

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University · Loyola Heights, Quezon City · 1108 Philippines

The Theology of History

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Philippine Studies vol. 13, no. 3 (1965): 687–706

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Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

*The Theology of History**

IF the layman's attitude towards the world must take into account both the order of creation (nature) and the order of redemption (supernature) in which both the layman and the world are involved, it must equally consider the relationship between time and eternity, between the historical encounter of man with God in "this world" and the eternal destiny of man with God in "the next world." To properly view himself and the world in which he lives, the layman must see what is his own and the world's place in the larger perspective of a Christian theology of history. Since all creation has a common destiny, in other words, there are no small eddies of personal autobiography which are exempted or escape from the general current of history as it sweeps on to its common goal.

We can briefly examine what the theology of history has to contribute to the layman's attitude towards the world by examining four questions: 1. Man and History; 2. Revelation and History; 3. The Christian View of History; and 4. The Problem of Transcendence and Immanence.

MAN AND HISTORY

Man is not simply a rational and social animal, he is also a historical animal. Unlike Jove, he does not spring full grown from the head of Minerva. He reaches physical and psychological maturity only after years of growth, and he continues to be personally enriched by experience until the very end of his life. When President Franklin Roosevelt, for example, asked Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes why he should be reading Plato at the age of ninety, the venera-

* This survey on the theology of history and on the problem of incarnationalism and eschatology forms part of *The Theology of the Layman*, issued in mimeographed form by the Publications Office of the Ateneo de Manila University (1965, 274 pp.). Footnotes and Bibliography were prepared by Fr. Joseph J. Smith, S.J. of San Jose Seminary.—EDITORS' NOTE.

ble old man replied, "To improve my mind, Mr. President, to improve my mind." Man does not gain maturity and perfection, therefore, in a single leap, but through the cumulative experience of a lifetime. In his usual humorous way, Mark Twain expressed a portion of this truth when he said, "When I was eighteen, I thought my father didn't know much, but, when I was twenty-one, I was surprised how much he had learned in three years." Even naturally, therefore, history is the matrix of all self-development or self-achievement.

History, however, is not mere autobiography, it also has a larger social dimension. No man is an island. We are increasingly affected in the modern world by the great events of the generation in which we live. Men do their best, of course, to control the events of history, but the complete control of history is beyond the power of finite men. As Winston Churchill has said, "History is not illogical, but it is a trap for logicians." It is this unpredictable element that makes history both a challenge and a threat to man. It is a challenge because to avoid disaster man must extend his talents to the fullest; and it is a threat because, in a world where the powers of evil and the effects of sin are at work, human freedom can be tempted to revolt against even the noblest of human causes. The best laid plans of mice and men, Burns assures us, oft gang awry.

It is the inevitability of being in history, on the one hand, and not being completely in control of history, on the other, that causes men to worry and be anxious about the future. Among the current terms which describe this condition of being irrevocably involved in something which one cannot completely control could be listed such familiar words as "anxiety", "alienation", "fear of the bomb", "despair", "nausea", and the "absurd".

It is precisely the unpredictability of human history that makes a knowledge of what revelation says about human history all the more essential. Not that a theology of history

will enable us to foresee the immediate future in precise detail, but it will provide the large frame-work within which the immediate future can intelligibly be placed. It is the difference between a man in a jungle with no sense of direction and no knowledge of where the jungle ends, or if it ends at all, and a man in the same jungle who knows that the sea coast and safety lie, let us say, to the East. The knowledge of where the seacoast lies, of course, will not dictate the precise path which the man should follow to reach it, but it will at least dictate the general direction in which he travels and it will also assuage that gripping and understandably human panic of being totally lost. God has a plan for history, and revelation tells us what the large dimensions of that plan are. It is true that God may, at any given moment, seem to be writing straight with crooked lines, just as the path of a man making his way out of the jungle towards the seacoast may seem aimless when viewed over a short distance. Nonetheless, despite our human perplexity and inevitable myopia, we can proceed with the help of revelation on our journey through history with a fundamental calm, because, on the word of the Lord of History Himself, we know that all paths lead back to Him.

