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Theological Foundations for the Interpretation of Man

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Our concern here is with the theological foundations for the interpretation of man. But, before we enter into our subject, it is well to situate it in relation to a philosophical foundation for man's interpretation and to articulate the relationship between these distinct foundations. Do the theological foundations for the interpretation of man presuppose a philosophical foundation on which to build in the light of the revealed message, or do they stand by themselves independently of any philosophical presuppositions? It seems clear that when we enquire into the theological foundations for the interpretation of man, we are already using a definite, if pre-theological, concept of man as a being who unwillingly finds himself in the world, in which he is able freely to build his existence through bodily expression and communion with others. Man is a personal subject destined to become himself by freely engaging in the world of men and of things to impress meaning upon it. But this philosophical definition—or description—presumes nothing as regards man's ultimate possibility of becoming fully himself in a personal relationship of communion with the living God. Whatever element of transcendence may be implied in a philosophical concept of man, the dimension of personal communion with the living God remains beyond the reach of philosophical enquiry and belongs properly to the theological. This dimension impresses on human existence an entirely new significance; man's existence in the world takes on a new direction when his presence to the world and history is lived in a communion with the living God. Hence, it seems necessary to say that no adequate definition of man can be given without integrating man's personal relationship to God, whether gratefully accepted or rejected. The reality of man being determined by a divine call, every philosophical definition of his being remains necessarily fragmentary and incomplete. In theology, in fact, the definition of man starts from his relation to the living God; only this relation unveils the meaning of human existence in the world. How God sees man is the theological question. Nor is the divine vision abstract, because for God to see man is to posit him as he sees him; it is to call him to the fulfilment of his divinely appointed destiny and to collaborate in its fulfilment.

Summarily speaking, then, the theological foundation for the interpretation of man is his personal relationship to the living God. This relationship is experienced by the Christian as he lives his life within a community of believers, whose faith is in touch with and prolongs

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that of the apostolic Christian Community to which the New Testament testifies. In this sense the theological foundation for the interpretation of man is one. Yet several levels can be distinguished in the divine relationship, enabling us to speak (in the plural) of theological foundations. Christian revelation mentions two such levels: man is made in the image of God; he is created in Jesus Christ. Creation and salvation in Jesus Christ determine the Christian interpretation of man; but we must be careful not to reduce creation and recreation to abstract doctrines. An effort is made here to bring out the element of communion with the living God which both doctrines imply. It is, moreover, necessary to stress the organic unity which exists between creation and recreation, lest we should introduce a false dualism in man's existence and a false duality in the plan of God for him. Jesus Christ in whom creation itself is accomplished is at the centre of God's unique plan for men and the world. The Christian revelation makes this clear; the 'image' of God in man is realized in him through Jesus Christ; the parallel between the first and the second Adam shows the intimate connection which in God's plan exists between man's creation in the first Adam and his recreation in the second.

I The Mystery of Creation

According to the Genesis creation narrative, man is created by God in his own image: 'God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him' (Gen. 1:27). In his book, *Man: Christian Anthropology in the Conflicts of the Present* (S.P.C.K., London, 1974), Jürgen Moltmann enquires into the significance of this biblical doctrine for us today. It means, first of all, that man is, like all other creatures, created by God. He is their fellow-creature, himself created and, therefore, not their God; conversely man has no other God but God himself. 'This cuts the ground from under the feet of the self-deification of man... There are no divine men. Human man...is conscious of being a creature of a free God among his fellow-creatures. Like them he has been called out of nothingness into endless existence' (p. 108). The biblical account further means that of all creatures man alone has been created and destined as the image of God on earth. This indicates the special position of man in the world; it is the point of his off-centre position. 'The appointment of man in the image of God means that man cannot be absorbed in that which is to hand, but that the infinite distance of the creator from his creation also destines man to infinite freedom over against all finite things and relationships and even his own reality. It is the honour of man that he is counted worthy of this relationship' (p. 109). Moltmann notes that belief in the destiny of man to be made in the image of God is protected by the Old Testament's prohibition of images. Man is to make in himself no image or likeness of God (Exod. 20: 4), because he himself and only he is intended to represent the image and likeness of God on earth. 'The world is the good creation of God but is not his image. Man in his destiny to be the image of God cannot be represented by anything else. The prohibition of images therefore protects the freedom of God over against his creation, and at the same time also the freedom of man over

