# Contents

# *Contributors*

**Helen Alford** OP, of the Congregation of St Catherine of Siena, Newcastle (Kwazulu Natal, South Africa), is Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Pontifical University of St Thomas (Angelicum) and Consultor to the Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace. Her publications are mostly on the use of Catholic social thought in business ethics.

**Vincenzo Benetollo** OP, of the Province of St Dominic (North Italy), teaches moral philosophy and theology at the Dominican house of studies in Bologna and in other institutes, and collaborated for some years with Raimondo Spiazzi. He is currently President of the Società Internazionale Tommaso d'Aquino (SITA)

**Vincenzo Caprara** OP, of the Roman Province of St Catherine of Siena, is currently Prior of St Dominic's Convent in Fiesole and was a professor of Philosophy and Political Ethics at the Angelicum in Rome. He is a member of ESPACES Italia and publishes on socio-political topics.

**Salvador Carrasco** is a professor of sociology in the Faculty of Economics and Business at the University of Barcelona and is responsible for the professional formation of professors in the same university. His doctoral thesis was on the social apostolate of Gerard and Gafo, and his research is mainly in the area of unionism and social Catholicism in Spain.

**Ruth Caspar** OP, member of the Dominican Sisters of St Mary of the Springs, Columbus, Ohio (USA), was Professor of Philosophy at Ohio Dominican University from 1968 to 2003. From 1983 to 1996 she also served as Consultant for Bioethics in Catholic Healthcare Facilities. Her areas of research and publication include bioethics and philosophy of religion.

**Francesco Compagnoni** OP, of the Province of St Dominic (North Italy), has taught moral theology at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, and at the Angelicum. His publications are in the areas of human rights and bioethics.

**Bertrand Juliaan De Clercq** OP, of the Flemish Dominican Province, was elected Provincial after retiring from his academic post. He taught social and political ethics at the Faculties of Social Sciences and Theology of K.U. Leuven (Catholic University of Louvain), and has been a visiting professor at universities in the USA and Indonesia.

**Paulus Engelhardt** OP, of the Province of Teutonia (North Germany), has taught philosophy at the studium generale in Walberberg and in various German universities. He is the main editor of the German edition of the works of St Thomas Aquinas, while his research focuses on the relationship between the teaching of Aquinas and contemporary philosophy.

**Anto Gavrić** OP, of the Dominican Province of Croatia, is Assistant Lecturer for the Chair of Moral Theology and Ethics in the Faculty of Theology, University of Fribourg, Switzerland, and Lecturer in the Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas in the Jesuit Faculty of Philosophy, Zagreb (Croatia). He also directs the Dominican website in Croatian on St Thomas Aquinas.

**Gustavo Gutiérrez Merino Diaz** OP, of the Province of France, is one of the founders of liberation theology. He has been honoured with numerous honorary doctorates. Since 1990, he has been Director of the Bartolomé de Las Casas Institute in Lima, Peru.

**Edward Kaczyński** OP, of the Province of Poland, is Professor of Moral Theology at the Angelicum in Rome, and has also served as Dean of Theology and Rector of the same university. He is a Consultor to the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Congregation for Bishops. His main research interest has been into contemporary problems in methodology and metaethics.

**Jean Claude Lavigne** OP, of the French Dominican Province (Paris) and currently *socius* to the Provincial, is an economist. He has also been Director General of Économie et Humanisme and Director of ESPACES (Dominicans for Europe).

**Luis Mendez Francisco**, Professor of Ethics and Sociology at the Faculty of Philosophy, was from 1999 to 2006 Head of the Department of the Philosophy of Moral and Political Law II at the Complutense University of Madrid, Spain. He is the author of many academic essays and books. In recent years he has been coordinating doctoral courses in Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and Brazil.

**Jean-Paul Montminy** OP, of the Province of Canada, is Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the University of Laval, and was Dean of the Faculty and Ombudsman for the whole university at various times. He has also received the Master in Sacred Theology of the Dominican Order.

**Stanslaus Muyebe** OP, of the General Vicariate of Southern Africa, is a chaplain at the University of Kwazulu Natal, a monitoring/evaluation consultant

for government programmes and a member of various internal audit committees.

**Aidan Nichols** OP, of the Province of England, is the author of books on a variety of theological topics. He is currently John Paul II Memorial Visiting Lecturer in the University of Oxford.

