CHRISTIAN HUMANISM*

I. A Theology for Man

It is already trite to say that theology finds itself today in a state of transition and upheaval. This upheaval is so fast, indeed so hectic, that the state of theology seems chaotic to many both inside and outside of theological circles. They no longer see the forest for the trees. Therefore they either lose nerve in face of their own courage or run aimlessly and breathlessly after whatever happens to be the latest theological rage. The question arises therefore what would be the focus and the goal of a theology which seeks to renew itself. What should be the guiding concern of such a theology?

I would like to propose the following thesis: a renewed theology, which is deserving of the name, is a theology for man. Obviously a theology for angels or for sparrows never existed. But there existed and still exists a "theology in itself." Such a "theology in itself" is continually occupied with the question, who is God "in himself" or who is Christ "in himself" without asking what all of this means for us. Such a "theology in itself" can be very scientific and learned; but it moves within an academic ghetto; such a theology can also be accurate and correct, so accurate in fact, that it is no longer true, for truth is concrete; such a theology moves, moreover, in an ecclesiastical ghetto. It forgets that man does not exist for the Sabbath, but that the Sabbath exists for man. The world without God, with which we are confronted, is a reaction against a God apart from the world and apart from man.[1]

A "theology for man" is nevertheless not simply anthropology

* [The addresses delivered at the plenary sessions of the International Congress of Learned Societies in the Field of Religion have already been published in *Religion and the Humanizing of Man,* James M. Robinson, ed. (copies available at $3.00 from the Council on the Study of Religion, Waterloo Lutheran University, Waterloo, Canada). This paper of Doctor Kasper is reprinted here since his participation in the Congress was due to the initiative of the CTSA. —Ed.]

[1] Cf. Y. Congar, "Christus in der Heilsgeschichte und in unseren dogmatischen Traktaten," *Concilium* II (1966), 10.

and sociology. If man were the ultimate value for man and if politics were to become religion, then this world would constitute a new form of mythology which would not free man but rather enclose him. A "theology for man" is therefore theology first of all. But wherever there is talk about God there is, at least tendentiously and implicitly, talk not only about man but also about reality as a whole. A "theology for man" therefore cannot be a theology which has been narrowed down and reduced to anthropology. Man is not an abstract being who sits comfortably apart from the world; the word man always implies the world of man as well. "Theology for man" is therefore not only transcendental and personal theology, but also "theology of the world," "theology of history," and "political theology."

If understood in this way, a "theology for man" is not an absolutely new bill of fare. Such a theology would have to be the basic goal of any theology which is oriented toward the Bible. The canon of the biblical writings was drawn up in the second century in opposition to Marcion, who separated the God of Creation from the God of Redemption. In that the early Church set up the Bible as canon, it wanted to say the following: the Christian message is a message of redemption, that is, of liberation *for* the world and not a message of redemption and liberation *from* the world. The unity of creation and redemption is therefore the basic principle of interpretation in biblical theology. But even from a systematic viewpoint man and his world are constitutively situated in the Gospel. The Word of God comes forth as human word; it reaches its goal where it is humanly heard, understood, and accepted; God meets us as a man and through men.

The world which is always the world of man becomes such at its point of contact with the Gospel (*locus theologicus*).[2] This statement says more than that the world is the goal of the Gospel or that the world is the object of missionary activity. The world of man is not only the destination but also the source of theological statements. This does not need to be misunderstood in a liberalistic

2 Cf. W. Kasper, "Die Welt als Ort des Evangeliums," *Glaube und Geschichte*, 1970, pp. 209-23.

or modernistic way. The Gospel is not merely a symbolic codification of common human experience. That would not be theology but rather mythology and ideology. The Word of God nevertheless never encounters us as a naked reality; it has its own *Sitz im Leben;* it has human form. If this is so, then the question arises: What is man?