against the world. . .Man alone is the mediation between the transcendent God and the immanent world' (pp. 109-110). According to the narrative, it is, moreover, man as such, viz., every man and all men together, who is destined to be the image of God on earth; not a special category of men, be they kings or rulers. Belief in the common destiny and value of man forbids the deification of some. 'It expects of *man* as such the freedom for this task. It makes impossible for him the divinization of his nation, of his people, of his society or of his race' (p. 110). Finally, the idea of man as made in the image of God destines him to 'subdue the earth' (Gen. 1:28). Men are to rule over God's creation, not by exploiting and destroying, but by creating. 'The idea of man as made in the image of God links freedom over against the world with responsibility for the world before God' (p. 110). Moltmann remarks that today, when man's domination of nature has increased almost beyond limits, to gain power over nature is no longer the problem; the problem is rather 'to use this power responsibly *for* nature and *for* a human future for man' (p. 110).

Man, then, as the image of God in creation, has a unique dignity in the eyes of God and a no less unique responsibility before him. This man whom God has created in his own image God also calls to enter into a personal relationship with him. Man's creation in God's image is in fact ordained to this relationship: he must grow after God's likeness (Gen. 1:26). The Book of Genesis witnesses to an intimate friendship and familiarity between God and man: God meets man personally and converses with him in the Garden; this situation lasts till man by his own free decision chooses to be the master of his own life independently of God. By doing so, he destroys himself; but even then God's call remains with him as unfulfilled destiny. This indicates that the relationship to God is not added, somewhat extrinsically, to man whose nature would be complete without it; it is constitutive of his very being. Man's being cannot be defined except in relation to God and God's personal call to him. This immediate relationship to God is offered to man before he can freely assume it and respond to it, even though he must freely assume it and bring it to fruition through the exercise of his freedom. Man is for God, and God turns to him even before man can respond to his advance and enter with him into a personal relationship.

The paradox of the human person consists then in being a creature in the world, whose life is hidden in the mystery of God — a God, however, whom man cannot encounter on a purely worldly plane. Oriented towards God as he exists from him, man is incapable of actualizing by himself his immediate relationship to God. He is powerless before the mystery of God to whom he is destined. His being is a call to self-transcendence—to reaching out beyond self by entering into communion with God—but man is unable to fulfil this call, unless God intervenes in an absolutely free and unforeseeable manner and through grace establishes between him and man an intersubjective dialogue. The meaning of man's life is beyond him, and he cannot attain to it by himself. Only God's offer of love—which forces him out of himself towards God—fulfils his life. Only when

this happens does man know that this possibility represents his true nature.

In the light of this relationship to the living God, the horizontal dimension of man as person-in-the-world takes on deeper meaning; the human person is defined theologically by his vertical communion with God, and it is within this intimate relationship with God that man encounters the world and his fellow-men. Man's being-in-the-world is essential to his nature; but it takes on its true, personal, significance only within the frame of man's relationship with God. This indicates that man may not engage in his worldly task in any manner, indifferently; only within the frame of a living relationship with God is his commitment to worldly tasks conducive to the accomplishment of his being. For, theologically, man's dialogue with the world must be integrated within his intersubjective relationship with God.