REVELATION AND HISTORY

Before proceeding directly to what the Christian vision of history is, it may be useful to pause for a moment on the intimate relationship that exists between revelation and history in themselves. Since Our Lord lived at a certain time (4 B.C.—30 A.D.) and in a certain place (Palestine), it is commonplace to say that Christian revelation is historical, that it took place in history. This, unfortunately, too often gives the impression that Christian revelation is merely a sectarian concern, or that revelation (even if we add in the history of Israel) is but a small portion of the much larger stream of universal history. Is not Abraham (c. 1800 B.C.), for example, of the recent past compared to the date projected for Peking or Kanjera man (c. 1,000,000 and 500,000 years B.C.)?

Actually, a more adequate and profound view of revelation would show that it is not merely a small part of history, but that it has creatively controlled the beginning, the progress, and the goal of history itself. The problem, in other words, is not to comprehend how revelation, in its narrow sense, fits into human history, but to see why there is no complete understanding of history possible without a knowledge of revelation, in its broader meaning. Revelation, properly understood, is neither a momentary fragment of universal history, nor is it merely another source of information about the purposes and goals of history. Revelation is the creative cause of the goal and purpose of history itself. Since this is not immediately self-evident, it requires some further explanation.

Christian revelation is not just a list of statements about God. In its most basic meaning, it is God's self-disclosure of Himself to man. Revelation is God's Word to man, but God's Word is a creative word. It effects what it says. The Hebrew for "word", for example, is *dabar* which has the connotation of "deed" or "event", as much as it does of "the spoken word."

The events of the Exodus and the Exile, therefore, revealed God to Israel as clearly as the Word of the Lord which the prophets spoke to the Chosen People. In the New Testament, the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ were likewise events of revelation as much as the Sermon on the Mount. The chief revelation of God, as we pointed out, was the Person of Christ Himself. As St. John clearly stated, the Incarnation was an event, not in idea. The Word became flesh. Of course, it is also true that the Word once made flesh revealed Himself to men by both word and deed. He was the way, the truth, and the light. In the person and message of Christ, in other words, God most perfectly revealed Himself to men.

The Word of God, however, was not merely creative in the past history of Israel and in the life of Christ. It con-

tinues to be creative to the end of time. Neither God nor His attributes ever change. Revelation is a personal encounter with God so that, when man responds to the revealing God by Faith, he is not merely informed about God by a series of conceptual propositions, but he is actually transformed into something new. Faith is the first step towards that justification which converts man from being unjust to become just, from being an enemy of God to being His friend. As the Council of Trent says, "Adults are disposed for justification in this way: Awakened and assisted by divine grace, they conceive Faith from hearing, and they are freely led to God."

Just as revelation, therefore, affects the reality of the men who accept it in Faith and love, so revelation has changed and transformed the goal and purpose of history. Revelation, in other words, remains creative, not only with regard to man himself, but also with regard to men's history. The bestowal of the supernatural was a revelation to Adam which altered his own and the whole of mankind's final destiny. The sharing in the divine life which constitutes the essence of sanctifying grace is but another aspect of the self-disclosure of God in revelation which effects what it says. Simultaneously with the elevation of Adam to such a sharing of the divine life through grace was the elevation of Adam's and mankind's final destiny. Revelation has been operative from the beginning of all human history and it has determined the final goal of all history as well. It is not merely a partial chapter in the history of mankind, therefore, but the alpha and omega of the whole process. Without revelation, accordingly, man can not learn what his final destiny truly is, and what are the necessary means to attain it.

THE CHRISTIAN VISION OF HISTORY

Oscar Cullmann in his book, *Christ and Time*, has described what the Christian vision of history was for the writers of the New Testament. Two of his conclusions are of interest

to us here: (a) Christ is the center of history and (b) we live in the "last times." Although James Barr, in his *Biblical Words for Time*, has made some telling criticisms of Cullmann's work, the main lines of Cullmann's presentation (with which we are alone concerned) still stand.