**Wolfgang Ockenfels** OP, of the Province of Teutonia (North Germany), is holder of the Chair of Christian Social Sciences in the Faculty of Theology of the University of Trier. Director of the journal *Die Neue Ordnung*, he is also President of the International Foundation *Humanum*.

**Servais Théodore Pinkaers** OP, of the francophone General Vicariate of Belgium, has taught moral theology for many years in the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. He has been a member of the International Theological Commission and made a notable contribution to the section on morals in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. He is the author of numerous works on fundamental morals, translated into many languages, including English.

**Carlos Josaphat Pinto de Oliveira** OP, of the Province of Brazil and Emeritus Professor of Moral Theology at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, now teaches in the School of Dominican Theology, São Paulo, Brazil. His research has been mainly in the fields of social and communication ethics.

**Hugues Puel** OP, of the Province of Lyon, has been involved in the Économie et Humanisme movement for more than 40 years, as recounted in his book *Économie et Humanisme dans le mouvement de la modernité* (2004, Paris: Le Cerf). He taught economics in the University of Lyon, researching into labour economics, and business ethics in Africa at the Université d'Afrique Centrale, Cameroon (1998–2004) and the Catholic University of Lyon.

**David van Ooijen** OP (1939–2006) was a teacher before joining the Dutch Dominican Province, later becoming a member of the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament for the Labour Party, and a member of the Board of the Dutch Open University. He was also Provincial of the Dutch Dominicans and taught regularly at the Angelicum in Rome.

**Luis Vila-López** OP, of the Province of Aragon, has worked as an adviser to the Director General of Social Affairs in the Spanish Ministry of Labour and Social Security, dealing with research on poverty and social protection, as well as European issues. After a period as full professor in the Complutense University, Madrid, he is now Principal of the Dominican School 'San Vicente Ferrer' in Valencia.

# *Preface*

GUSTAVO GUTIÉRREZ

The question of the social dimensions of the Gospel message is as ancient as the Gospel itself, going back to the testimony of Jesus. He called for personal conversion, and for love of God and of one's neighbour to be put into practice, with all the consequences that this should have for the establishment of just and respectful relations between people. From this arose the harsh reaction of a political power that was indistinguishable, at that time, from religious power. Theologically, the subject is rooted in the very heart of the Good News, for the proclamation of the reign of God is *already* present in history, though not *yet* in its plenitude, as the traditional expression puts it. This is what M.-D. Chenu was referring to when speaking of 'the law of incarnation' as an accurate interpretation of subjects such as the one we are discussing. Concerning as it does the tension between two 'poles' (the 'now' and the 'not yet'), it is not surprising that the greatest threat to our understanding of the social repercussions of the Gospel should come from the overestimation of one of these positions, or from the reduction to one of them alone. This has been witnessed throughout history.

There have been times in which the *now* of the kingdom of God has been accentuated to such a degree that the Church was almost absorbed within a society formed by Christianity, and there was a tendency – painting with a broad brush – to identify both with the historical realisation of the kingdom of God. I refer to the period when Christendom was formed, a period that lasted several centuries and that has left its imprint on the life and thought of Christianity. In politics, at the opposite extreme – although, paradoxically, with a similar theological mentality to one we have just discussed – the Church lived through moments in which that risk of identification of the kingdom of God with the here-and-now came from those who were striving for revolutionary change as a means to end social oppression, and who thus presented the renewal of society that they desired as implying nothing more nor less than the establishment of the kingdom of God's justice upon earth. Both positions – the first, something of great historical significance and which, indeed, lasted for centuries, and the second, the unrealised plan of a few – should rightly be rejected by a theology faithful to the Good News of Jesus.

On the other hand, there have been times and situations in which the transcendent aspects of the Christian message were emphasised to the point of placing it outside the course of events of humankind's history, partly, of course, as a reaction to the tendency to over-emphasise the here-and-now. John Paul II described the period in which *Rerum Novarum* was written as characterised by a view of the Church's mission as 'directed towards a purely other-worldly salvation, which neither enlightens nor directs existence on earth' (*Centesimus Annus* n. 5), and which thus brought about an indifference to our business in the world because it seemed to have no connection to the heart of Christian existence. A life directed exclusively towards the 'life to come' transforms our present life into a sort of stage upon which we are tested, in order to establish our eternal destiny. And what we are left with is a religious world wholly consistent within itself, but tangential to the daily lives of others. What is striking is that this 'spiritualist' or overly spiritualising understanding of Christianity often coexists with a strong hold on the present – which those who hold this view of the world pretend to value at naught: this hold on the present would seem to be necessary to instruct others not to hang on to what is but dust and ashes.

