personal conversion and structural or social change.

In the theological approach favored by Benedict XVI, and following on what he wrote in previous encyclicals, one would expect a strong insistence on personal conversion and reluctance vis-à-vis speaking of structural change. In *Deus caritas est* (DCE) the pope had drawn on the distinction between charity and justice in order to stress that the role of the institutional church was first to purify the reason and awaken moral forces by its teaching and second to practice works of charity oriented toward particular situations of distress. On the other hand the work for a more just ordering of society was the duty of the lay faithful (DCE 29). In *Spe salvi* (SS), Benedict warned that "the right state of human affairs, the moral well-being of the world can never be guaranteed simply through structures alone, however good they are," even if "such structures are not only important but necessary... the kingdom of God will never be definitively established in this world" (SS 24).⁴⁴

Bernard Laurent critiques *CiV* for breaking with the tradition of CST and its denunciation of the ideology of liberalism.⁴⁵ For him, the pope does not sufficiently denounce the interplay of structural forces and rather gives primacy to personal responsibility. It is true that social analysis

⁴⁴ This is reminiscent of the pope's critiques of liberation theology when he was prefect of the CDF. Nonetheless in *SS* other passages stress that Christian hope is necessary so that we can change the present (*SS* 2) or that "salvation has always been considered as a 'social' reality" (*SS* 14). Cf. Lisa S. Cahill, "*Caritas in Veritate*, Benedict's Global Reorientation," *Theological Studies* 71, no.2 (2010): 291-319 at 316.

⁴⁵ Bernard Laurent, "*Caritas in Veritate* as a Social Encyclical: a Modest Challenge to Economic, Social, and Political Institutions," *Theological Studies* 71, no.3 (2010): 515-544.

is not much developed in this encyclical which wishes to situate itself at the level of a theological and ethical consideration of the issues. In support of Laurent's argument one can notice general statements which seem to ignore the need for structural change such as: "the whole Church, in all her being and acting — when she proclaims, when she celebrates, when she performs works of charity — is engaged in promoting integral human development" (*CiV* 11). Concerning the market and the financial crisis, *CiV* sees economy and finance as instruments which "can be used badly when those at the helm are motivated by purely selfish ends." In consequence, for the pope, "it is not the instrument that must be called to account, but individuals, their moral conscience and their personal and social responsibility" (*CiV* 36).

Nonetheless, with other commentators, it seems more accurate to highlight that in *CiV* structural change remains very much in the picture. Just a few lines after the previous consideration about finance and economy, the encyclical posits that the economic sphere "is part and parcel of human activity and precisely because it is human, it must be *structured* and governed in an ethical manner" (*CiV* 36, emphasis mine).⁴⁶ From the reform of the United Nations to the promotion of fairer international trade relations, changes in migrations policies, rebalancing of the articulation between State, private business and civil society, and many other topics, the encyclical makes it clear that institutions and structures need to be changed. A good illustration is given on the issue of hunger. The encyclical stresses that "hunger is not so much dependent on lack of material things as on shortage of social resources, the most important of

⁴⁶ A few years later, the Pontifical Council Justice and Peace, building on *CiV*'s orientations, issued a more specific document about the reform of the financial world advocating for an international regulatory body. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Towards Reforming the International Financial and Monetary Systems in the Context of Global Public Authority* (24 Oct 2011), www.vatican.va.

which are institutional.” And it adds that “the problem of food insecurity needs to be addressed within a long-term perspective, eliminating the structural causes that give rise to it” (*CiV* 27).

We can also notice that the promotion of gratuitousness and of communion in various aspects of economic, political and social life, which we highlighted in the previous sections, has implications at a structural level. The pope invites to a rather profound reshaping of economy by bringing back the human person at the center. For example, the relational anthropology he offers informs his plea for redirecting economic activity from “the simple application of *commercial logic*” toward “*the pursuit of the common good*” (*CiV* 35). This implies restructuring the economic sphere by recognizing the need for some regulation and a plurality of actors (profit and non-profit corporations, the state, mixed entities). The call for greater communion does not downplay but rather enhances many specific calls for greater justice.⁴⁷

Even at the level of the principles mentioned in the introduction of the encyclical, the structural aspect is central. Christiansen notes that “for anyone still tempted to think that Benedict does not favor a structural approach to social justice, the encyclical's treatment of the common good is strong evidence to the contrary.”⁴⁸ Indeed, for the pope, the common good “is the institutional path – we might call it the political path – of charity, no less excellent and effective than the kind of charity which encounters the neighbor directly, outside the institutional mediation of the *pólis*” (*CiV* 7). And here, the pope does not reiterate the distinction he made in *DCE* between the role of the faithful and the role of the institutional church. In *CiV* the stress is more on the consideration of the mission of the church as a whole.

⁴⁷ Concerning the structural implication of adopting the principles of fraternity, gift and reciprocity in the economic sphere see, Zamagni, “Fraternity, Gift and Reciprocity.”

⁴⁸ Christiansen, “Metaphysics and Society,” 13.

This greater consideration given to social and structural change is an interesting reframing introduced into the theological framework of Pope Benedict XVI by a more direct confrontation with social, economic, and political issues. It complements the vision of the human being that we recovered in this section and which was mainly focused on the transcendent dimension, the dependence on God and the vocation to communion. It is an implicit tweaking of the Augustinian framework with a touch of a more liberationist one. In the next section about Christology, we will find the same dynamic at work.

IV. CHRISTOLOGY

In *CiV* there are far less explicit Christological references than in *SRS* or even *PP*.⁴⁹ This, of course, does not mean that the encyclical has no Christological foundations. The opening sentence should be sufficient to prove the contrary: “Charity in truth, to which *Jesus Christ bore witness by his earthly life and especially his death and resurrection*, is the principal driving force behind the authentic development of every person and of all humanity” (*CiV* 1, emphasis mine). Nonetheless, in our quest for Christological contributions in Benedict’s social encyclical, we are dealing here with implicit assumptions rather than explicit and fully developed aspects of the mystery of Jesus Christ for us.

At various points in the encyclical we encounter a Word Christology, favored by Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict. This Christology insists on a strong affirmation of the divinity of the second person of the Trinity and envisions salvation in terms of participation in divine life

⁴⁹ In order to get an idea, the words “Jesus,” “Christ,” and “Lord” appear independently 36 times in *CiV* (roughly 30,000 words), 50 times in *SRS* (roughly 23,000 words), and 21 times in *PP* (roughly 12,000 words).

through union with Christ. Nonetheless, the attention paid to global justice issues and the challenges of alleviating the pain and suffering provoked in this world by sin at structural levels (gross inequalities, abuses of power, greed, etc.) suggests another complementary Spirit Christology more attentive to salvation as the inbreaking kingdom of God through Christian discipleship and reordering of relationships with God, with the neighbor, and with the community.⁵⁰

This section will expose these two different Christological approaches which are in continuation with what we found in *SRS*. Doing this, the section will illustrate how special concerns about global justice and integral human development prompt a rebalancing of the “Augustinian” theological framework.

a) Word Christology

The figure of Jesus Christ as teacher of truth appears several times in *CiV* and coheres with the importance placed on inseparably practicing charity and proclaiming truth. “According to the teaching of Jesus” (*CiV* 2), charity is the synthesis of the entire law. “Taught by her Lord, the Church examines the signs of the times and interprets them” (*CiV* 18). To feed the hungry is “an ethical imperative for the universal Church, as she responds to the teachings of her Founder, the Lord Jesus, concerning solidarity and the sharing of goods” (*CiV* 27). In the concluding section, the pope reaffirms that, in face of the enormous challenges concerning development, “we find

⁵⁰ In this section, I rely heavily on Lisa Cahill’s distinction between Word Christologies and Spirit Christologies and on her analysis of the reorientation of Benedict XVI’s Christology, ecclesiology and politics in *CiV*. Lisa Cahill, *Global Justice, Christology, and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 122-203; “*Caritas in Veritate*: Benedict’s Global Reorientation,” *Theological Studies* 71, no. 2 (2010): 291-319.

solace in the sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ who teaches us... and encourages us” (*CiV* 78). Benedict XVI then urges the faithful to pray to the Father “with the words that Jesus himself taught us” (*CiV* 79).

Christ is the revelation and the perfect manifestation of “truth in love.” “In Christ, *charity in truth* becomes the Face of his Person, a vocation for us to love our brothers and sisters in the truth of his plan. Indeed, he himself is the Truth” (*CiV* 1). “Love is revealed and made present by Christ” (*CiV* 5). This is why the mission of the church to foster justice and enact charity is inseparable from the proclamation of Christ, or from “making Christ’s love visible” (*CiV* 13). The social doctrine of the church is defined as “*caritas in veritate in re sociali*: the proclamation of the truth of Christ’s love in society” (*CiV* 5). “Life in Christ is the first and principal factor of development” (*CiV* 8).⁵¹ Referring to Paul VI’s *Evangelii nuntiandi*, *CiV* insists on the connection between evangelization and works of justice and charity: “Testimony to Christ’s charity, through works of justice, peace and development, is part and parcel of evangelization” (*CiV* 15).

Christ teaches love and reveals love in truth but, through union with him, he also empowers human beings to love and he transforms and liberates them for love. Communion with God through union with Christ is the best source for reconciliation among human beings and

⁵¹ Here *CiV* refers to *PP* 16 but has a different scope. *CiV* suggests that life in Christ is central for the development of peoples: “Pope Paul VI illuminated the great theme of the development of peoples with the splendor of truth and the gentle light of Christ’s charity. He taught that life in Christ is the first and principal factor of development and he entrusted us with the task of travelling the path of development with all our heart and all our intelligence, that is to say with the ardor of charity and the wisdom of truth” (*CiV* 8). *PP*, however, was talking about personal development: “By reason of this union with Christ, the source of life, man attains to new fulfillment of himself, to a transcendent humanism which gives him his greatest possible perfection: this is the highest goal of personal development” (*PP* 16).

authentic development. *CiV* restates the central affirmation of *GS* 22. Christ, “in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals humanity to itself” (*CiV* 18, *GS* 22). This is why “the Gospel is fundamental for development” and ultimately, “every authentic vocation to integral human development must be directed [to Christ]” (*CiV* 18). Later on the encyclical recalls that Jesus said “Apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5) and also encouraged his disciples: “I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:20).⁵² This union with Christ is possible because in the first place Christ is the one who united with humanity. He is the Word who became flesh and who unites in his person, human and divine natures.

Everything which has been said thus far, and that covers almost all the explicit Christological references in the encyclical, reflects a Word Christology. As defined by Lisa Cahill,

Word Christology, derived from the prologue to John’s gospel, provides the basis of a strong affirmation of the divinity of the second person of the Trinity and of Jesus Christ as Word incarnate; it has been in possession from Nicaea onward... Redemption and sanctification are understood as union with the person of Christ, the Word incarnate. Salvation is participation in the life of God (see 2 Pet 1:4), a share in which Christ cannot communicate to us unless he is fully God. Through Christ, one is united with the Father... Word Christology also supports the idea that, sin aside, authentic humanity is possible only in union with Jesus Christ, the perfecter of human nature.⁵³

We recognize easily in this description the accents noted above in *CiV* about the union with Christ and Christ revealing the perfection of humanity.