Christ is the Center of History

As Cullmann points out, we can only speak of history having a direction when we know that it has a beginning and an end. The Greeks, for example, who could discern no such beginning and end of the whole historical process, were forced to conceive of history as cyclic, not linear. Men and civilizations were born, lived their moment in the sun, and died. In their offspring or conquerors, the cycle began all over again. This idea of cyclic history, of course, should not be understood to mean that all historical events recurred in exactly the same form. It merely means that the Greeks could not detect in the successive rise and fall of human realities any dominating and directive purpose (neither, it might be added in passing, have such modern analysts of history as Spengler and Toynbee).

Both the Hebrew and the Christian vision of history, however, conceived human history as linear. It had its beginning in creation, and it would have its consummation in the Parousia, i.e., the eschatological manifestation of Yahweh at the end of time, the "eschaton", or the "last time". The Jew and the Christian, therefore, could speak of the purpose of the whole historical process where the Greek could not. Revelation informed the believer of history's total direction where, from mere observation of history's passing events, human reason was impotent to discern any final goal of history.

If the Christian and the Jew, however, could agree on the beginning (creation) and the final end (Parousia) of history, they disagreed after the coming of Christ, on what Cullmann calls the Mid-Point of history. For the Jew, the

Mid-Point of history was the Parousia, and it still lay in the future. For the Christian, on the other hand, the Mid-Point of history was the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, and it lay in the past.

The "Last Time"

If, for the Christian, Christ is the center of history, if the definitive event of history has already taken place, if the final salvation of man has already been accomplished, the question naturally arises: what is the purpose of the time between Christ's life and the Parousia?

This is a question which seemed to puzzle many early Christians. Since the Hebrew point of view the final redemption and the Parousia were identified, some early Christians seemed to expect the imminent "end of the world" because they knew the final redemption had already taken place in Christ. The actual reality, as we know now, turned out to be more subtle. We do live in the last time. The eschatological age has already dawned in Christ, but the full and total realization of the eschatological age in the Parousia has not yet occurred. The purpose of history, therefore, between the first and second comings of Christ is to spread the Good News of Redemption to all the nations. The yeast, as it were, is already in the dough, but it has not yet permeated it completely.

This tension between the "already" and the "not yet" is characteristic of the last time in which we live. In the Synoptic Gospels, the Kingdom of God is already inaugurated among men by Christ Himself (it is a present reality), but the Kingdom of God has not yet reached its full growth (its complete perfection still lies in the future). As St. Paul said, we must build up the Body of Christ, and we must fill up the sufferings lacking in Christ Jesus.

The Christian vision of history, therefore, juxtaposes time and eternity. Just as there is a close harmony between na-

ture and supernature, there is a close association between the last time and the present time. At his death, the individual Christian believer steps out of this life into the next life, but the sharing of God's life that he will then enjoy by direct vision has already begun now by Faith. We see now in a glass darkly, but then face to face. In both cases, however, we truly "see" although in different ways. Even in time, sanctifying grace provides our passport for eternity. History has not yet reached its final stop (for us personally in death, or for the human race as a whole in the Parousia), but it already had its culmination, or Mid-Point in Christ.

Christ has already come into history by His Incarnation and returned to the Father by His Resurrection and Ascension. He has not yet returned the second time, but we have His promise that He will return and take us with Him. For the Christian, therefore, time is precious. We must redeem time. We must work quickly to prepare ourselves and the world for the final revelation of the redemption that has already begun. The Bridegroom comes and we must be ready for Him, because, when He comes, for us personally in death or for men generally at the Parousia, the time of preparation will be over.

IMMANENCE AND TRANSCENDENCE

Catholicism has been often called a religion of balance. It tries to establish a harmony between things which at first glance may seem irreconcilable, or even contradictory — between the order of creation and the order of redemption, between the natural and the supernatural, and between the hierarchy and the laity. It does not try to eliminate one or other of these alternatives, but, maintaining both, it tries to integrate them as harmoniously as possible. While safeguarding their distinction, in other words, it seeks to explore their possible unity. Catholicism can be better described, therefore, as a religion of "both-and" rather than a religion of "either-or."

History is another reality which challenges the Christian thinker to maintain that precarious balance between

its seemingly irreconcilable complexities. It may be well therefore, before proceeding to the different opinions between Catholics on the proper attitude towards history, (a) to state briefly in what the problem of immanence and transcendence consists, and (b) to cite certain positions about the problem which Catholics find unacceptable.