II. What is Man?

Theology cannot answer the question "What is man?" without taking seriously all those things which the present-day sciences of man have to say about him. In order to be able to speak about man in such a complicated and disturbed situation as our own, good common sense—as important as it normally is—is not sufficient. Information about man is for us today no longer as available as it previously was in a commonly accepted philosophy. If a "theology of man" does not want to proceed in a manner characteristic of a dilettante—and the danger of dilettantism is presently a great one in theology—then it must be interdisciplinary theology.[3] Interdiscipline is a fashionable word. But as soon as one earnestly agrees to it, the real difficulty of theology first comes to light. However, nowhere else are the anguishing problems of contemporary theology so clear, as when one asks: "What is man?"

Never before in history has man known so much about himself. Never before has the amount of information about himself made him so insecure. Bit by bit the self-understanding which has been handed down to man is being de-mythologized. If man saw himself previously as the center, the crown and the lord of creation, he now finds himself, since he began at the start of the modern age to penetrate searchingly into the cosmos—in the words of Pascal—alone in an isolated corner of the universe.[4] The grade of difference between man and animal, to which man attributed his exceptional position, has slowly but surely been abolished by modern biology. Since Darwin the boundaries have become fluid. Man has had to realize that from

[3] Cf. *Die Theologie in der interdisziplinären Forschung,* ed. J. B. Metz and T. Rendtorff, 1971; W. Kasper, "Die Theologie im interdisziplinären Gespräch —Gesichtspunkte und Fragen," *Evangelische Theologie* XXXII (1972), 292-300.

[4] B. Pascal, *Pensées,* 72.

a biological point of view he makes up only a small corner of the animal world.[5] Finally with the depth-psychology of Sigmund Freud the disillusionment with and the destruction of the former concept of man have been completed. The long-lasting, painful, and furious protest against this de-mythologizing of man is only too understandable. Today this protest has for the most part become silent. Even the churches, which indeed over the centuries have condemned almost every fundamental break-through of man, are leaving themselves open. They have no other choice. Modern science has plainly won the victory. And so the protest has been silenced; only the universal perplexity has remained: "What then is man?"

We have acquired an amazing amount of knowledge with which to approach this question. Yet the more answers there are to this question the less man seems to know with which answer he should identify himself. The greater the number of possible answers becomes the more man comes up against himself as if he were in a hall of a thousand mirrors and masks and finds that he has no clear image of himself.[6] Or do we know more today than before about the meaning of human existence, the meaning of love, of suffering, of death? "To raise this question is to torture ourselves, for the answer is so painfully clear. While we created wonderful things, we neglected to make ourselves into beings who were worthy of this powerful exertion. Our life resembles a state of spiritual chaos and confusion which comes very close to madness."[7] The more we know about man, the more we ask whether we also know that which is really worth knowing. The more we are able to manipulate our human existence, the more we ask what we are permitted to do and what we ought to do.

Here the topical interest of a theology which understands itself as a theology for man becomes evident in an almost unexpected manner. And this is so even if much, even if most of the traditional theological statements about man need correction. Religion and

5 M. Scheler, *Man's Place in Nature,* tr. H. Meyerhoff, 1961, p. 6.

6 J. Moltmann, *Mensch: Christliche Anthropologie in den Konflikten den Gegenwart* (Themen der Theologie 11), 1971, p. 12.

7 E. Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion,* 1950, p. 1.

theology have a purpose as long as they continually confront man with the question: "What is man?"

It is precisely this question which really makes man human.[8] Man is bound up in his environment in so many ways; in so many ways he is manipulated and determined. Nevertheless he distinguishes himself from other living beings in that he recognizes his plight and that he suffers because of it. In the very consciousness of his misery man's greatness is still evident. His greatness is that in the midst of his misery he can still question himself.[9] Thus it belongs to the very human existence of man that he asks himself about himself. If man were at some point no longer to ask this question, he would finally know what is wrong with him, for then there would be nothing wrong with him any more; then he would cease to be. Man would then have retrogressed back to a resourceful animal.[10]

This danger cannot be denied in our civilization which is becoming more and more one-dimensional.[11] Where everything is reduced to questions of technical feasibility and where the question concerning man's meaning is put in brackets because it is uncomfortable and even dangerous, there it is that religion and theology become new objects of pressing importance. That naturally means at the same time that religion and theology will only be actual as long as they have the courage to be a thorn in the flesh, as long as they ask questions and stand in question in order to create room once again for human hope. But if on the contrary religion and theology only say what all other disciplines are saying, and for the most part are