Dialogue with God is, therefore, man's primary task. God's most fundamental concern is to lead man beyond himself to make him enter into a communion of love with him. God seeks to introduce man into the intimacy of his own life, not by force but freely and through love. The deepest mystery of man's life is this personal relationship with God, made up of divine and human interaction, a true reciprocity in freedom and love. It must indeed be said that the reciprocity is real on the part of God also—even though on a divine mode—lest we should disfigure the interpersonal relationship: There is between God and man action and reaction, for this is of the very essence of interpersonal communion. Man's life with God is truly intersubjective, an I-Thou relationship. Such is the reality of what theologically is called 'sanctifying grace'. This intersubjective relationship constitutes the nucleus of human life; it has value in itself, not only as expressed in relationships on the world plane. Later we shall see how the nature of the intersubjective relationship between God and man is further revealed in the man Jesus. In him it takes the character of an ineffable intimacy between God as Father and man as son. What is revealed in Jesus the Son is man's call to share in his own sonship of the Father.

Meanwhile, let us already note that the God-to-man intersubjective communion expresses most deeply the significance of man as made in the image of God; theologically it defines him in his true nature. But, because man is personally related to God, his essence also includes a social dimension, itself marked with a character of personal friendship: man's interhuman relationships are to be based on theological charity. The son of God finds himself linked to his fellow-men by a family bond of which God is the source. The fraternal love—informed by theological charity—which builds up the community of men, becomes the manifestation in interhuman relationships of man's intimacy with God. Fraternal charity consists in being for others for the sake of God; it belongs to the theological definition of man. It differs from a horizontal philanthropy inasmuch as the neighbour is seen as brother, as a person called by God to share in his own life and to find in him the fulfilment of his human existence.

We have come to the point where it is possible to appreciate how man must and can become truly human and truly divine. He is human by being divine, and divine by being human. But this needs to be correctly understood, as misinterpretations on this point destroy his true meaning. Man is himself by becoming more than himself, by accepting to transcend himself in the 'wholly other' whose creative presence and personal call fulfil his existence. But the presence of the 'wholly other', while calling man out of himself in response to a divine initiative, precisely brings him into his own. No man is truly human as he who has discovered that he can only be himself by accepting a transcendence which constitutes his being, and who has opened himself to its constitutive influence. Man's dilemma is either to be made divine by accepting God, becoming fully human in the process, or by seeking self-deification to destroy his humanity.

Divinization and humanization necessarily go hand in hand. 'The modern age,' J. Moltmann observes pointedly, 'has made "man" an iconoclastic word against God: out of human self-awareness an iconoclastic attack has gone out against the religious image of God. But this remains meaningful only so long as, conversely, the real God is an iconoclastic word against man: out of a knowledge of God an iconoclastic attack goes out against the image of man in which man reflects himself, justifies and divinizes himself. . .It is only in a mutual iconoclasm of criticism that an understanding of transcendence, which does not alienate, and does not deify, but humanizes, and an understanding of immanence, which does not allow resignation nor tyranny, but makes possible final freedom, can arise. . .Man becomes more human if he is put in the position of being able to abandon his self-deification and his idolatry with all its gains and its achievements...It is the critical task of theology to take away from anthropology the absolute and totalitarian element, and the legalistic view of salvation. . .Without (the) "wholly other" man's mortal fortunes and the incomplete justice of the present are unacceptable' (*Man*, pp. 107-108.)

There remains to outline the proper significance of man's dialogue with the world within the frame of his dialogue with God. Man is called to a meaningful exchange with others and commitment to the world, precisely based on his life of communion with God; for the encounter with God is not simply a partial aspect of human life but a constitutive dimension extending to and encompassing man's being-in-the-world. Free man whom God addresses is involved in the world of men and engaged in the creation of culture. The recognition of worldly reality, of its value and consistency, is a necessary, if particular, aspect of an integral religious attitude. Secularisation, rightly understood, derives from religion, inasmuch as from within his dialogue with the living God the believer comes to recognize and appreciate worldly reality at its true value. Worldly reality cannot be separated from the whole of which it is an integral part, as though it enjoyed self-sufficiency in isolation; but neither can it be denied value and worth when integrated in the whole. It has within the whole its proper autonomy, which is guaranteed to it by the whole itself. Only when cut away from the whole is worldly reality 'profanated', while, when integrated