The Problem of Immanence and Transcendence

The problem of immanence and transcendence can be stated at varying levels for God, for the Church, and for the individual. Although it is basically the same problem, there is enough variation to justify a separate statement of the problem for each of these.

God. For God, the question of immanence and transcendence asks whether He is within or outside of history. It asks how He can be, in other words, both the Ground of all being and at the same time the Goal and the Governor of all history? Both alternatives pose cruel dilemmas.

If God is conceived as totally transcendent to history, then history may well be able to get along very nicely without Him. As Father De Lubac has shown in *The Drama of Atheistic Humanism*, if God is not connected with history, man gradually usurps His place.

On the other hand, if God is totally immanent to history, then pantheism or agnosticism are the logical results. Pantheism is continually one of the great philosophical temptations. If God is infinite for example, how can there be anything truly distinct from Him? If the world and its history are really distinct from Him, in other words, how is He infinite because there is something He is not? Further, if God is totally immanent to history, then men can never say that they know who God is. They can only say that they are learning what He is. If God is identified with the flux of history then what He is, or will be, has not been completely spelled out, simply because history has not yet been completely spelled out.

The Church. The Church is the continuation of Christ through history, and, like Christ, it must both incarnate itself in history and yet remain above it. Our Lord was totally a Jew of a given period and a given culture (immanence), but He was by no means limited to a thirty year period of Palestine's history (transcendence). The Church likewise must become a part of the various cultures which it evangelizes (otherwise it could not effectively speak about Christ to the men of those cultures), and, yet, the Church can never identify itself with any one culture (it is for all men, and not only for the men of any one culture alone). The missions have clearly posed this problem for the Church. The Roman Catholic Church, for example, may have its administrative center in Rome, but there is nothing intrinsically Roman or Italian about the Church.

The Individual Catholic. The problem of immanence and transcendence touches the individual in his attitude to the world and to its history. Can he wholeheartedly identify himself with the movements of history and the city of man (immanence), or must he hold back from history because he has a prior and conflicting commitment to the city of God, to the heavenly Jerusalem of the next life (transcendence)?

False Positions on Immanence and Transcendence

Without making any attempt at a complete exposition of their doctrine, we might list some recent positions which have exaggerated either the immanence or transcendence of God in history, or what they substitute for God. The mere listing of these positions (we have time for little more) may show that the problem is not completely theoretical. Among the immanentists we can mention Hegel (1770-1831), and Marx (1818-1883). On the other hand, Karl Barth (1886-), the noted Calvinist theologian, presents an example of an extreme transcendentalist.

Hegel. Hegel was an idealist and a pantheist who conceived the historical process as a dialectic in which the Absolute Idea thinks itself out through various stages of art (thesis), religion (antithesis) and philosophy (synthesis).

For Hegel, therefore, God, or the Absolute Idea, was totally immanent to history.

Marx. Marx accepted the dialectic of Hegel, but he despiritualized it. In place of Hegel's Idealism, Marx proposed a dialectical materialism with the classless society as its ultimate goal. For Marx, as for Hegel, history had a definite direction. The goal of history, however, was totally within history itself. The classless society was solely the product of history's own dialectic. The classless society, in other words, was Marx's substitute for the Beatific Vision. Man's sole glory was a brief life of service to the State. He had no transcendent destiny beyond history. Transcendence and the supernatural were swallowed up in immanence and the natural.

Karl Barth. Barth reacted against the Liberal Protestantism of the Nineteenth Century which saw God in immanent continuity with the best and highest in man's spirit and culture. The Liberals had linked Christianity to the cult of inevitable progress. They preached a "Social Gospel".

The First World War shattered this Liberal vision of God and of inevitable progress. In 1919, Barth published his commentary on The Epistle to the Romans in which he completely renounced Liberal Protestantism and the doctrine of immanence. For Barth, God was *ganz anders* (totally different). There was an "infinite qualitative difference between time and eternity, between God and man." Any knowledge of God or any contact with Him comes entirely from God in revelation. Reason, history, culture, the totality of human effort, literally, "get you nowhere." From a belief in the Liberal's God of immanence, Barth switched to a God of total transcendence, a God outside, above, and beyond history who judges man "straight down from above."