⁵² Cf. *CiV* 78.

⁵³ Cahill, *Global Justice, Christology, and Christian Ethics*, 130.

This concurs with Joseph Ratzinger's favored Christological approach as we encounter it in his three books portraying Jesus of Nazareth.⁵⁴ Relying greatly on the Gospel of John he insists on presenting the "real" Jesus as he is presented in Scripture, stressing his divinity right from the beginning. As Ratzinger reminds us in his introduction, the Christ-hymn of the letter to the Philippians (Ph 2:6-11) "offers a fully developed Christology stating that Jesus was equal to God, but emptied himself, became man, and humbled himself to die on the Cross, and that to him now belongs the worship of all creation, the adoration that God, through the Prophet Isaiah, said was due to him alone (cf. Is 45:23)."⁵⁵ For Ratzinger, such an attempt at portraying Jesus implies taking a critical distance from purely historical-critical methodologies in their endeavor to recover a "historical Jesus" disconnected from the "Christ of faith."

It comes as no surprise that in *CiV* the Johannine corpus is cited eight times whereas there is no explicit reference to Luke-Acts. In addition, direct references to Jesus' concrete life two thousand years ago are almost absent whereas the notion of personal, concrete and actual union with Christ appears as central.

As pointed out by Cahill, Word Christologies are "successful in affirming the divine origin of Jesus Christ and salvation, of ensuring hope in eternal life, and in conforming the spirituality of believers to the possibility of an elevating and transforming relation to God."⁵⁶ They also offer

⁵⁴ Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth. From Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration* (New York: Doubleday, 2007); *Jesus of Nazareth Part Two. Holy Week. From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2011); *Jesus of Nazareth. The Infancy Narratives* (New York: Image, 2012). See as well, Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1985).

⁵⁵ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. From Baptism to Transfiguration*, xxii.

⁵⁶ Cahill, *Global Justice, Christology, and Christian Ethics*, 148.

“potential resources for a this-worldly spirituality and an activist Christian political ethic.”⁵⁷ In insisting on union of God with humanity, they assert the possibility of communion among human beings because “in the humanity of Christ united with his divine nature, other human beings are also united with God.”⁵⁸ They also highlight the salvific nature of the incarnation in the face of so many human challenges which could bring us to despair if we were to rely on mere human capacities. Indeed, the very being of Jesus Christ, human and divine, “entails an elevation of human possibilities through union with God.”⁵⁹

Nonetheless, Cahill adds, “Word Christologies can tend to abstractness or ethereality regarding the specific demands of ‘love’ and have a proclivity at the ethical level to invoke transcendence, rather than resistant engagement, in the face of the suffering and conflicts of history.”⁶⁰ There is a danger of downplaying the historical and social dimensions of the incarnation and the significance of the inbreaking of the kingdom of God through the Christian community under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is why we need to recognize that the mystery of Christ is not exhausted by a single type of Christology. In the theological tradition, other Christologies, which Cahill calls Spirit Christologies, are present. Although more implicitly, this other type is also at work in *CiV*.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 150.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

b) Spirit Christology

According to Cahill,

Spirit Christology, rooted in Luke-Acts and some Pauline letters is an alternative (not an opposite) that stresses the reality of the presence of God not only in Jesus Christ, but also in the church, through the risen Christ who sends his Spirit... Spirit Christology works salvation through Christian community as inbreaking kingdom of God and body of Christ, whereas Logos or Word Christology highlights salvation as self-transcendence and contemplation, toward union with the divine.⁶¹

A key point in this approach is the attention paid to concrete models of discipleship drawn on Jesus' earthly life, death and resurrection, and early church practical ideals. Jesus reached out to the poor and marginalized and proclaimed the kingdom as reconciliation and healing of fractured people and communities.⁶² This has strong implications in terms of social ethics. When Word Christology carries the risk of evading present reality, Spirit Christologies "bring us back to history, the humanity of Christ, the concrete texture of the experience of God, and empowerment for God's reign."⁶³ They encourage attention to social suffering and social change and to how salvation brought by Jesus Christ is at work in history. According to Roger Haight, the "fundamental metaphor" of Spirit Christology is "empowerment."⁶⁴ The Spirit of the risen Christ empowers us to bring about the kingdom of God. It is also to be noted that Spirit Christologies are not only motivated by ecclesial or pastoral concerns about living the Gospel and bringing about the kingdom of God, they are primarily committed to render more intelligible a profession

⁶¹ Ibid., 131. As representatives authors for Spirit Christology, Cahill mentions: Friedrich Schleiermacher, Shailer Mathews, D. M. Baillie, Geoffrey Lampe, Piet Schoonenberg, Jürgen Moltmann, Michael Welker, David Coffey, Ralph Del Colle, Roger Haight, James Dunn, Elizabeth Johnson, and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza.

⁶² Ibid., 126.

⁶³ Ibid., 151.

⁶⁴ Roger Haight, *The Future of Christology* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 175.

in the real humanity of Christ. They develop a deepened and fundamental understanding of the incarnation and expand fundamental Christological claims.⁶⁵

As we already noticed in describing some elements of context for *CiV*, Benedict XVI is greatly concerned with the challenge of secularization in Europe. For him the crises faced by Western countries are rooted in the modern radical rejection of God. In this context, it makes sense to put forward a Christology with a robust connection between the divine and the human and supporting the recovery of communion with and in God.⁶⁶ Nonetheless, when, as in *CiV*, the outlook is turned more broadly toward global justice issues, inequalities at the world level, challenges in the global South, and the crucial need for social institutional reforms whether concerning the financial system or the United Nations, this approach appears insufficient. As Cahill notices, “the divinity-focused Word Christology, until now favored by Benedict, is necessary but not sufficient to sustain the social role he has begun to envision for the Church and its members since becoming pope in 2005.”⁶⁷ Implicitly, *CiV* testifies to a diversification in Christologies by developing ethical reflections that are more robustly supported if Spirit Christology is added to the central Word Christology approach.

In the previous section, we ended by stressing that, in contrast with *DCE*, *CiV* sees work for structural change as intrinsic to Christian love and part of the mission of the whole church – not merely the laity. All through the encyclical, encouragement is given in favor of structural

⁶⁵ For an overview of the contributions of Spirit Christologies at the level of fundamental Christology, see: Lucy Peppiatt, “New Directions in Spirit Christology: A Foundation for a Charismatic Theology,” *Theology* 117, no.1 (2014): 3-10.

⁶⁶ Cahill, “Benedict’s reorientation,” 291.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 292.

reforms in social, political and economic fields. “Love... leads people to opt for courageous and generous engagement in the field of justice and peace” (*CiV* 1). There is much more here than an invitation to personal reconciliation and communion with God or than the promotion of a spiritual counter-cultural renewal in a world ignoring the divine. With Cahill, we can conclude that it is a significant, if not entirely achieved, revision of the previous scheme at work in *DCE*.⁶⁸

Fostering work for “Charity in truth” through justice, and the common good (*CiV* 6,7), would be reinforced by a Christology that stresses the significance of Jesus’ earthly life, his commitment to the poor, and the meaning of the kingdom of God. The first sentence of the encyclical opens a path in this direction when it states that Jesus Christ bore witness to charity in truth “*by his earthly life* and especially by his death and resurrection.” The remainder of the encyclical makes no further explicit connections with this Christological approach. Surprisingly, for example, in *CiV* there is no appeal to the principle of a preferential option for the poor and its theological grounding, which, nonetheless was endorsed by Benedict in the World Day of Peace Message 2009.⁶⁹ Overall, we are thus left with simply an implicit opening toward another Christological approach beyond Word Christology.

In conclusion, the Christological contribution of *CiV*, limited as it is, remains principally of the type of Word Christology. The encyclical stresses salvation as union with Christ who in his incarnation bridged the gap between the human and the divine. Christ is teacher of truth and manifestation of love. This is another expression of the overall “Augustinian” theological framework at work in the encyclical. Nonetheless, the particular scope of the document and the

⁶⁸ Ibid., 304.

⁶⁹ Benedict XVI, *Fighting Poverty to Build Peace. Message for the World Day of Peace* (Jan. 1, 2009), no.15. www.vatican.va.

issues that it covers prompt some nuancing and tweaking of this framework. As Cahill showed, another Christology, more attentive to the historical and social dimension of the salvation brought by Christ, is also, implicitly rather than explicitly, at work in the encyclical.

V. CONCLUSION: THE THEOLOGY OF *CARITAS IN VERITATE*

Among the three encyclicals studied in this dissertation, *CiV* is probably the most *explicitly* theological. By explicitly, I mean that it is the one which makes the most explicit references to theological concepts and principles. Throughout this chapter we have seen how addressing the issue of integral human development in the globalized world of the first decade of the 21st century, brings to the fore some aspects of the mystery of “God for us.” Discussing the roots of the financial and economic crisis, considering environmental challenges, denouncing the scandals of poverty, hunger, inequalities, denial of basic human rights beginning with the right to live, are an opportunity to offer a particular vision of God, of Christ, and of humanity. In a world which is tempted to forget God and where the illusion of self-sufficiency and absolute autonomy grows, *CiV* reminds us that God is creator and savior of humanity. Grace is a free gift from God mediated by the church. All the insistences on metaphysical foundations for ethical thinking, on openness to God, on the truth to be witnessed by the church and its magisterial teaching, go in this direction. On the contrary, ignorance of the moral dimension of economic life or exclusive reliance on technical solutions for the various crises of the current times are denounced as deadly paths. What is crucial for *CiV* is the recovery of an adequate anthropology. It includes the sense of being human as a vocation including a transcendent dimension. Being human implies also recognition of the dimension of gift and gratuitousness inherent in being a creature and not the Creator. Being human implies striving with others toward authentic communion. *CiV* points

toward Jesus Christ as the incarnate Word of God, uniting the human and the divine, and opening a path for humanity's union with God and humanity's unity in one family.

All these elements fit in an overall "Augustinian" framework which we saw is preponderant in Benedict XVI's thinking. Insistence is put on the gap remaining between the created world and humanity as marked by sin and God's infinite love. The world is in need of God's grace and salvation brought about by Christ's death and resurrection. The relation between the church and the world is marked by a dimension of confrontation and opposition. It is the church's mission to testify to the truth through its teaching office. Salvation comes through personal union with the divine. Undeniably, this approach responds well to the situation of the world as is particularly exemplified in the secularization and growing relativism at work in the West. More generally, it has also the merit of connecting solidly the social thought of the church with theological notions. It makes clear for believers that they cannot eschew the social, political, and economic resonances of their faith. In a certain sense it also brings a profound hope, in face of the breadth of the challenges, by reaffirming that God, not mere human capacities, is the source of hope.