in it, it itself becomes sacred. Wordly reality, then, takes on its full intelligibility and meaning within the context of man's dialogue with God—an intelligibility and meaning which it cannot attain within its own frontiers. While a profane outlook is always fragmentary and provisional, a true religious outlook blurs the frontiers of the sacred and the profane. For the man who has genuinely discovered God's presence to him in the world, worldly reality becomes a sacrament of this presence. It has its own consistency, precisely as a sign and mediation of the divine presence. Man then assumes, in the face of God and together with him, his responsibility to the world and to history. He lives his intersubjective relation to God in the context of his relationship to the world. His dialogue with the world, which operates with its own proper laws, becomes an aspect of his dialogue with God. It acquires its full value and significance precisely within the framework of the personal relationship to God, which man consciously experiences.

The community of grace with God, which theologically defines man, gives therefore new significance to man's action in the world. For the man who lives in this communion 'profane' action becomes a concrete form, a mode of incarnation, of his personal communion with God; worldly reality is assumed into the orbit of his relationship with God. He acts in the world, engages in its pursuits, precisely as a son of God; his worldly endeavours have become an aspect of his life with God. Profane reality itself is in God. While the distinction between the profane and the sacred remains, both belong together to man's life-with-God existence in the world which becomes part of an integral religious attitude. Living his life with God in the world, the believer endeavours to build it as a better place for human living; thereby he incarnates in the world his communion with God. The biblical theme according to which the world is for man and man for God finds here its full significance. The proper, immediate end of human action in the world is intra-mundane: it intends the humanization of man by means of the humanization of the world, the building up of the earthly city in view of the furtherance of man. But man exists for God: the personal direction of his life is super-human, not intra-earthly. Man is not able to attain by himself this direction; he can only attain it by transcending himself and receiving it from God as a grace. Thus the dialogue between man and the world can only find its ultimate meaning in a religious attitude. Through man the intra-mundane end of worldly activity is oriented, beyond time, to the Eschaton: man communicates to the world his own personal end. Even though of its nature the world cannot demand to be ordained to a personal communion with God, it becomes so ordained in virtue of its essential orientation to man. Because of the complementarity of man and the world, the personal destiny of man in dialogue with God can, in a certain sense, be said to become the proper end of the profane world itself which, thereby, ceases to be simply mundane. Earthly tasks themselves and the profane acquire their full dimension as they enter into the realm of life-communion with God. Man is with God in the world.

Thus, because of its orientation to man and its subservience to his destiny, profane reality in its ultimate significance is steeped in the

mystery of divine grace. In virtue of the personal communion of man with God, the profane is humanized and associated with man's eschatological destiny. Being-in-the-world constitutes an aspect of a personal relationship between a God who loves and calls the man who is called and who responds in love. This is the keystone of an authentic human existence and the foundation of Christian humanism.