Although the greatest distortions to a proper understanding of the relationship between faith and the social sphere are those we have just briefly recalled,[1] there is another more subtle one which is of particular interest to me here. Historical experience is once again our teacher in this matter. It concerns the danger of getting stuck with our initial understanding of the relation between faith and society. This is a risk because we are dealing with rapid historical change. The way in which we understand the phenomena of the social, economic and political orders is subject to many variables; this has repercussions for our way of understanding and carrying forward the social dimensions of the Gospel.

To avoid remaining stuck in one historical moment, great sensitivity to the signs of the times is required, combined with an effort to avoid sterile repetitions which may even prove self-defeating. We spoke of a subtle threat, in the sense that while attention is drawn to the bonds between the Gospel and life in society, at the same time, the approaches and proposals made no longer fit the new situations that have arisen, and so become marginal to them.

This was what those featured in this book perceived, and what they fought against. Pioneers in a field where they were able to work with great spiritual freedom and commitment to their time, they did not let themselves be con-

fined by illusions that had had their moment but had lost their connection with the historical conditions that were taking shape. They knew they had to keep going. Although many of their lives overlapped in the matter of dates of birth and death, their experience of their own times was varied, because they all came from different corners of the Christian world. Nevertheless, they are united by their faith in Jesus, and by their being Dominicans.

In this short preface, I do not aim to present any kind of summary of their efforts and intuitions. Their journeys, as I have mentioned, were diverse; the articles of this book make this point with precision and with all the clarity one could desire. I will limit myself to stressing a few points that seem important, based on a reading of the chapters themselves.

In the first place, I will offer some reflections on Christian spirituality, with an emphasis on Dominican spirituality, since I am of the opinion that this constitutes the source of the subjects' witness. From there I will recall the context of ecclesiastical life and reflection in which the work of those featured is presented. I will end by calling to mind certain problems they had to confront, along with the fact that those problems remain to this day.

## PRESENCE TO GOD AND PRESENCE TO THE WORLD

The task of Christians is to recount, through our lives, the story of Jesus the Christ, of his works and words with which he reveals to us the love of a Father or a Mother. It will involve weaving that story into the daily circumstances of those whom our society considers insignificant, and pointing out how that story is absolutely incompatible with all forms of dehumanisation and injustice. That story, that narrative, becomes universal whenever it is freely welcomed, and so inspires many other stories. To tell the story is to proclaim a liberation whose ultimate meaning is that full communion which is friendship with God, from which no dimension, either human or cosmic, can be excluded. That is the content of the Good News that the Lord came to proclaim to every person, beginning with the poorest and most oppressed (cf. Isa 61:1-2 and Lk 4:16-20). It is a liberation that germinates like a mustard seed in history.

The message of salvation is transmitted through a dialogue that may only take place in a climate of respect for the person with whom communication is started. Yet no one is an island: everyone belongs to a distinct culture and follows particular values shared with others. Without an appreciation of those human dimensions, without the conviction that the dialogue enriches us all, our witness to the kingdom of life, liberty, peace and justice

will remain ineffective. To evangelise is to invite people, by means of concrete gestures and words, to follow Jesus of Nazareth. The golden rule of the proclamation of this message is, observing the Lord's own path, to relate to others as friends, not as slaves, not like those recruited to obey orders whose motives are hidden from them, but rather like those who have been given the knowledge of all that Jesus has heard from the Father (cf. Jn 15:15). The Good News is always a call to freedom and to responsibility.

To announce the kingdom is to stand witness on its behalf. To follow Jesus is '... to walk ... in accordance with the Spirit', as Paul says (Rom 8:4). Spirituality has its place, as far as matters of this world are concerned, in each Christian's daily life. To be a disciple is to become involved in Jesus' own practice. From that vantage point, the Gospel can be proclaimed and the faith may be meditated upon. Spirituality is the central axis of theology, giving it its most profound significance and most appealing scope. Years ago, M.-D. Chenu put forward a perspective that we have always found very inspiring: 'In short,' said this great teacher, in one of his first works, 'theological systems are nothing more than the expression of spiritualities. That is their interest and greatness.' And he added more precisely: 'A theology worthy of that name is a spirituality which has found the methods of rational analysis appropriate for its religious experience.'[2]