Nonetheless there are obvious limits to this framework if it remains alone. *CiV* illustrates them very well. The affirmation of the centrality of faith and union with God for working toward development, especially when it is formulated with a phrase like "a humanism which excludes God is an inhuman humanism" (*CiV* 78), can render rather difficult dialogue and association with men and women from other faiths or with no declared faith. There is also a danger of putting little hope in what can be done in this world because all the weight is in the "not yet there" of the eschatological hope for the coming of the kingdom rather than in the "already here" of what Jesus Christ announced (cf. Lk 17:21: "the kingdom of God is among you"). The insistence on ontological personal union with God can very well overshadow the historical

dimension of salvation. The Word Christology of the Johannine literature which tends to focus on knowing Christ who is the truth, risks leaving aside the sense that revelation consists in the manifestation of God in action and not merely an 'icon' of the divine. The latter is often better highlighted in the Christology of the synoptic gospels and Paul. There is finally the risk of stressing the personal moral dimension of the issues and downplaying their social and structural aspect.

This is why it is very significant that operating in this "Augustinian" framework, *CiV* continues to offer nonetheless some openings toward the two other frameworks which we have seen more at work in *PP* and *SRS*. The recognition of some aspects of inductive methodology, especially the incorporation of the experience of the Focolare, points toward a "neo-Thomist" vision of the world, a world which is locus and object of God's grace. There are seeds of truth to be recognized in human history. The real attention paid by *CiV* to the necessity of structural changes in order to bring about justice is also an opening in the direction of the "liberationist" framework. Those openings are prompted by the very nature of the encyclical. Because it deals with issues of global justice, with concrete historical situations, and with social, political and economic challenges, it cannot stay in the purely "Augustinian" framework. As we navigate with magisterial CST in these three frameworks, *CiV* seems to be the furthest it is possible to go in the direction of the "Augustinian" one. The limits which the encyclical shows, suggest rather that CST, in order to be relevant ethically and theologically, needs to give more place to theological frameworks where the world is not so antithetical to God and the church.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

In the previous chapters we saw how three social encyclicals concerned with the general theme of development in a globalized world offer some theological insights. They are theological because they contribute to shedding light on some aspects of the mystery of “God for us.” To make the same point in a Rahnerian way, they are a possible path to enter more deeply into the mystery of God and to allow it to seize us. Concluding this dissertation, this last chapter aims at gathering and pushing forward some of the theological contributions highlighted previously. Taking up three questions which correspond roughly to the three areas explored in the reading of the encyclicals – methodology and style, anthropology, and Christology – I would like to show how theological reflection is enriched by taking into account the social teaching of the church as it is presented in the papal magisterium.

The first question concerns the relation between theology and history. The challenge of theology is to announce the perennial and universal truth of salvation in Jesus Christ amidst a pluralistic and changing world. This challenge is shaped by the central Christian belief that the eternal God entered into history. Therefore, theology cannot be the mere repetition of atemporal, unchangeable, metaphysical dogmas. It has to take into account the present situation and the history of the men and women (and of the world) which are the object of God’s salvation. On the other hand it cannot be reduced to the mere projection onto God of particular and contingent situations. How to articulate these two dimensions is a fundamental question for any theologian. Because they deal with historical realities, the social encyclicals, once we recognize that they belong to theology, are a perfect place to think about the role to be played by history and human

experience in the elaboration of a theological discourse. I will argue that theology necessarily begins with and within historically situated experiences, but does not originate in them.

A second question concerns theological anthropology and the articulation between the personal and social dimensions of salvation. Is salvation to be manifested in personal conversion or structural change? The notion of integral development promoted by the three encyclicals points toward maintaining and articulating both aspects together. This reflects a theological vision of the mystery of humanity which is fully integrated, refuses all reductionisms and envisions human beings as both individual *and* social persons. Faithful to this anthropology, any Christian ethical and moral reflection should show concern for both the personal and the structural levels of the issues it addresses. In connection with this theme I will also suggest that engaging in a resolutely trinitarian anthropology is a promising path prompted by a theological reading of the social encyclicals.

A third question concerns Christology and the proper balance to be found when reflecting on the mystery of Jesus Christ “for us” – Jesus Christ truly human and truly God – between both ascending and descending approaches. My thesis is that reading social encyclicals in a Christological perspective supports a plurality of Christologies but gives a certain priority to those adopting a movement from below. This will lead me to highlight that adopting a preferential option for the poor has important Christological implications.

In addressing these questions I will use once again, in support of my argumentation, the three theological frameworks which I found at work throughout the reading of the encyclicals. The neo-Thomist framework, with its positive vision of the world where God’s grace is at work in the midst of contrasted human situations, shaped the theology of *PP*. It continued to play its role in *SRS* but was also rebalanced by a more Augustinian framework, with its insistence on viewing

the world as the place where sin is at work and as in need of redemption from without. *SRS* also testified to the presence of a more liberationist framework attentive to the social and structural dimension of sin and grace. *CiV* appeared more heavily embedded in the Augustinian framework.

Nonetheless, what the investigation has also shown is that theological-ethical reflections on social, political, and economic issues do not use these frameworks merely interchangeably. One or the other are favored because of the particular historical situation in which the documents are produced and because of the personality of the popes who authored them. Moreover, such reflections also invite us to articulate and establish priorities among the frameworks. They are not simply a collection of entries of equal importance into the mystery of God. Because social encyclicals deal with social issues, with the transformation of the world for greater justice, and with the coming of the kingdom beginning here and now, they cannot develop in a pure so-called “Augustinian” framework where the focus is put on eschatology much more than on the incarnation. We saw how, in *CiV*, Benedict XVI, who favors this articulation of the vision of the world and the vision of God, had to allow it to be reshaped in the direction of the two other frameworks. Even if one encyclical is rather Augustinian, in the long term, it is more fitted for CST to be framed in a more neo-Thomist framework, completed by a liberationist one, in order to stress better theologically the inherent social and collective dimension of the issues. The Augustinian framework then comes as a corrective, recalling when necessary a more transcendent dimension and the impossibility to identify too quickly the kingdom to come with historical, social, and political realizations.

Addressing the three theological questions with the resources of the theological insights highlighted in the encyclicals, I will therefore always give a priority to the neo-Thomist framework, enriched by the liberationist one and only corrected by the Augustinian.

In coherence with this epistemological option, a resource which will be useful to support the reflection is to come back to Rahner's theology. As I explained in the first chapter, Rahner's theology, though embedded in its time like any theology, remains a powerful catalyzer for contemporary reflection. His questions point in the same direction as our theological journey through the social encyclicals.

I. THEOLOGY AND HISTORICITY

In any attempt to do theology or to express something of the mystery of God's saving revelation we are confronted with the tension between recognizing the historicity of any discourse, and more profoundly the historicity of any meaningful salvific encounter of God with humanity, and the absolute otherness of God which grounds salvation and transcends history. In other words, we face the challenge of expressing something in a way that is both meaningful and true, a way which is embedded in, coming out of, and directed toward concrete historical situations and which at the same time is not the mere projection of these situations onto the divine. This is a challenge for theology, and for the church's magisterium which has the mission to express and safeguard doctrine. On one side the repetition of atemporal dogmas is not a solution since the formulation of these dogmas itself is historically embedded. On the other side, entirely contextual discourses, if they are not conscious of their limits, fail to testify to the saving God who transcends our human experience. In more trivial words, if God is too far away I cannot see how God really can save me, but if God is so close that I do not distinguish God from

a particular human experience, God can no more save me than I can save myself or than we can collectively save ourselves.

From a methodological perspective, the question of theology and historicity appears in the appreciation of how and how much, inductive approaches, dialogue, contextualization, or constructivism, are possible and desirable in a theological endeavor. The previous studies of the social encyclicals lead me to formulate a thesis which can work as a guideline for theological reflection. Immanuel Kant said about knowledge that “though all our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that all arises out of experience.”¹ In an analogous way, one could say of theology that *though any discourse about God necessarily begins with experience and within history, it does not follow that theology originates in human experience and history*. God is both the origin and the end of theology but God entered into history and, for us, God is to be found nowhere else than in this history. This thesis relates to the faith in the incarnation and the understanding of revelation. Practically, it implies that any theological reflection should take seriously historical contexts and particular human experiences as its starting point and its milieu while keeping provision for being challenged by what lies always beyond. God is a *living* mystery whose being and action exceed our comprehension. Entering into this mystery of “God for us” is not a mere linear inductive process going from analyzing concrete experiences to formulating a discourse about God’s salvation and the living out of it. Neither is it the mere deductive application of divinely revealed insights to concrete situations. It is rather a hermeneutical spiral movement including all the above. In order to justify and expound further

¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: MacMillan, 1950), 41.

this thesis let us turn back to what we have seen in the previous chapters throughout the sections on methodology and style. Along the way references to Rahner will strengthen the argument.

Vatican II started with the invitation of Pope John XXIII to adopt a pastoral approach in order to present the truth of faith in a way relevant to the current situation of the world. With the progressive reception of what Christoph Theobald calls the “principle of pastorality,” the conciliar fathers became more aware of the reality of historicity for any attempt at theological discourse. Not only does the way truths are expressed change with different historical situations but it pertains to the very core of the truth of faith to be affected by historicity since, as *DV* reaffirms, divine revelation is not merely the revelation of a set of truths but the communication of Godself within salvation history culminating in Jesus Christ. Thus, the documents of the council moved away from Neo-Scholastic ways of expressing the faith. These ways focused on looking for always more refined, unchangeable formulations of dogmas and then on deductively expounding practical consequences very often formulated as condemnations of errors, denunciations of deviating behaviors, and a quasi-constant war against the current world. *GS* is the best example of a new discourse which takes into account historicity and comes out of the consideration of the concrete situations and challenges of the time. The pastoral constitution explicitly adopted a more inductive methodology and a more positive attitude of dialogue with the world.

During the same period Rahner wrote an article about the historicity of theology.² He recognized that “the possibility of uniting absolute truth and the historicity of truth is one of

² Karl Rahner, “The Historicity of Theology,” in *TI*, Vol. 9 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), 64-82.

philosophy's most fundamental [and difficult] questions.”³ However he insisted on viewing historicity as an essential component of theology. This is the case because revelation occurs in history and we, ourselves, are in history.⁴ Consequently, although theology can and should take a critical look at the ‘spirit of the age’ and confront the prevailing ideologies, it is equally crucial that it should be self-critical and aware of the possibility of error in its midst.⁵

In another essay about practical theology – which, for Rahner, is a better name for what is usually called ‘pastoral theology’ – he defends it as a theological discipline in its own right and not merely the deductive application of systematic theology to particular and concrete realities.⁶ Concerned with “the self-actualization of the church *here and now*,”⁷ practical theology has a creative and prophetic component in it which should challenge all other disciplines. Not only does Rahner advocate for the importance of practical theology, which *per se* begins with practical and historically embedded questions, but he shows that any form of theological endeavor should include such a component. In my opinion, therefore, social moral theology, including the normative magisterial documents of CST, is ideally situated to fulfil this

³ Ibid., 65.

⁴ “Our place is in history and it is only in its forward-moving course that we possess the eternal truth of God, which is our salvation. This saving truth is the same within history, but, while remaining the same, it has had and still has a history of its own. This ‘sameness’ communicates itself to us continually, but never in such a way that we could detach it adequately from its historical forms, in order thus to step out of the constant movement of the flow of history on to the bank of eternity, at least in the matter of our knowledge of truth.” Ibid., 71.