II The Mystery of Incarnation

Thus far we have sought the theological foundation for an interpretation of man (and the world) in the mystery of man's creation by God and of the invitation he receives from God to enter with him into a personal communion of life. Not all has been said thereby, for no mention has been made of the mystery of the incarnation which gives to man and the world their last significance. Nor should the theological significance which man derives from the mystery of Jesus Christ be considered as an addition to a more fundamental theological meaning which he would have without Christ and outside of him. For God never sees man or creates him outside and independently of his Incarnate Son. To seek the theological meaning of man in Jesus Christ is to show the concrete modality of the dialogue which God initiates with man in creation and grace; outside this concrete modality, creation and grace remain an abstraction never in fact realized, nor can the depth of man's relationship with God be unveiled. If then creation and incarnation can, and in practice must, be considered as distinct theological foundations for the interpretation of man, they also need to be viewed always in their organic unity. Failing this, incarnation would be wrongly apprehended as giving added significance to man whereas, in fact, his significance in God's eyes is based in its entirety on the mystery of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate, is the fullness of divine revelation. He reveals God to man in a unique and decisive manner. His human word contains this fullness of divine revelation, because, within the orbit of the divine life, he is in the first place the eternal Word begotten of the Father. He reveals God as Father in an entirely new manner. This revelation flows from his own human consciousness in which he lives his intimate, unprecedented relationship of Son to Father. This intimacy between the Father and the Son incarnate is expressed in the Aramaic term 'Abba' with which Jesus addresses his Father. But in the process of revealing God to man, Jesus reveals also man to man. As he is the fullness of the revelation of God, he also reveals man fully to himself. In him the full significance of man in the eyes of God is unveiled; this is why the theological foundation for the interpretation of man is fully disclosed in the mystery of Jesus Christ.

Jesus reveals to man the intimacy of the personal relationship with God to which man is called. In him we come to know that God is truly our Father. This is so, no longer merely in the sense that the God of the Covenant takes a fatherly attitude towards his people, as was revealed in the Old Testament, but in the sense that God makes us sons in his Son, calling us to share in his own divine life. Man's

vocation, as revealed in Jesus Christ, consists in being drawn in him into a Son-Father relationship with God. As the consciousness of Jesus was essentially filial, so becomes the consciousness of the man who discovers in him his human destiny. The Christian consciousness of sonship is in fact a participation in Jesus' own filial consciousness. Theology has not always done full justice to the reality of this divine sonship of man. It is no mere legalistic fiction, as the term 'adoptive sonship' might mislead into thinking; the distinction between Jesus' own sonship of the Father and ours notwithstanding, ours is equally real, inasmuch as it is a participation in his. This is why the Christians of the first generation called on God their Father with the same childlike simplicity and intimacy with which Jesus himself had called on his Father.

Man's vocation to be a son of God is revealed in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, because it is accomplished in him; nor could it have been revealed by the prophets of old, but only by him in whom it is accomplished. 'God sent his Son into the world. . .that the world might be saved through him' (John 3:17); the sonship of God is the salvation of man. For centuries theology has attempted to fathom God's plan in sending his Son into the world; *Cur Deus homo*? While the incarnation is a free divine initiative —God could have saved man otherwise—and precisely because another economy of salvation was possible which would have imposed less demands on God himself, the incarnation disclosed the earnestness with which God intends to communicate himself to man in Jesus Christ; it reveals the depth of his love. Thereby it also reveals the full value of the human person in God's eyes. In the light of the mystery of Jesus Christ, man can no longer be defined merely as a possible partner in a covenantal relationship with God—let alone philosophically as an enfleshed spirit; he becomes in his human reality, by nature, a prospective brother of the Son incarnate, and in him a prospective son of God. Nor is the content of this Christological definition of man to be conceived as added to a substratum which would account for the reality of man in its own right, for God never intends or creates man independently of his Son incarnate. K. Rahner observes pointedly: 'The Incarnation is only rightly envisaged if Christ's humanity is not only, ultimately speaking, a merely extrinsic instrument by which a God who remains invisible makes himself known, but is rather precisely what God becomes (though remaining God) when he exteriorizes himself into the dimension of what is other than himself, of the non-divine. Even if it is obvious that God could create the world without the Incarnation, it is nevertheless compatible with that statement that the possibility of creation has its ground in the radical possibility of God's self exteriorization (for in the divine simplicity different possibilities cannot simply be juxtaposed without connection). In that case, however, the ultimate definition of man is that he is the possible mode of existence of God if God exteriorizes himself to what is other than himself; man is the potential brother of Christ' (*Sacramentum Mundi*, Volume 3, p. 370).

The Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* of the Second Vatican Council expresses the radicality of the Christological definition of man as

follows: 'In actual fact, it is only in the mystery of the World Incarnate that the mystery of man becomes clear. Adam the first man was a figure of him who was to come, namely Christ the Lord. Christ, the new Adam, fully reveals man to himself in the very revelation of the Father and his love, and discloses to man his sublime calling. . . He who is 'the image of the invisible God' (Col. 1:15) is himself the perfect man, who has restored to the sons of Adam the divine likeness deformed by the first sin. Since in him human nature was assumed, not absorbed, it was, by that very fact, raised to a sublime dignity in us also. For by his incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some way to every man. . .' (n. 22).

The ultimacy of Christ as principle for a theological interpretation of man is brought out in the New Testament by the Pauline doctrine of the two Adams : Jesus Christ is the 'second' and the 'last Adam' (1 Cor. 15:46, 47). The first and the second Adams are so closely interrelated that it is strictly impossible to conceive one independently of his constitutive relationship to the other. There is no first Adam without the second, and vice versa: which means, in the symbolical language used here, no Christ without Adam, for as second Adam Christ presupposes the first; but vice versa, no Adam without Christ, since, at first, Adam is necessarily referred to the second who is Christ. Considering, moreover, that the first Adam represents man as such, it becomes clear that Christ, as second Adam, is intrinsic to our humanity of which the first Adam is the universal symbol. Hence no full definition of man can be given without reference not only to the first but to the two Adams; just as Christ is destroyed if his essential relationship to our humanity is denied, so do we become unintelligible as first Adam, viz. as men, if our constitutive relationship to Christ is denied, by which our humanity is accomplished and divinized. Man, symbolically represented by Adam, is unintelligible without Christ, as creation is without incarnation. As second Adam, Christ is the supreme form of our humanity; in him God reveals us to ourselves in revealing himself to us.

To discover in Christ the meaning of man, it is not enough to consider the mystery of his person; it is also necessary to take into account the mystery of his life and work, the Christ-event, especially the Paschal Mystery of his death and resurrection in which the Christ-event culminates. Only in the light of his resurrection and glorification by God is the mystery of Christ finally perceived, and, consequently, in it the significance of man in the eyes of God. For God sees man in his own Son, made man and raised from the dead. It is well known that the entire New Testament looks at the whole Christ-event from the vantage point of Christ's glorification by the Father, and that this perspective born of the Easter faith considerably affects the manner in which the entire Christ-event is interpreted and understood; the mystery of the person of Christ is itself discovered only in the light of his exaltation by God. If, therefore, the significance of man is finally to be found in the mystery of Christ, the resurrection of Christ is the point where its disclosure is made perfect. In the resurrection of Christ, man himself appears as destined to an eschatologi-

cal future in God, for which the transitoriness of this world is only a way of entry. As J. Moltmann writes, 'The "future" of which the first real anticipation was seen in (the) resurrection (of Christ) was not understood (by the N. T.) as future history and thus as part of transitoriness, but eschatologically as the future of history and thus as the pledge of the new creation. "Easter" was a prelude to, and a real anticipation of, God's qualitatively new future and the new creation in the midst of the history of the world's suffering' (*The Crucified God*, p. 163).

The 'new man', the 'new creation' are revealed in the mystery of Christ's resurrection; in him they become essential terms for a correct theological interpretation of man himself. As the incarnation of the Son of God was oriented towards the resurrection and glorification by which Jesus of Nazareth becomes the Christ, so too man's coming into the world is ordained to his resurrection from the dead of which Jesus' own resurrection is the pledge. Man cannot be adequately defined in terms of the transitoriness of his present condition only; he must also be understood in terms of the absolute future of the new man and the new creation.

To return to the biblical parallel between the two Adams, it must be said that the first (who is the symbolic image of man) is not himself without his transfigurating relationship with the second, dead and risen. The second, and last Adam, in whom man is fully revealed, is not Jesus in the transitory condition of his kenosis, but the Christ in the glory of the Father. He it is who is the Alpha and Omega of the world, the beginning and the foundation of history, the principle of intelligibility of man and the cosmos.