This dictum, it seems to me, may be applied to both the praxis and reflection of the authors featured in this book. Spirituality is the source from which, to different degrees, flows their 'struggle for justice', as Pius XI called it, their attention to the human and social problems of their own times, their actions to change unbearable misery of whatever type, the theological reflections that accompanied those actions, and, in more than one case, the spiritual dimension that poured forth from their commitments. This is a spirituality that, in St Dominic's interpretation of the verse quoted from Paul, stresses what Lacordaire called *presence to God and presence in the world*. It is a way of translating the classical formulation of 'speaking to and of God' or the phrase, *contemplari et contemplata aliis tradere* (to contemplate and bring to others the fruits of contemplation), which we find in Thomas Aquinas, and which reminds us that the first step towards talking of God is silence. In that line of thought, the beautiful phrase of Irenaeus of Lyons is particularly inspiring: 'from the silence of the Father comes the Word of the Son'.

One's presence to the world implies solidarity with human history which, as in the case of Jesus, favours the poor and excluded. One's presence to God gives that commitment significance and enables it to reach its greatest extent, as is revealed in the fundamental text of Matthew 25. It is a passage that

takes up and carries much further an old biblical theme. Speaking with God and of God are two sides of the same coin, or, in the Pauline terms already quoted, of 'walking in accordance with the Spirit' (Rom 8:4). These two sides nourish and shape each other. Undoubtedly, there is a tension between these two aspects which can be very acute in certain cases, but which, in the long run, is always fruitful and a source of permanent creativity.

Certainly, it is not a question of spirituality being a sort of interval between daily obligations, and still less an escape route or shelter in difficult moments. Following in the footsteps of Jesus, without becoming detached from reality and without distancing ourselves from the currents of the modern world, a deep spirituality helps us to keep hope alive and to preserve our serenity when the storm grows stronger. Far from being a flight from the challenges of the present time, spirituality gives strength and durability to those responsibilities we have taken upon ourselves, to the ways in which we have chosen to 'live in the flesh'.

We welcome the gift of 'becoming sons of the Father' insofar as we forge fraternity in history. Theology must contribute to the recognition of the presence – and, in a way, the absence – of the kingdom of God in history. It therefore rejects the hypocritical words that ask for the kingdom to come and, at the same time, wish it not to interfere with our own plans. This is what is expressed in an astute poem by Jacques Prévert, whose opening lines read: 'Our Father, who art in Heaven, stay there'.[3] This attitude implies, among other things, a failure to understand the full significance of the incarnation of the Son of God. And, without doubt, Prévert's *Our Father* was not the one recited by the Dominicans we find in the pages of this book.

## A TIME OF TRANSITION

Although there are some differences between the times and the places in which these Dominicans lived, we can say that this generation of Dominicans lived in a period in which our Order bore witness to the beginning of what could be called a transition between two phases of the Catholic Church's social teaching. Let us recall some milestones, so that, in the light of these, we may be able to place the contribution our authors made in the context of their times.

The eighteenth century opens an era that was revolutionary in different fields of human activity, the result of an historical process in both events and ideas – that, in a way, had begun two centuries earlier – and that, in the western world, rapidly and radically changed a traditional mentality linked to the feudal world. It is the beginning of the period that we call modernity,

during which humanity began to acquire a clear awareness of its capacity to know and transform nature as well as society, that is to say, to transform history, by taking it into its own hands. For the modern person, this exercise of reason will be an experience of freedom insofar as one recognises that one is capable of changing one's own living conditions, and of altering one's position within the web of social relations.

What we call the Industrial Revolution, whose beginnings are traditionally placed in the mid-eighteenth century, meant the beginning of a phase of rapid and extensive production and distribution of consumer goods, based on a capacity to transform nature that was unknown until then. The forces of productivity are thus seen to advance beyond previously foreseeable limits, and substantially change the economic activity of society. The Industrial Revolution is above all a revolution in *production*; it gave the dominant social classes of the modern age the awareness that they were capable of profoundly modifying their living conditions.

This aspect is linked to another historical process, whose origins are located in the same period, and which reveals another aspect of humanity's transformative action. We are referring here to the social movement that lays claim to what are called 'modern' liberties: that is, those individual liberties at the heart of society, among which were religious freedom, an issue that had long been problematic, and that would be demanded from then on as a fundamental human right, linked indissolubly to other personal rights and freedoms. From these viewpoints J. J. Rousseau's famous distinction between the citizen and the human being emerged, that is to say, between the public sphere and private world, a distinction that still marks modern society, generating conflicts with the religious world even in our own day, and not only with Christianity.