⁵ “The historicity of theology implies the possibility and the effects of error even in theology not officially condemned (at least at a particular time) by Church authority.” Ibid., 77.

⁶ Karl Rahner, “Practical Theology within the Totality of Theological Disciplines,” in *TI*, Vol. 9, 101-114. See as well, Karl Rahner, “Practical Theology and Social Work in the Church,” in *TI*, Vol.10 (New York: Seabury, 1977), 349-369.

⁷ Rahner, “Practical Theology within the Totality”, 102. My emphasis.

requirement since it concerns itself with social, political and economic issues at a particular moment in history.

Not surprisingly, since it was published only one and a half year after the closing of the council, *PP* offers a very incarnational theology which highlights how God's revelation and grace is at work in this world while presenting the current struggles of the men and women of this time for justice and peace. The see-judge-act methodology is fully endorsed and stresses the necessity of considering appropriately the current situation and listening to the questions and challenges it raises. A positive attitude of openness to dialogue and collaboration with others inside and outside the church is very much promoted as well. Catalyzed by this dialogical and inductive approach, renewed considerations about the Good News of God's salvation in Jesus Christ can emerge.

A dialogical and inductive approach is characteristic of CST. Even in documents like *SRS* and *CiV* in which it is far less enthusiastically embraced, some elements of it remain. First, the historical context and the questions raised by specific economic, social, and political issues play a stimulating role. They prompt the moral and theological reflection offered by the magisterium. Even in *CiV*, where the style of presentation is deductive and runs from philosophical and theological considerations to their consequences on particular situations, the topics chosen are historically situated. The financial and economic crisis, globalization, or the environmental challenges prompt the theological reflection and contribute to shaping it.

Second, in the social encyclicals there is always a dimension of listening to and learning from the experiences of various groups of Christians. It is more or less explicitly recognized, and this in itself is arguably an issue, but it is always significantly present. *PP* built on the work of Lebreton and *Économie et Humanisme*. The experience of *Solidarność* in Poland played a role for some

parts of *SRS*, and that of the Focolare with their notion of economy of communion in *CiV*.

Because of the nature of the topics addressed, social encyclicals usually also involve in their elaboration an important contribution of specialists in secular disciplines through the work of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.

As was repeatedly highlighted in the previous chapters, the dimensions of induction and dialogue in the social encyclicals bear with them a crucial aspect of the Christian faith in the incarnation and also an important understanding of God's saving revelation. That God entered into history and revealed Godself in Jesus Christ, who lived the fullness of a human life with the exception of sin, shapes in a definitive way the relation of Christians to the world. The present world is not a neutral place which happens to be the place where one lives one's life in the best way in order to gain an eternal reward. Neither is it merely the milieu of evil from which one ought to flee as soon as possible. It is first of all the place and the object of God's grace, of God's offer of a shared divine life and of the possibility of a free response to this offer. This, of course, includes the possibility of a negative response reflected in the reality of sin and evil at work in the world. This world is not yet the fullness of the "new heavens and new earth." Nonetheless it is a central belief of the Christian faith that because of Jesus Christ, God is to be encountered within this world and salvation begins here. As Jesus reminds us, "the kingdom of God is among you" (Lk 17:21).

Already at the council, some worried that in the dialogical and inductive approach adopted by *GS* the embracing of the world was too strong. The risk is to forget the dimension of sin at work in the world and consequently the necessary dimension of conflict existing between the Church's mission to proclaim salvation in Jesus Christ and some aspects of the world. For a theologian like Ratzinger, the desire to come sympathetically to terms with the contemporary

situation and with modern thinking is too much prioritized over the desire to be more rooted in Scriptures and centered on Jesus Christ. The latter inevitably carries with it more confrontation.⁸ Faith in the incarnation is also faith in the incarnate Word who brings light into the world.

It is important to note that we are not facing here a refusal of the movement initiated at the council but rather a different inflection in this movement. Theologians like Ratzinger, de Lubac or Von Balthasar agree with others like Rahner, Chenu or Congar on the need for theology to move away from neo-Scholasticism and to be renewed. But when the latter theologians foster *aggiornamento* as entering into a positive dialogue with the modern world, the former opt for *ressourcement* as coming back, through Scripture and the early tradition of the church, to the centrality of Christ for the whole of human existence. These are the two trends which develop after the council and which we named “neo-Thomist” and “Augustinian” throughout this dissertation.

In *SRS* and even more strongly in *CiV* we have seen some drawbacks in methodology concerning the inductive and dialogical approaches. There we encountered more deductive ways of reasoning, projecting directly the contents of faith onto the current situations of the world in order to denounce sin or structures of sin. The authority of the church in its teaching was also insisted upon and left less room for what can be found as seeds of truth outside of it.

From a theological viewpoint, I interpreted these changes in methodology and style as expressing more strongly the Augustinian trend. I tried to present them not merely negatively as drawbacks but also more positively as reminders of one important aspect of the Christian faith.

⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2009), 218-220.

In a world marked by sin which also affects the various sciences concerned with bringing about a more integral development, it is important to remember that God is not limited by what we experience of God in the world; that salvation and grace at work within this world come fundamentally from without; that the newness brought in with Jesus Christ has a consistency in the tradition of faith borne by the church and its magisterial teaching. In brief, following the establishment of a new type of positive relationships between the church and the world at Vatican II, which is the fundamental ground for a Christian social ethics, the recognition of drawbacks in methodology coming later on can be seen as a pointer to the transcendence of God in the economy of salvation.⁹

Turning back to Rahner, it is interesting to note that, although fully embedded in the neo-Thomist trend and strongly endorsing the move to engage in dialogue with and within the modern world, he never loses sight of the danger of immanentism, or reducing God to an internal principle of the world. For example, Rahner warned against the danger of horizontalism in regard to the mission of the church.¹⁰ Horizontalism would be the reduction of the church's mission to humanization of the world and to being responsible for humankind and the world. Then, Rahner says, "'God' is reduced to a mere cipher... It stands for mankind itself."¹¹

⁹ This is not meant to turn a blind eye to all the problems associated with such drawbacks, especially when, as in the case of *CiV*, they seem rather radical. As I said above, I do not see Benedict's encyclical as really a workable theological model for developing CST in the long term. My objective is merely to try to get some *theologically* meaningful interpretation out of what is and will remain part of the church's social doctrine.

¹⁰ Karl Rahner, "The Church's Commission to Bring Salvation and the Humanization of the World," in *TI*, Vol. 14 (New York: Seabury, 1976), 295-313.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 296.

Of course, Rahner adamantly denounces the mere juxtaposition of vertical dimensions and horizontal ones. Considering that love of neighbor is a moral duty implied by the love of God is not sufficient. There is a more intrinsic and essential relation between the two because “there is no experience of God for pilgrim man on this earth which has not been mediated through an experience of the world.”¹²

Rahner concludes that, in current times, we might need a stronger stress on the horizontal dimension, on the responsibility for the world, and the love of the neighbor. This can be done – and should be done – without dismissing theology, worship, and other more vertical activities. The mission of the Church is to bring salvation. It is to communicate the sign of God, Jesus Christ as God’s self-utterance of the truth concerning the ultimate end of the world. The church must preach “that there is no horizontal dimension which is *entirely whole and complete* in itself without a vertical one; that it is only through God’s grace that we are set free in such a way as to be able to use and enjoy the world, and open ourselves unreservedly to our neighbor without becoming enslaved by this social and material environment of ours.”¹³

It all comes to the more general and constantly reaffirmed view of Rahner that “the history of salvation and revelation [is] coextensive with the whole of world history.”¹⁴ This does not mean that they are identical. The fullness of salvation, as our accepting God’s free self-offer which perfects us, is not a moment in history but its culmination. However, salvation takes place within

¹² Ibid., 304-5. Recall as well Rahner’s insistence on the unity of the love of God and the love of neighbor. Rahner, “Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbor and the Love of God.” In *TI*, Vol. 6 (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1969), 231-249.

¹³ Rahner, “The Church’s Commission,” 313.

¹⁴ Rahner, *FCF*, 142. See also, Rahner, “History of the World and Salvation-History,” in *TI*, Vol. 5 (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1966), 97-114; *FCF*, 138-175.

the world and it begins now. Salvation history lies hidden in the history of the world even if, to the eyes of faith, it becomes apparent only in Jesus' resurrection. Therefore, salvation history explains profane history. According to Rahner, "for Christianity, the history of this world is a history interpreted in a Christo-centric sense."¹⁵

These reflections of Rahner point in the same direction as the theological interpretation of the variations in style and methodology in the encyclicals lead us. Theology cannot start elsewhere than in the historicity of human experiences because that is where God reveals Godself and saves us by offering this revelation as a free gift. This, however, does not mean that theology originates here. There is a more fundamental and transcendent source, beyond mere historical embeddedness. Any theological endeavor has to reflect this.

CST is an instance of theology done "in context" and out of the challenges posed by a particular set of historically situated questions concerned broadly with the life of human beings in society. Therefore, it is well situated for pursuing the task given to theology by the council, which, while keeping in view the transcendent dimension, is to take seriously into account historicity. To conclude this section, I would like to suggest three ways in which CST, in its magisterial form, approaches and conveys the mystery of "God for us" in its transcendent dimension while still beginning from reflecting on particular historical concerns. The first one has been largely used in documents produced by John Paul II and Benedict XVI. The two others are only emerging and, in my opinion, should be given greater consideration.

In order for CST not to forget that the mystery of "God for us" to which it bears witness transcends the context out of which it offers its theological and ethical investigations, a first

¹⁵ Rahner, "History of the World and Salvation-History," 114.

obvious means is its self-inscription in a tradition extending in time. Social encyclicals and other documents of the magisterium always put a big stress on showing that they are in continuity with previous teachings by citing repeatedly their predecessors. Taking seriously into account what pertains to a documentary tradition and remaining faithful to it requires interpretation. This always includes downplaying some aspects and highlighting others. Continuity in faith can be compatible with some ruptures in formulations. Yet, engagement with the teaching of the past is a crucial means to avoid the mere projection onto God of particular experiences. It is a way to remain humble and to let the mystery of God seize us while working to enter more deeply into it. Undoubtedly, by insisting on the role of the magisterium and the authoritative dimension of papal teachings, John Paul II and Benedict XVI have used this approach often.

Other means could be given a greater place as well. Firstly, Scripture remains, as *DV* stated, “the soul of sacred theology” (*DV* 24). Since the council, documents of CST have shown a greater and better use of biblical sources. I noticed an interesting use of Jesus’ parables in *PP*. There they shape the imagination to foster action rather than appear as mere textual proofs for ethical arguments. In *SRS*, there is undeniably a developed reading of some biblical passages such as the first chapters of Genesis and Paul’s letters. This reading is not the mere compilation of proof-texts either. However it remains too often unilateral and not sufficiently aware of diversity and tensions in biblical studies. Benedict XVI makes references to biblical passages but not so many and without in-depth analysis. The US bishops in their two letters in the 1980s showed a greater willingness to anchor their reflection in a critical reading of Scripture, even if they ended up more with a juxtaposition of biblical arguments with other philosophical or theological ones, than a true interpenetration, which would have better revealed the challenging and prophetic role of Scripture. Much remains to be investigated and debated about how to use

the Bible in CST and in the documents of the magisterium, but whatever the methodologies used, I see a more explicitly biblical grounding of CST as a good way to keep sight of transcendence while developing historically embedded reflections.