[8] Cf. H. Plessner, *Zwischen Philosophie und Gesellschaft: Ausgewählte Abhandlungen und Vortrage,* 1953, p. 280; K. Lowith, "Natur und Humanität des Menschen," *Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur Kritik der geschichtlichen Existenz,* 1960, p. 199; F. J. J. Buytendijk, *Mensch und Tier: Ein Betrag zur vergleichenden Psychologie,* 1958, p. 113; H. D. Bastian, *Theologie der Frage: Ideen zur Grundlegung einer theologischen Didaktik und zur Kommunikation der Kirche in der Gegenwart,* 1969, pp. 131 ff.

[9] B. Pascal, *Pensées,* 397, 410, 416.

[10] K. Rahner, "Meditation über das Wort 'Gott,'" *Wer ist das eigentlich—Gott?*, ed. H. J. Schultz, 1969, p. 18.

[11] H. Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man, Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society,* 1964.

saying better, then their salt has lost its tang. If this is the case, then theology would have to keep silent, since it has nothing more to say. But whenever theology does speak, then it has the task of exercising the other disciplines in the discipline of humanity. Indeed what is man? What is the Christian understanding of man?

III. The Mystery of Man

The most famous and almost classical statement on man is that he is an *"animal rationale."*[12] This definition of ancient philosophy is practically common property of the entire philosophical and theological tradition. The problematic of this definition has already been frequently pointed out. It connotes from the very start a certain dualism in man and does not do justice to his unity. Even more essentially problematic, however, is the fact that this definition generally defines man without ever asking whether it is possible as a general principle to give a definition of man. The classical definition presupposes from the very start a definable, uniform and fixed nature of man.[13] This presupposition ranges from Stoic and neo-Scholastic teaching on natural law and the encyclical *Humanae vitae* to popular Marxism and popular Freudianism. It shows up again in the conservative and socio-romantic attempt to return to the wholesomeness of nature as well as in the often cynical reference to the so-called objective pressures which come from economic and political realities. All of these positions rest on a fatalism which shrinks back from responsibility. Here man is continually being subjected to the almost fatal necessity of the powers of nature. His

12 The definition of man as *Zōon logikon* (*animal rationale*) is found in Sextus Empiricus, *Pyrrhonic Elements* II, 26; Stobaeus, *Eclogae* II, 132. On the problem of this definition, cf. M. Heidegger, *Brief über den Humanismus: Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit,* 2nd ed., 1954, pp. 64 ff.; J. Möller, *Zum Thema Menschsein: Aspekte einer philosophischen Anthropologie,* 1967, pp. 7 ff.; K. H. Volkmann-Schluck, "Gedanken zu Platons Politikos: Die Geschichtliche Herkunft der überlieferten Wesenbestimmung des Menschen," *Die Frage nach dem Menschen: Aufriss einer philosophischen Anthropologie* (Festschrift für M. Müller), ed. H. Rombach, 1966, pp. 311-25.

13 For the conception of nature, cf. J. B. Metz, "Natur," *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche,* 2nd ed., VII, 805-08; *Das Naturrecht im Disput,* ed. F. Böckle, 1966; *Naturgesetz und christliche Ethik: Zur wissenschaftlichen Diskussion nach Humanae vitae,* 1970.

freedom is seen as an insight into necessity; his spirit is becoming merely a subtle detector of nature and acts either as its superstructure, its sublimation or its substitute.

But modern anthropology defines man in terms of his openness to the world.[14] Whereas all other living beings instinctively fit into their surroundings and thus are definable, man is "the X, who can maintain himself in unlimited measure open to the world."[15] He is the "unsettled animal."[16] "The animal is a bent-over slave"; man on the other hand is "the first freed being of creation."[17] This thesis of man's openness to the world is certainly being modified by the latest findings of the behavioral sciences,[18] but is basically not being refuted. There are, as we now know, "innate forms of experience" and pre-programmed ways of behavior in man which stem from the history of his race.