In this context, modern society took its shape, and, to be precise, the bourgeois social class was formed, whose interests and values gave their character to the social and economic relations that exist in modern society. Yet there also emerged, in historical contradiction to this, the working class, the proletariat, who gave rise, towards the second half of the nineteenth century, to social movements that laid claim to humane conditions for their labour and demanded social justice in the new conditions created by the industrial world.[4]

New challenges, then, were posed for the Christian faith. The Church and theology quickly reacted by firmly rejecting this modern world which overturned a social order that had lasted many centuries. The rejection regarded,

above all, the central themes of the modern mentality: the critical reasoning that challenges authority on the subject of knowledge; modern freedoms, especially the claim to freedom of religion; and, above all, what is most characteristic of the modern spirit – the individual as an absolute starting point and autonomous locus of decision-making. The confrontation was hard and costly; through a long journey, however, the issues both settled and became clearer. The path the Church followed culminated in Vatican II, which allowed a critical and open-minded discernment of what had become, especially for the western world, the lived experience of nearly two centuries.

The reaction was somewhat delayed as regards the consequences, in economic terms, of capitalism itself, which was linked in one way or another to certain aspects of modernity, and which presented itself – and continues to do so – as the economic system most natural to the human being. Lay figures, such as Frédéric Ozanam in France, or churchmen, such as Bishop Ketteler in Germany, to name but two, opened up the route to what would be called social Catholicism, which would later flow into the social doctrine of the Church and its first systematic presentation composed by Leo XIII in 1891. Nevertheless, we cannot forget that, during those years, another element had been added to the mix and had caused significant disquiet: different forms of socialism, and especially what was known as the 'scientific socialism' of Marx and Engels.

The encyclical *Rerum Novarum* takes note of those 'new things' that were stirring up European society in that time, and takes an important step by assuming the defence of workers. It sets the foundations and provides the main outlines of how these problems will be treated in the documents of the *magisterium*: the documents that follow *Rerum Novarum* study social problems in depth, but within the same basic mentality, characterised by a perspective built on fundamental ethical values, but whose categories inevitably start to become outdated as society evolves and unfamiliar problems arise.

With regard to criticism of 'egalitarian ideology', Cardinal G. Cottier put it clearly some years ago when he said that *Rerum Novarum* 'speaks of equality in terms which our intellectual and moral sensibilities have difficulty in accepting', because its line of argument 'is not yet totally free of the fantasies tied to the ruling classes of the *ancien régime*'. It is the case, he believes, that 'the specific inequalities of the modern economic system appear not to have been completely perceived'.[5] It is not only a question of language; in this encyclical a vision of society is expressed. In one way or another, similar things can be said of later texts on these themes, since these social problems are

changeable in their very nature and subject to the influence of many factors. Avoiding an anachronistic view allows us to understand this easily, but it also means that it is necessary to be attentive to the historical circumstances of this type of document. In this field there is no continuity without rupture.

The Dominicans involved in the social sphere, whose testimony and work are presented in this book, were inspired by the first documents of the Church's social doctrine, and made use of the renewal of Thomist philosophy and theology which gathered strength in the period that runs between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. At the same time, new challenges on the social front (to which they were attentive), made them take up a certain critical distance from the Church's social teaching and led them to new proposals for, and reflections on, this teaching.

They embarked on varied experiences: bringing poverty to the notice of European public opinion; the creation of new lines of research and of institutions to carry out that research, university education; publications in the field of ethics and social sciences; close relations with trade unions; commitment to human rights and world peace; dialogue with socialist and Marxist currents in Eastern Europe; theological reflections concerning the link between injustice and structural sin; first-hand knowledge of developing countries; philosophy and theology of work; elaboration of syntheses of the Church's social teaching and social ethics; the founding of magazines dedicated to social themes; and a humanistic perspective on the notion of development. A range of commitments and reflections is included, taking into account new situations that appealed to those who sought to respond by turning off the beaten track. In this way they contributed – and they are doubtless not alone in this – to a deepening of social teaching, which is by its own nature invited, by constantly revisiting its sources, to open itself to other perspectives.