INCARNATIONALISM AND ESCHATOLOGY

If the extreme positions just referred to are unacceptable to the Catholic, there are, nonetheless, two possible attitudes which Catholic theologians have adopted towards what Fa-

ther Gustave Thils has called "terrestrial reality", that large complex of history, society, science, culture and technology.

This question of the Catholic's attitude towards the world became the center of a heated theological debate shortly after the close of World War II. The discussion began in France, although it quickly spread beyond the confines of France alone. From this discussion, there arose two clearly differing positions, two groups who for want of a better name have been called the Incarnationalists and the Eschatologists. Both positions, it should be stressed, are Catholic, and both are based solidly on Catholic dogma. They differ, however, in their arrangement of the truths of revelation, and in the emphasis that they give to them. For convenience, we will consider: 1. the Eschatologist position, 2. the Incarnationalist position, and 3. the relevance of these questions for the layman.

THE ESCHATOLOGIST POSITION

The Eschatologist position was presented mainly by Father Louis Bouyer and Father Daniélou in the magazine *Dieu Vivant*. In general, the Eschatologists were pessimistic about the enduring value of terrestrial reality. They cautioned against any excessive hopes for human progress. They saw in the growth of technology, for example, the danger of reducing men to robots and the threat to man's liberty through regimentation. Theologically, they based their position on the following points.

1. The world was still vulnerable to the influence of Satan. The greatest lie that the "father of lies" had perpetrated on the human race was precisely the modern conviction that he did not exist at all.

2. The world also still suffers from the effects of personal and original sin. The redemption has restored grace, it is true, but it has not restored integrity. If nature is not corrupt, it is at least easily corruptible. Those who throw themselves into the world are in real danger of becoming worldly.

3. Redemption was won by the Cross. The Christian progresses most, therefore, when he renounces most. The Cross will always be "a folly to the Gentiles and a stumbling block to the Jews", but, to those to whom the grace is given, it is the wisdom of God. To play down the Cross and renunciation is not to accommodate the Faith to the world, it is to compromise it.

4. Whether we call man's final destiny the City of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, or the eschatological Kingdom of God, it is not a product of human effort, but a pure gift from God. Man's labor in this world can never attain it. A supernatural destiny is discontinuous with natural effort. The supernatural is totally gratuitous.

Because of these truths, the eschatologists maintain a guarded reserve towards the world. If they do not have an overt contempt for the things of this life, they at least have a fundamental suspicion of them. The Christian should live in the world, the eschatologist seems to say, as a stranger and a pilgrim because all these things about him will someday "pass away."

Father Daniélou, for example, wrote as follows about the Christian's attitude towards the world.

For the Christian, the world of natural values and science, the world of the temporal city and the economic life has something essentially anachronistic about it. It is fundamentally surpassed by the word of the Church which already possesses its future. The world of the Church, on the other hand, appears in relation to the political society "catachronistic"—that is to say the anticipation of a reality to come—to the extent that it belongs to the future. The juxtaposition of a past and a future, such is the Christian present.¹

Father John Courtney Murray makes the following statement about the eschatologist position which can serve as a fitting conclusion to our brief exposition:

Pushed to the extreme, the conclusion would be that man not only may in fact neglect, but even should by right neglect, what is called cultural enterprise—the cultivation of science and the arts, the pur-

¹ Jean Daniélou, "Christianisme et histoire," *Etudes* 254 (1947) 183.

suit of human values by human energies, the work of civilization—in order to give undivided energies to the invisible things of the spirit. No Christian of course draws this extreme conclusion and makes it a law for humanity, though individuals may hear it, in one or other form, as the word of God to them, and hearken to it, and be God's witnesses to the oneness of the one thing necessary, by the completeness of their contempt for the world.²

THE INCARNATIONALIST POSITION

Among the Incarnationalists can be numbered Fathers Gustave Thils, Leopold Malevez, Yves Congar, J.C. Murray, and Martin C. D'Arcy. Father Teilhard de Chardin is perhaps the most imaginative and most dedicated incarnation-alist of all, but, since he does not always work precisely as a theologian, we will reserve our consideration of his position for another article.