Still these factors are obviously ambivalent. Aggressive as well as altruistic behavior is present in man. This means that man's behavior cannot be deduced from a clearly definable nature of man.[19] Even cultural anthropology[20] points out the astounding degree of historical variability and plasticity of the phenomenon man. "Plundering, incest, infanticide, and patricide all have their place in the category of virtuous behavior; the only certain thing is that, using pure reason as a measure, there is nothing which is right; every-

[14] M. Scheler, *Man's Place in Nature,* pp. 37 ff.; A. Gehlen, *Der Mensch: Seine Natur und seine Stellung in der Welt,* 8th ed., 1966, pp. 31 ff.; A. Portmann, *Zoologie und das neue Bild vom Menschen,* 1956, pp. 64 f.; W. Pannenberg, *Was ist der Mensch? Die Anthropologie der Gegenwart im Lichte der Theologie,* 2nd ed., 1964, pp. 5-13.

[15] M. Scheler, *Man's Place in Nature,* p. 39.

[16] F. Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse,* ed. Schlechta, II, 623.

[17] J. G. Herder, *Über den Ursprung der Sprache* (1770, reprint 1959), pp. 18 ff.

[18] I. Eibl-Eibesfeld, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Verhaltensforschung. Ethologie,* 1967; *idem, Liebe und Hass: Zur Naturgeschichte elementarer Verhaltenweisen,* 1970; K. Lorenz, *On Aggression,* tr. M. Wilson, 1966; W. Wickler, *Antworten der Verhaltensforschung,* 1970; *idem, Die Biologie der Zehn Gebote,* 1971.

[19] Cf. W. Lepenies, "Schwierigkeiten einer anthropologischen Begründung der Ethik," *Concilium* VIII (1972), 321 ff.

[20] E. Cassirer, *Was ist der Mensch?,* 1960; E. Rothacker, *Probleme der Kulturanthropologie,* 2nd ed., 1965; *idem, Philosophische Anthropologie,* 1964.

thing fluctuates with time."[21] Even the question "What is man?" is an historically conditioned question. But if the knowledge of the nature of man is an historical process, then even the active self-realization of man is a happening in process.[22]

It is valid therefore to distinguish between that "which nature makes out of man" and that "which he as a free agent makes or can and should make out of himself,"[23] between the humanness of man (*hominitas*) which he is given by nature and the humanity of man (*humanitas*) which he must develop historically.[24] What human human-existence ultimately means remains an open question which defies any conclusive definition. The human in human-existence is that it is *per definitionem* not definable.

There is hardly a critique of any definition of man which is sharper than the theological statement that man is the image of God.[25] For if man is not permitted to make an image of God, then the sentence "man is an image of God" means that to make an image of man is not possible or permissible. If God is the hidden One, then man is also out of reach of the very grasp of man. If God is for man an ever greater mystery, so is man. A mystery is different from a puzzle. A puzzle can be solved; a mystery cannot. "The 'solved puzzle' of man would then be the final dissolution of human existence."[26]

To speak of man as the image of God is a proposition of an eminently critical theology.[27] Such a proposition is in any case more critical than its modern inversion: that it is not man who represents

21 B. Pascal, *Pensées,* 294.

22 Cf. the survey of Process Philosophy by John B. Cobb, Jr., "Man in Process," *Concilium* VIII (1972), 328-37.

23 I. Kant, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht,* ed. Weischedel, VI, 399.

24 H. Plessner, "Anthropologie," *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart,* 3rd ed., I, 412a.

25 Cf. G. von Rad and G. Kittel, "*eikon,*" *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* II, 390-97; H. Renckens, *Urgeschichte und Heilsgeschichte,* 1959, pp. 92-112; J. Jervell, *Imago Dei*: Gen 1, 26 f. *im Spätijudentum, in der Gnosis und in den paulinischen Briefen,* 1960; St. Otto, *Gottes Ebenbild in Geschichtlichkeit,* 1964.