Recognising the dynamics of this type of development, and without forcing a rigid schematisation upon matters, we can say that this openness took concrete form in the great encyclicals of John XXIII. This new departure had been prepared gradually, but then it appeared in all its clarity and would be continued by Paul VI and, with great force, by John Paul II. This brief introduction cannot enter into detail concerning the documents of this time. It is sufficient to say two things which, in a way, are outlined in the journeys and texts that are to be found later in this book: social teaching (it will increasingly be named as such) acquired a universal dimension by going beyond the frontiers of the western world, and, at the same time, it deepened its

foundations in the theological sense, turning back increasingly to biblical sources.

During these years, we can see clearly that social teaching took into account the global situation, the condition of poor countries, the methods of analysis becoming available, the conditions created by the Council and the theological currents that emerged at that time. It made a step forward, motivated and nourished by the experiences and reflections of many Christians, such as those who speak to us in the chapters of this book, who creatively extend what has been done up to this point regarding the relations between Christian faith and socio-historical challenges, and take into account circumstances very different from those in which the social teaching of the Church was born. For example, the influence of the works and experiences of L. J. Lebret on the encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, a milestone in the process we are describing, is well known.

The testimony and the work of these Dominicans are placed in different moments of the twentieth century, a period that contributed to a renewed understanding of the relations between Christian faith and the transformation of history. These Dominicans opened new paths and launched initiatives, thereby giving rise to a ferment of ideas which was to have important repercussions in the proposal of Vatican II that we should be attentive to the signs of the times.

## WHAT WAS AT STAKE?

The work of the people discussed here, in a direct or in an implicit way, touched important aspects of the subject we have been addressing throughout this preface: the social dimensions of the Christian faith. In order to go more deeply into these dimensions, we will restrict ourselves to three of them.

### *Understanding the structural causes*

In the writings of several of these Dominicans we can observe a concern to understand the structural causes of the situation of the poverty and injustice with which they would not compromise. This issue is significant, because for a long time there existed an idea, which is still held by many Christians, that poverty fitted into a certain natural order. It was no more than a step from here to the claim, as has been the case up to and including even recent times, that it is a part of God's plan. This conviction consistently led to the distinction between the duties and rights of those whom fate – or God himself – caused to be born rich or poor.[6] The poor should receive meekly

whatever help they needed and that the rich man should generously offer.

That focus, in the new circumstances, did not allow a clear awareness of what is today at stake in the challenge of poverty and, as a consequence, hides the proper means of responding, with due fidelity, to the demands of the Gospel. Those tools of analysis available to us today for understanding both poverty and the causes of poverty, when examined with due critical rigour, allow the socio-economic mechanisms and the social categories present in society to be revealed.[7] They dissipate any shadow of fatalism and confront us with our social responsibility with regard to the causes of poverty. These tools did not exist in earlier periods – and for this reason we must, here too, avoid anachronisms in passing judgement on the past – but in the present day their use is vital for knowing where the demands of social justice should lead us. Analysing causes is a constant process, and is demanded by honesty if we really want to overcome an unjust and inhuman state of affairs. It is, moreover, a focus that makes visible the role played in this matter by collective responsibility, with the primary responsibility resting with those who have the greatest power in society.

In reality, poverty is not a matter of fate, but a condition; it is not a misfortune, but an injustice. It is the result of social structures, and mental and cultural categories, linked to the manner in which society, in its different manifestations, has been constructed. It is the fruit of human hands: economic structures and social taboos, prejudices on the grounds of race, culture, class and religion accumulated throughout history, and of increasingly ambitious economic interests.[8] Its extirpation is also, therefore, in our own hands.

From the first social encyclical of Leo XIII, we find a rejection of the abuses suffered by workers. But we do not clearly encounter the subject of the causes of poverty; it is implied in John XXIII, affirmed by Paul VI and appears with full intensity, and repeatedly, in the teachings of John Paul II. A statement of this pope regarding the subject marked the episcopal conference of Puebla in Latin America, a continent aware of those structural causes, as expressed in 1968 by the Medellín conference. At Puebla, John Paul II denounced the mechanism that brings 'ever increasing wealth [to] the rich at the expense of the ever increasing poverty of the poor'.[9] He repeated this, in the same words, during a homily given in Havana on 25 January 1998.[10] The same condemnation is repeated in several of his other works. As we said earlier, this position is also clearly expressed by several of those described in this book. Recognising that poverty, as a complex reality, is not an inescapable fact and that it has human causes, leads to a re-elaboration of traditional

conceptions, through which the needy condition of the poor and the marginalised was merely ameliorated. Direct and immediate aid to those who are in need and suffering injustice still makes some sense, but must be re-orientated, and must go further than mere assistance, to aim for the elimination of what gives rise to that state of affairs.