We must go further still and say that the Christ who is the fully accomplished form of man is not only the Christ of the resurrection but of the Parousia. For it is in the Parousia that Christ will allow the liberating forces of his resurrection to invade the entire cosmos. In Paul's description in 1 Corinthians 15 the Parousia is seen as the decisive manifestation of the glory of the risen Christ; if this is what the Parousia is, it is also bound to be the final disclosure of the reality of man insofar as man has his form in the Christ of the resurrection. The present state of the world, subject as it remains to the dominion of death, prevents the glory of Christ from being fully unveiled to us. The Parousia will bring this state of affairs to an end; the glory of Christ will then attain to its cosmic proportion. In the process it will reveal man—and his world—fully to himself. The Christ of the Parousia will subdue the cosmic forces, viz. the universe itself, insofar as in the present condition it continues to keep mortal man under its sway. 'The last of the enemies to be destroyed is death,' says St Paul (1 Cor. 15:26) in which we see that man's present mortal condition is to be vanquished in the end by the power of the risen Christ. The Parousia will reveal to the whole cosmos that which is already contained in germ in the risen Christ himself; his cosmic dominion will bring to an end man's present mortal condition. No theological definition of man can, therefore, be complete, unless the biblical doctrine of the resurrection of the dead finds its place in it; man is defined by his final end. Christ

has been raised from the dead in order to raise our mortal bodies; his own resurrection is the promise and the model of ours. He has entered into his glory to lead us to our supreme perfection. Only this supreme perfection of man's being says totally what man is: a son destined to be raised in the Son to partake of the Son's glory.

III Conclusion

To sum up we may say: man as a created personal subject in the world is in the deepest reality of his being a possible partner for God, with limitless receptivity to him. He is the being who by his very nature has his centre outside himself, in God, and is therefore a candidate for divinization through grace. Divinization through grace is the only true accomplishment of man's nature. It is the paradox of man's finite nature that it calls for self-transcendence in the Infinite—a self-transcendence which he can only receive from the Infinite. Man can only be man by becoming more than himself in God.

Man transcends himself in Jesus Christ. Or rather, Jesus Christ is the Way in which God freely brings about man's self-transcendence in himself. Christ is at the centre of God's creative plan, and is therefore the form of the created world. In him man's constitutive call to infinity is accomplished and realized. Creation and Incarnation are not extrinsic to each other; they are interrelated as vocation and accomplishment. Jesus Christ is the realization and the manifestation of the true reality of man. Theological anthropology cannot but be Christocentric for man is revealed in Jesus Christ.

Theology too must be Christocentric, for God also is revealed in Jesus Christ. Christology then binds theology and anthropology together, as Jesus Christ united God and man in himself. What God is for man and man for God is at once revealed in Jesus Christ; this relatedness between God and man in Jesus Christ is the precise subject of revelation. That theological anthropology cannot but be Christocentric does not merely mean that Christ is man in an ideal way, and so an example to man and an ideal model, though not strictly required, for a theological doctrine of man; it strictly means that the reality of man is discovered in him who is the form of his being. Similarly, that the theology of God cannot but be Christocentric does not merely mean that in Jesus Christ what God is for man, and consequently in himself, becomes better known; it very precisely means that this comes to be known only in Jesus Christ. Christ is in proper terms the definition of man as he is of God; only by being united to him in grace does man reach to the fullness of his existence. The essence of man is not a datum, but a task and a grace to be accomplished in Jesus Christ. 'For the Word of God, through whom all things were made, was himself made flesh so that, as the perfect man, he might save all men and recapitulate all things in himself. The Lord is the goal of human history, the focal point to which converge the longings of history and civilization, the centre of the human race, the joy of all hearts and the fulfilment of their aspiration' (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 45).