Finally, a last means for achieving this same goal is to pay greater attention to the preferential option for the poor. In a certain sense, the absolute otherness of God, or the fact that the mystery of “God for us” is always greater than what we can express of it, are also recalled by paying attention and letting ourselves be challenged by God’s presence among the poorest, the most fragile, and the most vulnerable in society. This epistemological tool is at work when, for example, at the beginning of *PP* we read that “the development of people has the Church’s close attention, particularly the development of those peoples who are striving to escape from hunger, misery, endemic diseases, and ignorance” (*PP* 1). Of course this requires some hermeneutical work. Who are the poor, the outcast, and the vulnerable? How is God revealing something through them when they are no holier than others? How to look at the world through their lenses without merely projecting particular ready-made ideologies? For now, though attention to the poor as giving access to the mystery of God is present in the recent encyclicals, it remains underdeveloped in the sense of a theological principle.

II. PERSONAL CONVERSION AND STRUCTURAL CHANGES

Once historicity is recognized as central for Christian faith, and therefore for theology, then other questions emerge. For example, does salvation, which the church has the mission to bring into the world, entail personal conversion or structural changes? Although formulated here in a theoretical way, this question has concrete implications upon which we touched in our reading of the encyclicals. In ecclesiology, for example, what should be the main work of the church? Is it

to provide sacraments, to proclaim explicitly the Gospel, to strengthen the spiritual life of the faithful, to encourage them to practice charity, and, in a nutshell, to foster their personal conversion? Or is it to transform this world, to prompt change in laws, structures, and institutions, to fight injustice and bring about God's kingdom? Similar questions concern the proper focus of CST. Is it to stress personal values and virtues such as fraternity, solidarity, reconciliation, or charity? Or rather, has it to focus on the principles which ought to govern social institutions such as justice and equality, or rights and duties? We can recall that the return of the category of charity in Benedict XVI's encyclicals raised such discussions. Some commentators worried that a proper understanding and commitment to justice was weakened.¹⁶

The appropriate answer to these questions certainly requires not an either/or approach but rather a solid both/and. Nonetheless, a simple juxtaposition would not be sufficient. Theological reflection has to show that there is always a strong interaction between the two aspects of salvation or the two approaches to the church's mission. It is beyond the scope of this section and of this dissertation to envision in detail all the questions raised here. More modestly, I would like to make the case that the anthropological vision offered by the encyclicals when promoting integral human development constitutes a solid basis for the unity of personal conversion and structural change both in the salvific grace of God and in the mission of the church in the world. Personal conversion and structural change strengthen each other and neither should be ignored. Their unity is essential to the development of CST and Christian social ethics.

¹⁶ David Hollenbach, "Caritas in Veritate: The Meaning of Love and Urgent Challenges of Justice," *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 8, no. 1 (2011), 171-182.

In support of this thesis, this section will recall some of the key elements highlighted in the study of the encyclicals concerning theological anthropology. The promotion of an integral human development fosters a highly integrated vision of the human being with both a transcendent personal dimension and a social one. Both dimensions are reinforced by each other. They are rooted in the vocation to be image of the triune God and saved in Christ. I will conclude by opening a reflection about trinitarian anthropology which I see as a promising lead in theological anthropology, supported by some of the claims made in the social encyclicals.

PP offers a good starting point. With Lebreton's notion of integral development as "development of the whole person and of all humanity" – a foundational notion which will be continuously deployed in the following encyclicals – we have a workable guideline which allows taking into account multiple aspects of being human, always in a dynamic process, and with a crucial mention of both the personal and social dimensions.¹⁷ To be human is to become more and more human. The encyclical presents an ordered list of conditions which favor humanization, ranging from the material dimension, to the intellectual and cultural, and up to the spiritual. The concrete social analyses and recommendations give flesh to this vision. Material misery, lack of food, healthcare and shelter in many parts of the world are objects of concern, but so too are lack of education, or political participation. Ultimately *PP* highlights openness to God

¹⁷ It is important to notice the integrative power of the notion of integral human development. It is meant to embrace all the dimensions of being human and therefore it resists the danger of reducing the human to one or a limited number of aspects. In most of CST about development it works at denouncing a purely economic paradigm for development. However, it is open and suitable for incorporating other dimensions even if they were not at first explicitly or sufficiently mentioned. One can think of the challenge of sustainable development. A dimension of being human is being in relation with a natural environment to be respected and preserved. Other issues, which arguably are still not sufficiently dealt with in the social encyclicals but for which the notion of integral human development could be used, include gender discrimination and racial injustice.

and unity in Christ as the summit of humanization. Freedom, respect for human rights, and stress on the right to be the agent of one's own development are keys in expressing this dynamic transcendent vision of the human being.

This transcendent dimension is immediately and intrinsically linked with the vocation to solidarity. The vocation to be human is the vocation to become children of God, brothers and sisters in Christ. Concretely, the encyclical denounces the obstacles to greater cooperation and mutual aid among peoples. It calls for greater equity in trade relations and a reform of the mechanisms and institutions shaping them. It also points to the intrinsic link between peace and development.

When reading *PP*, there is a strong sense that the aspiration to personal freedom and self-fulfillment is the source for building solidarity and fraternity and for transforming institutions and social structures into better and more just ones. The transcendent dimension of the human person is not in competition with its social dimension but rather finds its realization in the latter.

This movement is very much highlighted in Rahner's theological anthropology. As he explains, salvation comes through the self-communication of God and its free acceptance by the human person. A key feature of being human is therefore the capacity for and openness to the gift of God's own divine life. This is what Rahner expresses by insisting on the dynamism of human freedom as oriented toward union with God and love of neighbor. However the "yes" to God's self-communication is always a "yes" *within* the world, *within* an environment constituted by the created world and society. Rahner affirms that

the freedom of acceptance or refusal of salvation occurs in all the dimensions of human existence, and it occurs always in an encounter with the world and not merely in the confined

sector of the sacred or of worship and 'religion' in the narrow sense; it occurs in encounters with one's neighbor, with one's historical task, with the so-called world of every-day life, in and with what we call the history of the individual and of communities.¹⁸

Because salvation concerns all the dimensions of being human it is not merely a matter of a private, individual union with the divine but concerns the whole world in the complexities of human relations, interpersonal interactions and social organizations. As we recalled in the first chapter, Rahner adamantly insisted on the unity of the love of God and the love of neighbor which he saw as close to an identity as possible. Love of neighbor is encounter with God and salvation. This love is not reduced to an interpersonal relation but takes form by transforming socio-political structures in view of the kingdom.¹⁹

It comes as no surprise then that, when Rahner reflects on topics like social work and the mission of the church, or institutions and freedom, he insists on the social dimension of the human person and on salvation concerning society as a whole, even if he does not go into details. This, actually, will be the task undertaken by Metz's political theology. Rahner says that charity and social work – meaning here work for bringing about justice and more human structures in societies and not merely charitable work oriented to lightening the suffering of the poor – are integral parts of the self-fulfillment of the church. They are part of its mission as a “basic sacrament of unity in the ministry of love.”²⁰ Elsewhere, in the context of the Western students' uprising of the late 60s, he highlights that the apparent contradiction between human institutions and freedom is overcome when it is remembered that God, as the true source of freedom conceived as a blessing of salvation, is also the author of all structures and orders in the world.

¹⁸ Rahner, “History of the World and Salvation History,” 98-99.

¹⁹ Rahner, “Love of Neighbor and Love of God.”

²⁰ Rahner, “Practical Theology and Social Work,” 358.

Nonetheless, the free will of human beings and sin take their part in the process as well. This is why institutions are in need of transformation or even radical change in order to bring about God's kingdom.²¹ At the same time, Rahner reflects on revolution and recognizes its legitimacy under certain circumstances on the ground that the church "is not restricted in its function to catering for the salvation of the individual."²²

In *PP* it is clear that some social structures, especially those ordering international economic and political life, are an impediment for integral human development. The social conditions need to change in order for persons to become more fully human. This is why the encyclical is concerned with concrete and practical ways of organization and cooperation at the global level. For example, it is not simply a matter for individuals in the North to provide more aid to the global South but for countries to build different types of relationships, for international institutions to be strengthened, and for economic relations to be reoriented beyond the mere logic of profit and toward the benefit of those most in need.

With *SRS* and its incorporation of some of Latin American liberation theology's categories, the role played by structures and the necessity to change them is highlighted and is given a theological understanding. Obstacles to integral human development are viewed as structures of sin. In the context of the late 1980's, John Paul II denounces specifically the division of the world into blocks sustained by rigid ideologies and more generally he points to various forms of imperialism. As a path to overcome the evil of the structures of sin, the pope then makes a plea

²¹ Karl Rahner, "Institution and Freedom," in *TI*, Vol. 13 (New York: Seabury, 1975), 105-121.

²² Karl Rahner, "On the Theology of Revolution," in *TI*, Vol. 14 (New York: Seabury, 1976), 326.

in favor of solidarity which, following his predecessor, includes a dimension of an international system of real cooperation based on equality.

However, reasoning in terms of structures is always articulated with reasoning in terms of personal responsibilities. Structures of sin are originally produced by personal sins and they are maintained and rendered difficult to remove by other personal sins such as voluntary blindness or cowardice to act. Two typical attitudes opposed to the will of God and impeding the development of structures of solidarity oriented toward the common good are the thirst for power and the desire for profit.

In this anthropological vision offered by *SRS* we see a very tight articulation uniting the personal and the structural levels. It makes clear that what is required are both, personal conversion and structural change, each one nourishing the other.

In *CiV*, the stress is put on an explicitly *theological* anthropology. Nevertheless, the encyclical roots its Christian vision of the human in particular social, political and economic issues. Some of these are the ecological crisis, the challenge of hunger, the regulation of financial markets, the reshaping of corporate business, the reform of international organizations. For Benedict, being human is a vocation to love in openness to God's love and requires recognition of one's creatureliness manifested in the gratuitousness at work in various aspects of human life. It requires also recognition of the centrality of relationality and striving for greater solidarity, and even communion, with one another and with God. All these anthropological features are strongly personalist. They imply both a promotion of individual personal development in freedom and of social development in communion. The more distinct feature is the explicit affirmation of God, God's grace, or God's love, as source and link between the two dimensions of development. As a

consequence, the refusal of transcendence, which is viewed as characteristic of Western secularization, is a major impediment to integral development.

It seems natural, therefore, that *CiV* would stress mainly the necessity of personal conversion and of a return to God as its central prophetic call. However, as we pointed out in the previous chapter, this is far from being the case. The expounding of *CiV*'s theological anthropology takes shape through the consideration of structural issues and the call for structural changes.