Nevertheless, despite the obvious nature of the matter, it cannot be said that this structural perspective has become a widely held opinion in either today's world or even in Christian circles. To speak of the causes of poverty is to make visible the sensitive and, in truth, controversial nature of the subject, and this is the reason why many seek to avoid it.

The subject is closely connected to one of the most pressing and debated themes of today: the relations between ethics and economics, as we know all too well.

*Transforming history*

Commitment to the transformation of history raises the question of what its place should be in the central task of the Church, which is evangelisation; a question that has long been debated by theologians, and which was a preoccupation in the work of those depicted in this book.

Without reaching back very far into history, let us simply say that when the Christian's commitment to what was once called the building of the temporal city became urgent, particularly with regard to the contribution of lay people, it was valued, but seen as a task different from, and even parallel with, true evangelisation. Sometimes it was granted the status of pre-evangelisation. A step forward was taken by a type of theology, supported by, among others, Yves Congar, which stated that the Church had two missions: to proclaim the Gospel, its central commitment, and then what was called animating the temporal order, that is, activity that was directed towards social advancement and justice. It was an important contribution, but the energy inherent in the subject required more precise responses. Subsequent theological reflections provided these.

The state of the question is different today. Vatican II asked itself what were the relations between worldly progress and the growth of the kingdom. After various vacillations during the composition of the document on *The Church in the World*, in the final section of the document the Council took a half-way position without entering deeply into the problem, although one of the preparatory outlines had done so (the Ariccia version, named after the place in which it was debated). Yet the final document did contain one statement that set a standard for later, deeper explorations: 'although tem-

poral progress and the growth of Christ's kingdom must be carefully distinguished, the first, inasmuch as it can contribute to the better ordering of human society, nonetheless concerns, to a great extent, the kingdom of God' (n. 39). Little by little, starting from various social and ecclesiastical activities and the reflection they brought about, we reached the point of a more inclusive and precise language, gradually adopted by the *magisterium*.

One such case was the episcopal conference of Medellín, which saw the Church's task of evangelisation challenged by the scandalous poverty in the continent. Some time later, in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), Paul VI wondered, 'how in fact can one proclaim the new commandment without promoting in justice and in peace the true, authentic advancement of man?' (n. 31).[11] John Paul II, for his part, was very clear on this matter; at the beginning of his pontificate, in the inaugural address of the Puebla conference, which has already been mentioned, he stated that 'an indispensable part of [the Church's] evangelising mission is made up of works on behalf of justice and human promotion'.[12] This is a position that he reaffirmed on various occasions.[13]

The process by which we reached the point of understanding that a transformation of history, centring on a struggle for justice, is rooted in the heart of the evangelical message was not easy, and took time. Yet it opens up wide horizons, and at the same time it has demonstrated that few, if any, people are now frightened by the supposed threat that this undertaking is equivalent to proclaiming the Christian message as if it were wholly limited to social transformation; the shadows that gave the threat an illusory existence have been dispelled, and its inner workings revealed. The subject has been worked on extensively in Christian milieu over the last few decades, and, as we have recalled, the momentum provided by the Council, and various assemblies of other Christian denominations, contributed to it. Without doubt, the new awareness of the poverty and exclusion suffered by so many of our contemporaries has played a decisive role.

Diverse theological currents during these years have taken up the issue again, making visible the historical implications of the testimony of Jesus, Son of God, made one of us, proclaiming a kingdom that, although not fully present in history, is being constructed within it. It is the famous *already*, but not *yet*, as we put it earlier; or, to put it in philosophical terms, in the biblical universe there is no transcendence of God without his immanence.

This transcendent immanence allows us to reread the meaning of the labours of those featured here within the light of the spread of the Gospel.

They did not only prepare the way by creating humane conditions so that the Gospel might be heard, but preached it in complete accordance with the Dominican charism.

*The biblical and theological meaning of poverty*

Although from the first, concerns about society were marked especially by an interest in the economic conditions of poverty, gradually, study of the situation and closeness to the people who suffered it called for precise definitions of the biblical and theological meaning of poverty. We have seen the complexity of the situation we designate with that word, *poverty*, and it has allowed us effectively to reclaim what, from the theological viewpoint, we must understand to be poverty.