26 J. Moltmann, *Mensch,* p. 12.

27 Cf. Th. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology,* 1960, p. 145.

God's image, but rather God who represents the image of man, the projection of his anxieties, the wish-fulfillment of his longings and the mirror and sanction of his relation to the world as its Lord. We could think that we had thus conclusively laid bare the mystery of man; in reality we have done nothing more than destroy his freedom. The result of such de-mythologizing is a new myth and a current deification of man. An idolized, an ideal or a total man is not more human, but less human. If politics were to replace religion, then politics would not make man free, but restrict him and become totalitarian.

It is precisely the theological proposition about man which is a contribution to man's humanization. For it has a critically liberating power over against all other attempts to grab hold of man and define him. A "theology for man" therefore will have to be critical theology. It will not offer cheap answers or a questionable model. Theology knows, in a strict sense, not more but rather less about man than the other sciences. Theology will have to grasp the tradition of negative theology and will have to be a negative anthropology.[28] For it defines man as the being of absolute mystery.[29] Such a definition has a critically liberating power over against all self-deceit and self-infatuation; a critically liberating power above all in the face of all totalitarian attempts to fit man into a system. Theology is a defender of man's freedom.

IV. Concrete Hope

To define man's being as freedom[30] is the second great attempt of Western tradition to find a clue to the being of man. We encounter this attempt above all in the modern age. The way had been prepared by the biblical tradition and, to no small degree, by

[28] Cf. U. Sonnemann, *Negative Anthropologie: Vorstudien zur Sabotage des Schicksals,* 1969; K. Rahner, "Christlicher Humanismus," *Schriften zur Theologie* VIII, 247.

[29] K. Rahner, "Über den Begriff des Geheimnisses in der katholischen Theologie," *Schriften zur Theologie* IV, 67 ff.; *idem, "Zur Theologie der Menschwerdung," ibid.,* 139 ff.

[30] For the concept of freedom see the good survey by M. Müller, "Freiheit," *Staatslexicon,* 6th ed., III, 528-44.

the liberating anthropological turning point in the theology of Thomas Aquinas.[31] The modern Enlightment and the French Revolution bring the force of the new picture of man to an erupting point, and not without the embittered opposition of the churches and of theologians. Not man's proper place in a metaphysical scheme, not obedience towards the authority established by God, but rather emancipation and liberation now become a way of defining man. Not a return to the "always-the-same" of nature, but an opening up to the "new" of the future is to characterize him. Man discovers that he occupies an eccentric position and a utopian stance over against the world and himself.[32] Whenever man understands himself as freedom, then he can no longer allow his being finally to be defined in an absolute way; then he can only define his human existence as always critical and experimental.[33] Man is now understood as "the one who can say no," "life's ascetic," the "eternal protestor against every mere reality," the "eternal Faust," "the *bestia cupidissima rerum novarum,* never content with the surrounding realities, always eager to break through the barriers of his here-and-now-this-is-the-way-it-is existence, always striving to transcend the reality around him—including his own given understanding of himself at any moment."[34]

This dynamic and historical understanding of man has not come into existence without the pervasive influence of the Christian tradition. At the beginning of the Christian history of salvation there stands the call to the exodus and the liberation from the bondage of Egypt as well as the promise of a future which was to surpass all that had come before it.[35] Eschatology also dynamizes and mobilizes by its very nature the Christian understanding of man. Man is

[31] J. B. Metz, *Christliche Anthropozentrik: Über die Denkform des Thomas von Aquin,* 1962; *idem, "Freiheit als philosophisch-theologisches Grenzproblem," Gott in Welt* (Festgabe füf Karl Rahner) I, 1964, pp. 287-314.

[32] H. Plessner, *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch,* 2nd ed., 1965, pp. 288 ff.; *idem, Philosophische Anthropologie,* 1970, pp. 41 ff.

[33] W. Lepenies, "Experimentelle Anthropologie und emanzipatorische Praxis: Überlegungen zu Marx und Freud," *Concilium* VIII (1972), 16, 26, 53, 58.

[34] M. Scheler, *Man's Place in Nature,* p. 55.