The Incarnationalists are, in general, optimistic about the lasting value of man's work in this world. Without denying the transcendence of God and the supernatural to the historical process, they, nonetheless, emphasize that the Kingdom of God is already actually at work in the world at present, and that, although the complete redemption still lies ahead, now is the time to prepare for it. They support their position by stressing the following points.

1. As Genesis stated (1.26), God made man in His own image and likeness, and gave man domination over nature. In exercising and expanding his control over nature, therefore, man deepens and perfects his likeness to God. He becomes, in a limited but real sense, co-creator with God by rendering matter more supple and pliable to the service of man.

If by sin the harmony that should exist between man and nature was upset, it is one of the functions of the redemption and, consequently, of redeemed man to restore the original integrity between man and matter. Man has the task, therefore, of so organizing the world that a truly human life is possible. He must fight to eliminate hunger,

² J. Courtney Murray, "Christian Humanism in America," *Social Order* 3 (1953) 240.

sickness, and abject poverty. These seemingly human tasks can be made works preparatory for redemption, since, as Pius XI stressed in *Quadragesimo Anno*, the man who is starving for ordinary bread can hardly give much thought to the supernatural and saving bread of the eucharist. Grace builds on nature, but both material and human nature, like potter's clay, must be kneaded by human labor in order to receive the impress of grace.

2. As their name indicates, the Incarnationalists put great stress on the reality of the Incarnation. The Word became flesh. The divine once entered the stream of human history, and the Holy Spirit still works in the Church. All human striving for perfection can be viewed as the building up of the Body of Christ. As Father Malevez says, "the contemporary mastery over matter, the political organization of society, art, creative thought, and technology, complete what Christ came to do, and, in completing His work, glorify Him. They do this whether the men who undertake these enterprises have a pure intention or not... This accomplishment announces and inaugurates the consummation of the God-Man."³

3. With the Greek Fathers, the Incarnationalists see grace as a divinization of man, and not only as the mere healing of fallen nature, the complementary aspect of grace which the Western Fathers stressed. Sin is certainly a reality which must be taken into consideration, but the motive which grace provides for positive action should not be stifled by a constricting fear of sin. Charity is not merely negative. One will be judged by what one does, as much as by what one avoids doing. Grace is not given so that we can "set upon the ground and tell sad stories of the death of kings." The optimism of grace must counteract the pessimism of sin.⁴

³ Leopold Malevez, "Philosophie chrétienne du Progres," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 59 (1937) 381.

⁴ The "law of the cross" must in no way be denied. But it cannot be made into a principle which excludes all human values or all dedication in the world. Sin did not corrupt the human values in creation, but made creatures accidentally dangerous for fallen man. The Christian therefore must dedicate himself to liberating the human

4. If man's ultimate goal is supernatural and, therefore, a gift of God not strictly attainable by human effort, it is, nonetheless, a goal of man, it is a perfection that man can enjoy. Man does not have to be changed substantially to enjoy the beatific vision. Grace builds on nature, it does not destroy it.

Granting, therefore, a discontinuity between man's final destiny and man's own native powers, the Incarnationalists show the consequence between man's work now for humanity and man's future existence in the City of God. God did not just give man a supernatural goal, He also gave man the supernatural means to attain it. Merit exists. All things will not "pass away." Man will not arrive in eternity without any luggage from this world, as Father D'Arcy phrases it.⁵ Man brings his meritorious acts with him. He helps others to reach heaven

values in creation in the spirit of seeking first the Kingdom of God. His action in the world will then necessarily become a concrete form of living the "law of the cross."

Cf. these lines in Fr. Murray's article, "Christian Humanism in America":

"In the stage of growth proper to its earthly pilgrimage the Body of Christ finds organic place for developed human values. It carries on the mission of Christ: *salvum facere id quod perierat*. And that which perished was not only a soul, but man in his composite unity, and the material universe too, in that its relation of subjection to man was shattered and it fell into a mysterious slavery of disobedience to human purposes, from which it longs for deliverance.