Real (or, if one prefers, material) poverty is an inhuman condition, opposed to the will of the God, as proclaimed by Jesus, that we should have life. In the last analysis, it really means a physical and cultural death that is both untimely and unjust. The poor die of hunger, and of diseases that humanity is now in a position to defeat. What is happening these days in Africa, with famines, malaria and HIV / AIDS, is a clear instance of what we are describing.[14] Added to this is what we may call a cultural death. In effect, when belonging to a race or culture or being a woman are in some way motives for exclusion and discrimination, we are taking life away from the people who find themselves in those situations.

At this level, we can understand that poverty is a challenge to the proclamation of the Christian faith. In an analysis of faith, it is not difficult to see that the ultimate root of the situation of human marginality and social exclusion in which a great part of humanity finds itself, is sin, that is to say, the rejection of friendship with God and others. It is to refuse to recognise every person's human dignity and status as a son or daughter of God. The Church's social teaching claimed, from the beginning, the right and duty of the Church to express opinions on social matters. With just cause, it began to be presented not as an ensemble of practical proposals but rather as a social morality, and it distanced itself from the idea that it was a 'third way' between *liberal capitalism* and *Marxist collectivism*.[15]

On the one hand, social teaching has increasingly been enriched by insights from human sciences to produce a better diagnosis of the social situation; this has led to a great suppleness in its analysis and with all consequences that arise therefrom. Among these, there is the need to confront the social conflicts in human history head-on and with realism,[16] and, as far as possible, to avoid remaining tied to answers intended for an historical situ-

ation that is destined to change. On the other hand, the similarly increasing recognition of its position in the theological sphere has led social teaching to penetrate more deeply into the biblical sources of the Christian message, to see itself as an expression of a fundamental biblical fact: the preferential option for the poor,[17] and to value the struggle for justice as an essential part of the mission of the Church: the proclamation of the Gospel.

## CONCLUSION

Let us end by recalling one of the most important and contentious issues of our own era in relation to this subject: the relationship between *ethics* and *economics*. Does ethics, and very specifically Christian ethics, have something to say to the world of economics?

The question would have had no meaning in the sixteenth century. Moral theologians of that time (amongst them Francisco de Vitoria), who concerned themselves with the issues posed by nascent capitalism, would have reacted with surprise, and would only have extended themselves to say that the answer was obviously affirmative. In the classics of eighteenth-century economics, we still find philosophical and ethical preoccupations in the new field which they were setting out.

But economics has sought to declare itself an autonomous sphere in relation to ethics, as if within the economy the human person was not at stake. One of the major preoccupations of the Dominican pioneers in the social sphere described here was precisely to adopt a humanist perspective in addressing these issues, keeping in mind the human being's primacy over objects. Some of them sought a humane economy, a search that continues to be fruitful in the face of the new situations posed by globalisation.

Certainly, we must respect the proper autonomy of a discipline that makes rigorous efforts to understand the sphere of economic activity. Many unnecessary problems have arisen in the past with regard to this, and it is important to learn from that experience. But this does not mean that economics should be a sector absolutely independent of existence; nor should it be the nucleus or totality of that existence. The economic movement must, of necessity, be positioned and examined in the context of human life in its entirety, and in the light of faith. The criterion of immediate efficiency is not definitive.

Today, works on the ethical guidelines necessary for economic activity, and about the distortions set down in certain justifications of centring the economy on the unconditional forces of the market, are multiplying and

coming from different parts of the globe. We must recognise the values of freedom, personal initiative, the possibilities that technical advances open to humanity and, even, the functions that the market can carry out within certain parameters. But the logic of an economy that enslaves people, nations and cultures, must be denounced.

An important task of theological reflection in this field is to show that many elements of rupture of friendship with God are present in the socio-economic structures that create and maintain unjust inequalities among people. In fact, Christian reflection leads us to realise that sin is the root of all social injustice. In this context, the issue of the exclusion of the poorest, those irrelevant to the dominant economic system, is of particular concern to us.

In the chapters of this book, through different formulations, initiatives and ways of speaking, each in their way replying to the challenges of their own time and alive with the transformation that is characteristically worked out by those opening up new paths, there can be read the contribution of the Dominican friars and laity whose life and work is presented in this volume. But reading them must not lead us to a fixation on the past. 'Memory,' said St Augustine, 'is the present of the past'; only with that dense meaning will the present be capable of preparing the time to come.