Individually those in positions of power and holding greater responsibilities are called to reform themselves and to behave more ethically. However, the encyclical does not stop there. It also denounces the mechanisms, institutions, and laws that justify, encourage, or simply allow injustices to flourish. To achieve integral human development, personal conversion cannot be separated from structural change.

From a theological perspective, what is probably a key and a promising path of study for an anthropology uniting personal conversion and structural change, is the connection made in *SRS* and *CiV* between anthropology and the doctrine of the Trinity. In the context of its social teaching the church has highlighted the notion of being created in the image of God. This is a solid grounding for developing arguments in defense of human dignity for all, no matter the differences of gender, race, or social condition. The notion of image of God, plays a central role, for example, in the church's appropriation of the human rights agenda since Pope John XXIII. We have seen in the study of the three encyclicals that it was a concept very much at work. However, in the two latter there is possibly an opening in a new direction. Human beings are created in the image of God, but more precisely, in the image of a *triune* God. Because this triune God, while remaining one, is by nature a communion of love between three persons, this

immediately brings in a focus on the human person as relational and social. The relationships rather than the individual become the starting point for anthropology.

Already *GS* gave a hint about founding in the doctrine of Trinity the communitarian nature of being human, with its corollary, the human vocation to solidarity. One section of the second chapter of part one, concerned with “the community of mankind,” speaks of

a certain likeness between the union of the divine Persons, and the union of God's sons in truth and charity. This likeness reveals that man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself (*GS* 24).

In *SRS*, John Paul II sees a new criterion for looking at the world in the “awareness of the common fatherhood of God, of the brotherhood of all in Christ – ‘children in the Son’ – and of the presence and life-giving action of the Holy Spirit” (*SRS* 40). For him the Trinity is “a model of unity” which ultimately is able to inspire human solidarity and overcome the structures of sin. For Benedict XVI, in *CiV*, “the inclusion-in-relation of all individuals and peoples within the one community of the human family...is illuminated in a striking way by the relationship between the Persons of the Trinity within the one divine Substance” (*CiV* 54). The mystery of the Trinity helps to envision how an authentic communion among human beings is not detrimental to their individual identities but on the contrary contributes to their full expression.

Of course, the recourse to Trinity as a model for human social interactions and relations is not without difficulties. The most obvious one is that we don't know anything more about the Trinity in itself than what the Trinity reveals in interacting with us. Therefore, it is impossible to take the Trinity as an external model in order to shape, say, human solidarity. We would run the risk of simply re-projecting on human beings something which in the first place we have merely

imagined of God from our human experience.²³ It is clear that in the encyclicals, the language is very cautious, speaking of “a certain likeness,” or “inspiration,” or “enrichment” to evoke the relation between the immanent Trinity and human situations. Nonetheless it remains a noticeable and suggestive move on the part of the magisterium.

Ellen Van Stichel suggests that turning to a more explicitly trinitarian anthropology beyond the mere relational personalist anthropology, traditional in CST, would be a fruitful resource to address some ethical challenges of today, especially in the economic area.²⁴ As she formulates it, the question for theological ethics becomes, “what does a trinitarian *relationship* consist of and how should our (global) society be structured to mirror adequately that series of relations.”²⁵ Relying on Spanish theologian and *focolarino* Enrique Cambón, she offers a few characteristics of a trinitarian anthropological worldview. Not only are relationships fundamental but relationships as *agapic*. This means that self-giving is constituent of one’s self-realization. Enabling the other to realize oneself is also a path to one’s realization. Finally, “persons act in a trinitarian way when they live *with* others, *for* others, and *thanks* to others,”²⁶ all three elements being necessary. Concretely, as Van Stichel argues, this leads to emphasis on the centrality of the

²³ This is a critique which arguably can be made about Leonardo Boff’s attempt in his *Trinity and Society*. Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988).

²⁴ Ellen Van Stichel, “The Ethical Potential of Communal Movements for Catholic Social Thought. The Trinitarian Anthropology of the Focolare Movement,” in *Visions of Hope. Emerging Theologians and the Future of the Church*, ed. Kevin Ahern (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2013), 133-147; “The Economic Crisis as a Crisis in Anthropology. Would a Trinitarian Anthropology Offer an Alternative to an Economic Individualist Approach?” *ET-Studies* 3, no. 2 (2012): 295-315.

²⁵ Van Stichel, “The Ethical Potential,” 142.

²⁶ Cambón, quoted by Van Stichel, “The Ethical Potential,” 143.

principle of participation in the work for global justice. A trinitarian perspective, thus, prevents social thought from separating *charity* and *justice* by insisting on reciprocity in love.

Van Stichel's remarks are only tentative insights on a reflection articulating a trinitarian anthropology and social ethics. Much remains to be done to develop it more systematically. Undoubtedly the evocation of the mystery of the Trinity in the midst of social encyclicals is an invitation for theologians and ethicists to do so. It is a good example of how the relation between theology and social ethics is one of mutual challenge and enrichment rather than a mere linear deductive/application process. It touches the heart of the question we are dealing with in this section: the articulation and unity between the individual and the social dimension of being human. Having a more trinitarian approach in reflecting on the human being as image of God, whatever concrete form it takes, will integrate more strongly the two aspects together.

To conclude these reflections on theological anthropology which have led us to speak about the mystery of the Trinity, it is worthwhile to recall Rahner's challenge:

Despite their orthodox confession of the Trinity, Christians are, in their practical life, almost mere 'monotheists.' We must be willing to admit that, should the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major part of religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged.²⁷

As a response, Rahner offered his famous axiom: "The 'economic' Trinity is the 'immanent' Trinity and the 'immanent' Trinity is the 'economic' Trinity."²⁸ Trinity in itself cannot be discussed apart from its revelation as salvation in history. For us, the only access to "God-in-eternity" is to consider "God-for-us," but "God-for-us" is inseparable from "God-in-eternity."

²⁷ Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (Wellwood, UK: Burns and Oates, 1970), 10-11.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

Consequently, the consideration of the Trinity in the context of social ethics almost naturally leads us to a closer consideration of God's salvific self-revelation in Jesus Christ. A turn to Christology will also prevent us from the aforementioned trap of speculative reflection about the Trinity. Whatever insights about relationality we have from reflecting on the mystery of the Trinity, insights which might help us to envision a better realization of human relationships in society, we gain those insights from contemplating the revelation brought by Jesus Christ of his relation to the Father in the Spirit. Christology remains the surest path to theological anthropology and to entering into the mystery of a triune God.

III. CHRISTOLOGY: FROM ABOVE OR FROM BELOW?

When attempting to reflect and say something about the mystery of Jesus Christ, theologians always face a nagging question. Where to start from? Should we begin with Jesus, the Nazarene, whom we know through Scriptures and whose life, death and resurrection had such an impact on his followers that 2,000 years later there are more than 2.4 billion Christians around the world? Or should we begin with the affirmation of faith at the center of the Nicene Creed that Jesus Christ is "God become human"? Should we engage in a Christology from below or from above? The reading of the social encyclicals within the perspective of a Christological quest supports approaches which incorporate both movements. However it gives a genetic or heuristic priority to the movement from below while not ignoring the classical formulations pertaining to the movement from above. Indeed, being attentive to the challenges of justice in a globalized world prompts one to highlight some aspects of Jesus' life such as his proximity to the poor and the social dimension of the salvation brought about by his death and resurrection. This pertains to an ascending Christology. The ethical reflection on social issues offered by the magisterium

develops also at length the idea of *GS* 22 that “only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light.” This is rather an expression of a descending Christology. Although it has become predominant in the latest encyclical of Benedict XVI, this latter approach could not hide the previous elements which, we saw, remain implicitly present, even in *CiV*, through the call for structural changes. This is why I offer the thesis that Christological insights carried by social encyclicals, because of their particular objects, highlight a variety of possible approaches to the mystery of Christ with an articulation between approaches from below and approaches from above but with a certain priority given to the former.

In order to defend this thesis I rely on Karl Rahner’s investigation about “two basic types of Christology.” This give me the conceptual framework into which I then revisit the main results gathered in the previous chapters. In conclusion I expand on what I consider the most significant Christological insight produced by post-Vatican II CST: the attention focused on Jesus Christ’s relation to the poor through the adoption of the preferential option for the poor.

In an important essay on Christology published in 1972, Rahner reflects on what he considers the two basic types or forms of Christology.²⁹ On the one hand there is the “saving history” type of Christology, “a Christology viewed from below.” Jesus is seen in the context of the quest of human beings for salvation. He is seen in his fully human reality and in his fate brought to resurrection by God. Faith sees this history as God’s “ultimate and irrevocable” utterance of salvation to human beings: “Jesus in his human lot is *the* (not *a*!) address of God to man, and as

²⁹ Karl Rahner, “The Two Basic Types of Christology,” in *TI*, Vol. 13 (New York: Seabury, 1975), 213-223.

such eschatologically unsurpassable.”³⁰ From this, if interpreted correctly, it is still possible to arrive at the Chalcedonian statements about one person and two natures.

On the other hand there is the “metaphysical type” of Christology, a “descending Christology” developing downwards from above. Metaphysical is here understood in a broad sense as qualifying merely what goes beyond the initial experience of Jesus by the believer. Two features characterize this type. First, it is a descending approach which considers as self-evident the doctrines of the divine Logos and pre-existing Son of God, who is the second person of the Trinity distinct from the Father. They are *made known* in a certain sense by the words of Jesus but do not need to be justified. Christologies of this type proceed from these self-evident axioms and do not need “any further recourse to the experience of Jesus in saving history.”³¹ Second, metaphysical Christologies imply a doctrine concerning the cosmic and transcendental significance of the incarnation, God’s love coming into history. Creation is seen as the “enabling condition” for the self-communication of God.

For Rahner, even if there are variations, these are *the two basic* types. There is no other. They correspond to the two poles of our understanding of humanity, the transcendental and the historicity of human beings. It is clear that in the New Testament itself the two types are mixed and Rahner suggests that, possibly, the classic Christology of Chalcedon, which is strongly metaphysical in character, is actually mixed as well. So what he is trying to do is not so much to strictly classify existing Christologies, but rather to reflect on the types of reasoning at

³⁰ Ibid., 216.

³¹ Ibid., 218.

work in attempting to produce Christological statements. Moreover, he adamantly affirms that both types of Christology can be expressed either in orthodox or unorthodox ways.

However, Rahner also notes that “the second basic type [i.e. the metaphysical type] constantly presupposes that experience of sacred history which is experienced in the first basic type, as its abiding basis and as the necessary criterion of rightly understanding the assertions it contains.”³² And he adds that “all descending Christology of the second basic type may have a secondary and interpretive character.”³³ This means that Rahner acknowledges a certain genetic or heuristic priority in approaches “from below,” especially in the context of modernity for which personal experience is so crucial and dogmatic affirmations so much put to the test. One cannot but see a convergence of argument with the claims made by Latin American liberation theologians about the need to begin with the historical Jesus. As Lois states, “we might speak of a theological priority of the Christ of faith and a logical and methodological priority of the historical Jesus.”³⁴

In his essay, Rahner then concludes that “there is room for a pluralism of Christologies” as far as these “respect the Church’s credal formulae concerning Christ” and include “the essential reference to Jesus as the bringer of eschatological salvation.”³⁵ Indeed, “even the two basic types

³² Ibid., 220.