"The Church then is catholic in her redemptive scope; all men are to be saved, all that is human is to be saved. There is indeed to be a war upon the flesh, but in order that the body may be dignified. The Christian heart must cultivate a contempt for the world, but diligently cherish its reverence for the work of the Creator, who is Creator not only of heaven but of the earth, of the visible as well as the invisible. In order to protect the true meaning of the doctrine of sacrifice, its premises must be strongly affirmed—that the life which one loses, gives up, renounces, is a good life. Otherwise the losing of it would not be a saving loss but a sheer loss, a destruction and not a redemption (one would not and could not 'buy back' that which was destroyed as of no value)." *Social Order* 3 (1953), 240.

⁵ Martin D'Arcy, *The Sense of History: Secular and Sacred*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1959): p. 184.

with him, and he works with the material universe to prepare it for its final transformation.

This does not mean that only those works done in "the state of grace" have any value. The Incarnationalists further emphasize that all human work has some worth. Human effort has varying degrees of value for the one who performs it, for the service of other men, and for the final preparation of the material universe for the new creation. Not all human works, of course, are on the same level. Weaving baskets and then unweaving them simply to pass the time, as the ancient ascetics of Thebaid did, is not an activity as useful to men in general as the building up of the human city. The value of work in itself, in other words, can not be judged exclusively by the pure intention of the one performing it. A mediocre work of art painted by a saint remains a mediocre work of art no matter how meritorious it may be; and a masterpiece painted by a libertine remains a masterpiece no matter how inadequate his motivation may be in other respects.

RELEVANCE FOR THE LAYMAN

One of the notable result of the Incarnationalist-Eschatologist controversy is that the Second Vatican Council is discussing a schema on the Church and the Modern World. There has been a growing and widely felt need to face up to the issues which the Incarnationalists and Eschatologists discussed. Is it true, for example, as the Communists have claimed, that Christianity alienates the Christian from all truly human concerns? Can the Christian remain indifferent to the hunger, the sickness, and the poverty of over half of the present human race? Is there not an anti-social hedonism at work in the person who "saves his soul" while patronizingly abstaining from any wholehearted cooperation with one's fellow men in the task of building a more human civilization? Because of the crucialness of these questions,

the Council's statement on these problems is eagerly awaited not only by Catholics, but by the whole world.

Since both the Eschatologist and Incarnationalist positions are basically Catholic, the individual is free to choose the one that he prefers. *In necessariis, unitas; in dubiis, libertas; et, in omnibus, caritas.* Keeping that wise reservation clearly in mind, we suggest, nonetheless, that the Incarnationalist attitude is more congenial to the needs of the present-day layman. The average layman has to work for a living, and he works in the world. For the one, therefore, who must by his profession face the tasks of civilization, the Eschatologist position would seem to create an inevitable and debilitating tension between his belief as a Christian and his commitment as man. As Pope John XXIII said in his encyclical *Mater et Magistra* when discussing economic progress:

From instruction and education one must pass to action. This is a task that belongs particularly to Our sons, the laity, since their work generally involves them in temporal activities and in the formation of institutions dealing with such affairs.

It is interesting to note that Father Daniélou who was regarded as one of the chief proponents of the Eschatologist position wrote recently as follows about the Second Vatican Council's schema on the Church and the Modern World.

God is no less present in the construction of the human city than He is in the sanctuary. The Christian should not let himself be influenced by that false contemporary laicism which presents the reality of political, social, and economic action as a purely profane world which is totally independent of God. It is undoubtedly true that these realities do not directly depend on the Church. They enjoy a valid autonomy. Nonetheless, although there is no direct dependence on the Church, these activities do depend on the law of God whose interpretation lies within the competence of the magisterium of the Church.

If the Christian properly understands this, then when he puts himself at the service of the human city, it is God whom he serves at the same time as his fellow men; when he labors to build up the earthly city he earns eternal life by the same process. As Jesus said, "He, who gives a cup of water to one of these little ones, gives it to me." If the Christian understands this statement of Jesus, then beyond performing an individual act of charity, especially that modern form

of charity which precisely consists in the service of civilization and its institutions, he will also save his soul. Christ Himself affirms it. To serve one's fellow man and to save one's soul are not two different things, but one and the same. The Christian can thus rediscover the unity of his vocation, of his nature, and of his person.⁶

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⁶ *Etudes*, January 1965.

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