[35] J. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope,* 1967; *idem, Umkehr zur Zukunft,* 1970; *Diskussion über die Theologie der Hoffnung von Jürgen Moltmann,* ed. W. D. Marsch, 1967.

called to a continual re-thinking; he does not simply exist, he is becoming; he is freedom given over to itself, which first achieves its finality through history. Thus man is an experiment which has been handed over to itself, which can succeed, but which can also fail.

This emphatic stress on man's freedom can easily turn into its opposite. For if reality is seen in such a one-sided manner as history continually transcending itself, then the negative consequences for ethics are immense. Albert Camus has warned of this consequence. In effect then there is no longer anything which in itself would be good or evil; there is only that which is before its time or beyond its time. Everything is allowed if it only lies in the progressive direction which is presupposed as right; indeed it can even be allowed and commanded to suppress freedom in the present for the sake of freedom in the future or to sacrifice the present generation for the generation of the future.[36] Therefore it is precisely a conception so closely linked to the freedom of man which stands in danger of turning into a cynical totalitarianism. One can go still one step further in this critique and say: If the utopian stance of man in the world and his radical rootlessness were to be thought out to its conclusion, then the present reality is the absolutely "perverted" and the radically "evil." The existing world is then of the devil and must be radically overthrown. We are left as a result with a new form of gnosticism.[37] Thus the nihilistic feature of Western thought which was exposed by Martin Heidegger comes to light once again.[38]

At this point Christian eschatology brings two points of view into play which are essential for anthropology: Christian hope is hope in the world and it is hope for the world. It is hope in the world. In this way it is different from enthusiasm.[39] It is sober. It takes into consideration the boundaries which are placed on all human existence: birth and death. For whenever these boundaries are disregarded, whenever death in particular is being suppressed, whenever there is talk about a kind of super society of abundance

[36] A. Camus, *Der Mensch in der Revolte,* 1964, pp. 223 ff.

[37] G. Rohrmoser, *Das Elend der Kritischen Theorie,* 2nd ed., 1970, p. 23; J. Moltmann, *Mensch,* p. 57.

[38] M. Heidegger, *Nietzsche* II, 1961, pp. 31-256, 335-98.

[39] E. Käsemann, *Jesus Means Freedom,* pp. 62 ff.

with little work, much automation, the eradication of all sickness, the complete equality of the sexes, the resolution of all conflicts, then there could result at the end a repulsive boredom. When the pain which comes from the yearning for transcendence dies down, there is then no longer any history, but only a higher form of Fellah or prehistoric society.[40] Because hope is in the world, Christian hope is hope for the world. It is not a romantic flight into a utopian future, not a "great refusal,"[41] but the power to engage oneself in the present against all hope. Since hope believes in the God for whom all is possible, it also takes into account the still latent possibilities of other men. "In love the hope of the earth is near."[42] Hope therefore does not only criticize but in its critique and in its suffering under present unjust conditions hope helps create a concrete Utopia and real possibilities for a happier human existence. "Therefore it is in creating, reconciling and hopeful love that the deepest possibilities for human beings are found in an inhuman world."[43]

Christian hope finds God in the concrete and yet knows that God transcends all that is concrete. Because hope knows of this absolute future which transcends every concrete future it is never permitted to identify itself once and for all with a concrete humanism. Nor can hope allow itself to sanction that vision of man which has historically developed in our Western culture. Hope must recognize that there can and increasingly must be a plurality of humanisms. "Christianity therefore is not the drawing up of a concrete humanism, but rather the suppression of any humanism as absolute. It must view the acceptance of any particular humanism's experience as continually questionable."[44] We experience this questionability more today than ever before. Therefore more decisively than ever before we must ask what is it that remains amid all the necessary upheaval? And so, once more: "What is man?"

[40] K. Rahner, "Experiment Mensch: Theologisches über die Selbstmanipulation des Menschen, *Schriften zur Theologie* VIII, 281 ff.

[41] H. Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man,* pp. 255, 257.

[42] P. Schutz, *Parusia, Hoffnung und Prophetie,* 1960, p. 637.

[43] J. Moltmann, *Mensch,* p. 169.

[44] K. Rahner, "Christlicher Humanismus," p. 248.