³³ Ibid., 221.

³⁴ Julio Lois, “Christology in the Theology of Liberation,” in *Mysterium Liberationis. Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, eds. Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 188.

³⁵ Rahner, “The Two Basic Types of Christology,” 222.

of Christology, and their mutual interrelationship, render such a pluralism of Christologies both inevitable and legitimate.”³⁶

What Rahner exposes theoretically is well illustrated by the Christological insights we found highlighted in the social encyclicals we studied. It is clear that we are not considering fully elaborated Christologies but only some sets of significant insights or points of attention relative to the mystery of Jesus Christ. However they reflect a plurality of approaches and a certain priority given to movements “from below,” or from the experience of saving history.

In *PP*, Christological insights come clearly out of the human quest for salvation. This quest takes two major forms. First, the consideration of the current injustices and inequalities in a nascent globalized world prompts an encounter with Jesus in his proximity with the poor. Jesus is the teacher and model urging us to act in favor of the poor. His involvement in the world, his commitment to the poor, and his compassionate gaze for those who are rejected are strongly highlighted. Even if it is not yet expressed in these terms, we recognized in *PP* the premises of the “option for the poor” soon to be developed in the Latin American church. The figure of Christ which emerges from the encyclical is one of closeness and solidarity with “those people who are striving to escape from hunger, misery, endemic diseases, and ignorance; of those who are looking for a wider share in the benefits of civilization and a more active improvement of their human qualities; of those who are aiming purposefully at their complete fulfillment” (*PP* 1). The so-called “liberationist” theological framework is already at work here.

The quest for salvation is also expressed in a second, more existential, form as the quest for greater or more complete humanization. This is the idea carried out by the notion of integral

³⁶ Ibid.

human development inherited from Lebreton and exposed in terms of “the transition from less human conditions to those which are more human” (*PP* 20). Concerning Christology, the reflections about integral human development highlight Christ as realizing the fullness of humanity and the light of Christ’s gospel as confirming the humanization at work in the processes of authentic development. Therefore, union with Christ is seen as the crowning of integral development and the latter is also viewed as the striving toward solidarity constitutive of the body of Christ. The light which the Gospel sheds on current reality helps to denounce individual and collective vices such as avarice and greed or nationalism and racism. There is more room here for some elements of a descending Christology and its notion of the light brought in the world by Christ. However, in the predominant neo-Thomist theological framework of the encyclical, what is more striking is the starting point located in the personal transcendental experience of people longing for integral human development. This is the key for stressing and developing the Christological statement that Christ realizes the fullness of humanity. Christ is promise and path of salvation for all human beings striving for freedom and solidarity.

In *SRS*, we have seen that the Augustinian theological framework is more present, yielding insights more clearly of a metaphysical or descending type. John Paul II develops the idea of Christ the redeemer as central to his ethical reflection and stresses that Christ is “God become human.” He brings salvation *into* this world. Christ fully reveals the Father to humanity and humanity to itself. This is what occurs, for example, when the church promotes a notion of integral development against the delusions of unlimited progress or the reduction of development to materialistic and economic dimensions alone. Christ teaches the truth. He reconciles and liberates. He brings about the kingdom of God which is inherently social and not merely a matter

of individual salvation. The Christological image which is central in the encyclical is that of the union of Christ with each and every human being in order to redeem the whole humanity. This aspect is certainly reflective of a descending Christology of the incarnate word even though in John Paul II's approach, Christology is always very soteriological and therefore it always keeps a flavor of the "saving history" type. The experiential need for redemption, expressed in different ways as desire for salvation, for reconciliation, or for liberation, is the real starting point. No surprise then, that *SRS* offers an important and suggestive reflection about sin and structures of sin.

Nonetheless, what shows more strikingly the inescapability of Christological approaches from below is the incorporation and consecration in *SRS* of the option for the poor, labelled "love of preference for the poor." This is the important contribution brought about by the liberationist framework which we saw playing a role in John Paul II's encyclical at a period of tense relations between the Vatican and Latin American liberation theologians. Two Christological insights come with the affirmation that "the option or love of preference for the poor" (*SRS* 42) is a key guideline in order to address social issues. First, Jesus Christ is the one to be imitated in his love and concern for the poor, he who was sent "to preach good news to the poor... to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Lk 4:18-19).³⁷ Second, Jesus Christ is to be encountered in the poor who are "the Lord's poor" because "the Lord wished to identify himself with them (Mt 25:31-46)" (*SRS* 43 and footnote 80). In solidarity with the poor we are closer to Jesus Christ, sharing in his mission to bring about the kingdom of God.

³⁷ Cf. *SRS* 47.

In *CiV* the shift toward the predominance of the Augustinian theological framework is complete. The most visible of the Christological insights pertain therefore to the metaphysical type. Benedict XVI, worried about the growing secularization in Europe, has always been adamantly defending, against rampant relativisms of all sorts, a substantial notion of truth, beyond full human grasp but able to direct human reasoning and action. It comes as no surprise therefore, that concerning Christological claims, he would privilege beginning with faith claims about the incarnate Word of God. Christ teaches love in truth. Christ fully reveals love in truth because indeed, “in Christ, *charity in truth* becomes the Face of his Person, a vocation for us to love our brothers and sisters in the truth of his plan” (*CiV* 1). Through union with him we are empowered to love in truth. The pope invites everyone to turn to Christ in order to bring about substantive changes in various fields such as financial markets, the distribution of food resources, care for the environment, etc.

As we suggested, by calling for these structural changes, the encyclical remains open to other Christologies more akin to the “saving history” or “from below” type. Attention to Jesus’ earthly life and to the in-breaking of the kingdom of God which is to be realized in this world, and in part *from within*, would support fruitfully the more concrete claims and ethical guidelines offered in the encyclical. This confirms my assumption that attentiveness to Christological insights coming out of social encyclicals always leads to recognizing the necessity of “from below” approaches.

If approaches “from below” have an inescapable role to play, then, what is probably the most significant contribution to Christology drawn from the reading of the encyclicals is the challenge of affirming a “preferential option for the poor.” It is clear that this option, which is part of the universal teaching of the church, has a solid grounding in Christological faith. As Benedict XVI

reminded us in his opening address to the 5th General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, at Aparecida, Brazil in 2007, “the preferential option for the poor is implicit in the Christological faith in the God who became poor for us, so as to enrich us with his poverty (cf. 2 Cor 8:9).”³⁸ This option is a commitment to the marginalized, of a pastoral, ethical and social nature and is grounded in Christian faith. However our readings of the encyclicals suggest that its theological nature should be deepened. Not only is the option supported by theological claims but “opting for the poor” is in turn a hermeneutical key to elaborate theological claims, and in particular, Christological ones. The Christological insights which come along with the promotion of the preferential option for the poor in the encyclicals, and the images and concepts which they favor offer a path into the mystery of Jesus Christ.

Adopting the hermeneutical key of “opting for the poor” is of course the methodological shift instigated by Latin American liberation theologians.³⁹ Their productions in Christology are illustrations of a theology elaborated in the context and from the perspective of an option for the poor. It is not within the scope of this work to recall them here. In the following paragraphs I would like merely to suggest a few threads of thought coming out of the question: What does the

³⁸ Benedict XVI, *Inaugural Address to the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean at Aparecida* (May 13, 2007), no. 3. www.vatican.va.

³⁹ “The historical womb from which liberation theology has emerged is the life of the poor and, in particular, of the Christian communities that have arisen within the bosom of the present-day Latin American church. This experience is the setting in which liberation theology tries to read the word of God and be alert to the challenges that faith issues to the historical process in which that people is engaged. Revelation and history, faith in Christ and the life of a people, eschatology and praxis: these are the factors that, when set in motion, give rise to what has been called the hermeneutical circle. The aim is to enter more deeply into faith in a God who became one of us, and to do so on the basis of the faith-filled experience and commitment of those who acknowledge this God as their liberator.” Gustavo Gutiérrez, “Introduction to the Revised Edition: Expanding the View,” in *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, 2nd edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), xxxiii.

preferential option for the poor bring to Christology? An inspiring example of an answer to this question is given by a Chilean theologian, Cristián del Campo, who reflects about the Aparecida Conference's concluding document (*Ap*).⁴⁰

In its consideration of the centrality, for the church in the Latin American and Caribbean context, of a preferential option for the poor, Aparecida appears in more direct continuity with Medellín (1968) and Puebla (1979), rather than the more timid Santo Domingo Conference (1995). The fundamental category used in the final document is the category of “disciples and missionaries.” In the Christian vocation, persons are called to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ in order to follow him and fulfill the mission of proclaiming the Good News of God’s kingdom. In this dynamism of becoming truly disciples and missionaries, the theme of the preferential option for the poor is dealt with at length. It is reaffirmed as a confirmation of the teaching of the previous conferences (*Ap* 396), but it is also re-actualized within the current context. Following Jesus, all disciples-missionaries are called to translate their vocation into a commitment of solidarity with the poor and marginalized (*Ap* 112). The missionary-disciple is also called to recognize Jesus in the poor who are encountered. Without using the terminology of “sacramentality” of the poor, the document offers some openings in this direction:

If this option [for the poor] is implicit in Christological faith, we Christians, as disciples and missionaries, are called to contemplate, in the suffering faces of our brothers and sisters, the face of Christ who calls us to serve Him in them: “The suffering faces of the poor are suffering faces of Christ” (*Ap* 393).

⁴⁰ Cristián del Campo, *Dios opta por los pobres. Reflexión teológica a partir de Aparecida* (Santiago de Chile: Universidad Alberto Hurtado, 2010). CELAM, *Concluding Document of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean*, 13-31 May 2007, <http://www.aecrc.org/documents/Aparecida-Concluding%20Document.pdf>.

The encounter with Jesus Christ in the poor is “constitutive” of the faith in him (*Ap* 257) and this is the place where personal conversion happens and social relations are transformed (*Ap* 359).

Despite all these Christological mentions, which give a theological emphasis to the preferential option for the poor, del Campo notes that the document “does not finish closing the hermeneutical circle because it understands the preferential option for the poor as theological only in one direction.”⁴¹ The document shows that the option is rooted in Christological faith but it does not really take into account how much “from the poor, Christology, and therefore, discipleship, can be deepened.”⁴² The implications of the quasi “sacramental” affirmation cited above, that the face of Jesus is encountered in the face of the poor, are not taken to the full because, in the implementation of the methodology “see-judge-act,” the step of judging is done out of already established theological notions which are not really interrogated or enriched by the “see” and the “act.”⁴³

Del Campo then suggests three aspects of Christology to which a preferential option for the poor brings a substantial contribution. First, this option helps to improve access to the humanity of Christ. In face of the always resurging danger of various forms of Docetism, the perspective brought by the life of the poor is to rediscover the concrete meaning of the incarnation.

God becomes man, and a man who is poor. This option, which Jesus lived through all his historical existence, is verified in his lifestyle, in his choice of the first recipients of his

⁴¹ del Campo, *Dios opta*, 77. Translation mine as in all the following citations.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 80-90.

proclamation, and in the mode of his passion and death. The adjectives qualify the substantive: Jesus lived a simple, poor, and suffering humanity.”⁴⁴

These are key points of attention in Jesus’ humanity for a Christological reflection which connects with today’s reality of the poor and marginalized. Crucial also is the consideration of the cross in its historicity. There is a connection between considering the poor and asking questions about the causes of poverty and considering Jesus on the cross and asking questions about what brought him there.

Second, if the preferential option for the poor helps us to understand the humanity of Jesus Christ, it also helps us to understand his divinity. As suggested by Juan Luis Segundo, it is Jesus Christ himself who reveals to us what it means to be human and to be divine.⁴⁵ In consequence, in order to envision what the divinity is, it is crucial, for example, to look at the cross. Del Campo writes,

To affirm that the option for the poor is eminently theological implies believing in innocent suffering as a theological reality. This means that we should recognize, not only that the poor are the crucified of today, but that they are the historical body of Jesus Christ on the cross out of which the mystery of a suffering God is enlightened. In Jesus crucified, this God self-appeared as “a minor God,” present in the little ones and the powerless, a “divinity which hides itself,” and in front of which sin seems to triumph.⁴⁶

Third, the preferential option for the poor pushes us to deepen our understanding of God’s central project for humanity and Jesus’ central mission: the kingdom of God. The poor are the first addressees of the proclamation of the kingdom, a kingdom of justice, peace and dignity for all. The kingdom of God belongs to them (Mt 5:3). If the poor are those who hope for the

⁴⁴ Ibid, 31.

⁴⁵ Juan Luis Segundo, “Disquisición sobre el Misterio Absoluto,” *Revista Latinoamericana de Teología* 6 (1985): 225-226.

⁴⁶ del Campo, *Dios opta*, 98.

kingdom then “orthopraxis helps to penetrate the mystery of revelation, because it is on the path of transforming reality that can be experienced with more clarity the *truth* of the kingdom.”⁴⁷ At the same time, history remains open. It is incomplete. The kingdom is “not-yet” fully there. The option for the poor nourishes also a perception of the eschatological dimension of the faith in Christ bringing about the kingdom of God.

The three topics raised by del Campo – the human history of Jesus Christ, his divinity and the kingdom of God – can be developed in many different ways. Actually, many liberation theologians have already done so. They can also certainly be discussed and challenged on some aspects. The point I want to make in evoking them is to show the potential implications of taking into account the initial Christological insights which we highlighted as coming out of the adoption of a preferential option for the poor. I showed that, in the social encyclicals, such an adoption lead to insisting on looking at Jesus Christ in his proximity to and commitment with the poor and also to envisioning them as a privileged locus for encountering him. This is a crucial starting point which can have many more repercussions. The teaching of the magisterium on social issues opens doors for deepening Christology.

What del Campo notes concerning the final document of Aparecida and its failure to take into account the consequences for theology of the preferential option for the poor could certainly be said also of the encyclicals studied in this dissertation. By not clarifying the Christological implications of something like the preferential option for the poor, the documents simply allow the gaps to be filled by other already existing approaches to Jesus Christ. For example, when nothing is said about the historical conditions of the passion and death of Jesus in relation to the

⁴⁷ Ibid., 100.

suffering of today's crucified, any evocation of Christ saving us on the cross remains rather metaphysical and abstract. Coming back to the central thesis of this section about the articulation between Christologies "from below" and "from above," this is the reason why attention to and explicit incorporation of the latter are so crucial.⁴⁸

There are many different entries into the mystery of "God for us," many different ways of being seized by this mystery of God's love saving us. There are many different ways of articulating a reasoned discourse about God or practicing "theo-logi." What this dissertation has attempted to do is to show that social ethics in the form taken by CST – and more precisely, papal social encyclicals – is one possible way to do so. With no pretention to be theologically systematic or exhaustive, this teaching nonetheless provides significant theological contributions which emerge from particular sets of historical circumstances.

In this last chapter I have suggested how the theological insights gathered throughout our theological reading of the encyclicals could give an orientation for three "meta" theological questions, namely of articulating and uniting (1) theology and history, (2) structural change and personal conversion, and (3) Christology from above and from below. This reflects my interest in addressing methodological and fundamental questions concerning the theological endeavor and offering some guidelines for developing it. Along the way I also suggested some promising paths to be explored on more concrete topics brought up by the theological reading of the social

⁴⁸ No doubt that, in this regard, *CiV* is found wanting. There are obvious appeals for structural changes and greater global justice which could point to Jesus' historical and essential proximity to the poor and marginalized but the explicit Christological references pertain mostly to the classical metaphysical approach to Jesus Christ.

encyclicals: trinitarian anthropology and Christological implications of a preferential option for the poor.

Within CST, social encyclicals offer a diversity of ethical analyses and political positioning regarding the challenges of bringing greater justice, peace, and solidarity in the world. This diversity is the result of various historical circumstances and also of differences of appreciation of these circumstances among the popes. What I have highlighted in this dissertation is that such diversity is reflected in a plurality of theologies. Not only do some theological options better support certain normative and practical responses to the social challenges, but these responses in turn also contribute to shape or reshape theological discourse. Greater awareness of this hermeneutic spiral of relations between social ethics and theology enriches any reading of CST and it should inform as well its future productions. In this way entries into the mystery of “God for us” will be multiplied, or rather we will allow many more ways for the mystery of God’s love to seize us.

AFTERWORD

When I started this project and elaborated my dissertation proposal in the fall of 2012, Benedict XVI was still in office. The choice of three encyclicals on development from the three major popes of the post-Vatican II era as objects of my study was rather easy since it was a good way to cover the whole period. A few months later, however, on February 11, 2013, Benedict announced his resignation and on March 13, Jorge Mario Bergoglio was elected pope, taking the name of Francis. As I write these last pages, in March 2015, we are still expecting his first social encyclical, which is announced for next summer. It is therefore impossible to engage in the same kind of investigation about him as was done about his predecessors in the central chapters of this dissertation. Nonetheless, I would like to risk a few remarks based on what we have already seen, heard and read in the two first years of this new pontificate. How does Pope Francis fit in the theological landscape I have given in the previous chapters? What do we find in terms of theological contributions coming out of his social teaching even before his forthcoming encyclical?

Since *CiV* in 2009, the situation of the world has not substantially changed in terms of the challenges of global justice. Inequalities are not recessing even if extreme poverty is. Following the Great Recession no real structural changes have been made concerning financial markets despite the calls to learn from past errors. The environmental issue is more and more pressing, which makes an encyclical concerned with ecology particularly timely. Many parts of the world are torn apart by violence generated by civil wars or gang wars, religious fundamentalism, exacerbated nationalism and ethnic conflicts. Millions of people are forced to migrate for security or economic reasons.

While these challenges are not significantly new, Francis, as the first pope from Latin America and the first Jesuit pope, nonetheless brings in a new worldview for papal social teaching. The shift initiated at Vatican II from a European-centered church to a world church is taking a new step with a pope coming from Argentina. His first two sets of nominations of cardinals have confirmed this movement with a well noticed increase in diversity of origins and the light shed on countries of the global South never before awarded a cardinal. Through the history of his own country, Francis has a first-hand experience of the realities of poverty, underdevelopment and political violence. He had to find his way in the murky waters of the troubled period of the military dictatorship in the 1970s when he was provincial superior of the Jesuits. As Archbishop of Buenos Aires from 1998 to 2013 he showed a special interest in ministering in the slums. He may have shown some reserve toward the more politically engaged and revolutionary forms of liberation theology, but he can be seen as firmly part of one current of it which stresses the significance of popular piety as expressing the evangelizing power of those in need.¹ Finally, prior to his election, Francis has exercised mainly pastoral responsibilities. These are, undoubtedly, some of the key contextual features that shape the current pope's social teaching and the theological contribution this teaching offers.

Already two elements of this contribution can be highlighted. First we witness a renewed emphasis on the option for the poor and the marginalized. On his first trip outside Rome on July 8, 2013, Francis visited the island of Lampedusa to call attention to the tragedy of thousands of migrants attempting to join the Europe from the coast of Northern Africa on overcrowded boats and encountering only death by drowning in the Mediterranean Sea. A few weeks later, at

¹ Philip Endean, "Writings on Jesuit Spirituality I by Jorge Mario Bergoglio, S.J.," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 45, no. 3 (Autumn 2013): 6-7.

the occasion of his visit to Brazil for the World Youth Day he spent some time in a *favela* of Rio. More recently, we saw him visiting a shanty town inhabited by Romas in a neighborhood of Rome. These are powerful symbols of what is repeated constantly in his speeches: the poor and the marginalized ought to be an object of special concern for the church, a priority. In his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (EG) (2013), he dedicates a whole section to the inclusion of the poor in society.² A crucial point for theology is that he stresses that “our faith in Christ, who became poor, and was always close to the poor and the outcast, is the basis of our concern for the integral development of society’s most neglected members” (EG 186) and later he adds that “for the Church, the option for the poor is primarily a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical one” (EG 198). The poor are not merely an “object of concern” they are primarily a source for our faith: “we need to let ourselves be evangelized by them...we are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them” (EG 198).

Second, in his way of proceeding and in his writings, Francis shows a willingness to develop collegiality among bishops, to listen to a plurality of voices, and to take into account the diversity of cultural situations. This is particularly striking in EG. Many documents of conferences of bishops are cited in support of various points of argumentation, each one bringing a particular expertise on a specific topic, for example the bishops of the Philippines about ecology and biodiversity in creation (EG 215) or the African bishops about forms of neo-colonialism (EG 62). The October 2014 extraordinary synod on the family was also the occasion for promoting open debate within the church without fear of diverging opinions and also, through

² EG 186-216.

the largely publicized initial consultation, to find ways of listening to more voices. With Pope Francis, dialogical and inductive approaches seem to regain a stronger role in the way the church develops its authoritative teaching.

The previous points suggest that, in the theological landscape I drew in this dissertation, Francis would fit better in the neo-Thomist and liberationist frameworks than in the Augustinian. However, it could well be that we need to work out another framework.³ The analysis of the theological insights of the forthcoming encyclical will certainly help to clarify this question. In any case, my theological reflections exposed in the last chapter of this dissertation appear reinforced by what we already see of Pope Francis. The very existence of the church's social teaching as *theological* discourse highlights the necessity for theology to take into account historicity, to stress structural change and to never lose sight of the Christology from below required by the option for the poor.

³ In her typology of post-Vatican II models of Catholic theology, Lisa Cahill has a "neo-Franciscan" type, reflective of a new generation of Catholics who prioritize faith community life and search for personal holiness while also envisioning the public role of the church as caring for the poor, promoting non-violence, raising concern for the environment and engaging inter-religious dialogue. The figure of Francis of Assisi is in the background. It is a possible path to explore in order to capture Pope Francis' theological stance. Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Catholic Feminists and Traditions: Renewal, Reinvention, Replacement," *The Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 34, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2014): 27-51.

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