V. Ecce Homo!

In general one can say that the discovery of the personal dignity of each man is the specifically Christian contribution to anthropology. Not man as nature or even man as freedom, but rather man as person characterizes the Christian understanding of man. The notion of person attempts to forge a synthesis between the two notions of man as nature and man as freedom.[45] According to the classical definition which has been customary since Boethius, a person is the unchangeably unique and therefore direct manner in which a spiritual nature exists.[46] The human person is defined as a spiritual nature and therefore as freedom, but this freedom is not utopian but rather has its concrete locus; it stands in itself. In the person the infinity which is freedom finds its home. This is the reason why the person possesses infinite value, why an absolutely inviolable dignity belongs to him which is independent of the usefulness which the person has for the advancement of society, for a party, a state or even for the Church. By reason of his personhood man is an end in himself and may never become a means to an end.[47]

This message of the personal dignity of every man is, according to the Pastoral Constitution of Vatican II, the decisive contribution of Christianity to the humanization of the world.[48] This statement is of great importance. Nevertheless the question is whether once again the official teaching office of the Church did not come out with it too late. According to all the evidence, it seems that

45 M. Müller, *Existenzphilosophie im geistigen Leben der Gegenwart,* 3rd ed., 1964, pp. 160-83.

46 Boethius, *De duabus naturis* 3 (*PL* 14, 1343); Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I q. 29 a. 1; cf. J. Ratzinger, "*Zum Personverständnis der Dogmatik,*" *Das Personverständis in der Pädagogik und ihren Nachbarwissenschaften,* 1966, pp. 157-71; R. Guardini, *Welt und Person,* 2nd ed., 1950; M. Muller, "Person und Funktion," *Erfahrung und Geschichte: Grundzüge einer Philosophie der Freiheit als transzendentaler Erfahrung,* 1971, pp. 83-123; A. Halder, "Person," *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche,* 2nd ed., VIII, 287-90; M. Müller and A. Halder, "Person," *Sacramentum Mundi* III, 1115-27; W. Pannenberg, "Person," *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart,* 3rd ed., V, 230-35; J. Möller, *Zum Thema Menschsein,* pp. 41-51.

47 I. Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft,* ed. Weischedel, IV, 210.

48 "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," Ch. IV, Art. 41.

even the notion of person has not been spared from the epochal upheaval which we experience today. Romano Guardini had already spoken of the "end of the modern era" and described the development as an end of the modern ideal of person.[49] In reality man's person is becoming more and more unclear; it is disappearing more and more behind the function and the role which it must play in the great and anonymous clockwork of our society. The notion of person is being asked to renounce any distinct shape or form. But is it enough if personhood, in the face of this threat by an ever more perfect and advancing system—as Romano Guardini says—were to retreat to its nuclear essence and thus just rescue that which is most important to it? Would not such an understanding of person which is so sublime, so purely interior and so narrowly limited to the private sphere be totally abstract? Indeed in the face of a concrete lack of freedom would not such an understanding be candidly cynical? This danger cannot be overcome simply by understanding the person as relation or a I-Thou encounter. All I-Thou encounters exist in the realm of general relationships to things, to common tasks and to common interests.

If the stress on the personal dignity of each man is not to be a romantic escape, then such a stress needs a concrete humanism as its base.[50] To live human existence in a human way means that man needs, as the concrete presupposition to such a life, the necessary components such as food, clothing, housing, work, room to move, education and freedom. The minimum definition of such concrete humanity can be different from place to place. But the following is essentially true: the personal dignity of man demands for its concrete realization that it be publicly recognizable.[51] Person is a publicly juridical, a political concept. And with this statement we have almost unexpectedly arrived at the biblical understanding of

[49] R. Guardini, *Das Ende der Neuzeit: Ein Versuch zur Orientierung,* 1950, pp. 66 ff.

[50] H. R. Schlette, "Utopisches Denken und konkrete Humanität," *Concilium* VIII (1972), 355-62.

[51] Legel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes,* ed. Hoffmeister, pp. 141 ff.; *idem, Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts,* ed. Hoffmeister, 36, 48, 57, 71; *idem, Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1830), ed. Nicolin-Pöggeler, 484-90.

man and at the biblical command to love our neighbor. For what is love except an unconditional recognition of the other. Through such recognition love creates justice for the other. Love and justice are not therefore, as one often assumes, opposites. Love is rather the unconditional decision for justice for all.

Love thus borrows that which in the classical concept of person is continually valid. But love also transforms that concept as well. To speak by way of illustration: the classical notion of person came about through the baptism of the pagan understanding of man; but in order to become fully Christian, the notion of person must still undergo a second painful baptism—that of radical re-thinking. The stress on the independence, on the "in-itself and for-itself existence" of man is an expression of an almost egoistic desire to assert the self. The "will to power," which Martin Heidegger pointed out as the basic impulse of the history of Western philosophy, is apparent here.[52] The catastrophies of our century and the still greater dangers of the future which the will to power conjures up frankly force us to go to the root of the problem and radically to re-think our understanding of the person.

How can a Christian theology in light of the situation behave any differently than that it reflect on its origin and its center, than that it reflect on Jesus Christ. Ecce Homo! Behold a picture of man! The vision of man, as we encounter it in Jesus of Nazareth,[53] is nevertheless not an ideal personality, but rather its opposite: the rejected and abused, the suffering and the crucified man, who knows that he stands united with all other abused and weak men. But he overcomes the misery of miseries not with violence so as to create only new violence. He takes the lost and destitute condition of man upon himself. He allows himself to be abused without abusing others, he allows himself to be struck without striking back, he allows all force and violence to die in him. The renunciation of force and violence therefore means hope for those who are so powerless and hopeless that they can no longer revolt any more. His power is the powerlessness of self-renouncing love. Thus he converts lord-

52 M. Heidegger, *Nietzsche* II, 1961, pp. 329 ff.

53 Cf. J. Moltmann, *Mensch,* pp. 30 ff., 160 ff.; B van Ersel, "Das normative Menschenbild des Evangeliums," *Concilium* VIII (1972), 337-43.

ship into service, power into love. This is the really Christian revolution and the most radical liberation which man can conceive. Christian love concerns a liberation from that which dominates the entire world—the will to power, and it concerns as well a revolution, which reaches to the very depths of man's understanding of reality. The highest ideal is now no longer the person who possesses himself and who exists in and for himself, but rather existence "for the many," for the others.[54] The ultimate is no longer self-sufficient substance, but that which in Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy was considered the weakest, namely relation. The fulfillment of man's humanity no longer consists in his being by himself, but rather in his being for others, not in having oneself at one's own disposal, but sacrificing his will to power.[55]

There is still much to be done in order to translate this fundamental realization into the language of philosophy. There is still even more to be done in order to translate it into practice in society, in the churches, and in individuals. The closer the contact becomes between men, all the stronger the will to power becomes and with it the danger that they will mutually attempt to subjugate each other. But the other possibility increases as well, that men will come together and work together in a united fashion. Today the power of man is already so great that the use of the will to power can obliterate all of mankind. Only the growth of love among men can hinder this destruction. Therefore it is critically important that the death of Jesus on the cross stand at the center of Christian faith and that Christianity is and remain Christianity only to the extent that it has its center in the cross. Certainly whoever reflects on how much this past and present center of Christianity is being ridiculed, not so much in theory as in practice, will not be surprised that Christianity is in difficult straits.[56] Christianity's chance for survival lies in recognizing the crucified one as the beginning and the foundation of a new reconciled humanity. Thus the vision of man which we

[54] For this understanding of Christian revolution cf. J. Ratzinger, *Einführung in das Christentum: Vorlesungen über das apostolische Glaubensbekenntnis,* 1968, pp. 112, 144, 205 ff., 253.

[55] Cf. H. Schlier, "*eleutheros*," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* II, 496-502.

[56] Cf. J. Möller, *Zum Thema Menschsein*, p. 34.

encounter in Jesus of Nazareth could be a guide to preserve man's humanity in its most threatened hour. Only love can effect the ideal of human human-existence in a human world, that it not remain a mere dream, but become an effective hope in an inhuman world.

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