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## TO EXIST WITH AND FOR THE PEOPLE: PHILOSOPHICO-RELIGIOUS ROOTS AND THE NEED OF A MORAL COMMON FAITH

### Abstract

Historical dynamism, moral and religious dimensions, and even the sacral and soteriological sense of our journey through this world can all be found in Judaism. However, it was Christianity which overcame the temporal and national limitations proper to the Old-Testament conception, providing new traits to the idea of a ‘people’. This idea was at the root of political theories (especially, those of Spaniards Vitoria and Suárez) which decisively influenced Modern Age. Nevertheless, it was subsequently transformed and distorted by Liberal and Marxist traditions. Traditions which, however, have shown themselves incapable of building neither the unity needed by peoples, nor the universality to which our nature points, nor the attention demanded of the neediest human beings. Nowadays, to respond to these challenges in a democratic and pluralist environment, it is essential that a moral common faith, structured around a set of objective principles accessible to everybody (but of a Christian inspiration) exists. In the case of politicians, it demands to exist with and for the people.

**Keywords:** Biblical theology; Christianity; Human being; People; Political theory

### Introduction

In both classical Greece and Rome, the concept of a people (*demos* and *populus*, respectively) was the object of reflection by political theorists, and even held some relevance in social life. However, beyond these contributions, their importance and later influence, the thesis I will defend today in this brief article is that the idea of a “people” that the West has structured over the large part of its history and that the modern prevailing concept today in substantial aspects still depends on—albeit no longer nourished by its spirit—has its essence in Judaeo-

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Christian origins with regard both to theology and philosophy.

A simple investigation into the meanings of the term people in the dictionaries of the main modern Western languages (*pueblo* in Spanish, *peuple* in French, *Volk* in German, *popolo* in Italian, *povo* in Portuguese) reveals that there are two principal meanings in which this voice tends to be employed. First, it refers to a large group of people united by bonds of origin, beliefs, language or culture that, as citizens of a specific society, enjoy civil and political rights, are governed by allegedly just laws and connect to or oppose the ruling party. A second meaning refers to the group of people in this society that does not belong to the most culturally or economically favoured classes, but instead to the poorest and most humble population, operators, who tend to do manual labour, in short, those we often refer to as “common people”.

What I maintain is that both meanings—which even today continue to be the essential traits of this definition—have their roots in the spirituality of the Holy Scriptures and in the classical Christian (moral or political) philosophy and theology. I would even say that the humanist and universalist direction in which the concept would like to point today, in the globalised world in which we live, also has its precedents and can only be fruitfully carried out by reviving the Christian inspiration of a moral secular common faith. As always, but specially nowadays, both State and Church are called upon to exist with and for the People.

### The “people” in the Old and the New Testaments

The issue of the people, crucial in both the New and Old Testaments, as it has been the subject of thought and subsequent formulation in our civilisation, is largely in debt to biblical theology and anthropology.

a) According to them, God created the universe<sup>2</sup> and, in it, man, who He modelled in His image and likeness.<sup>3</sup> Thus, as human beings, we all have the same origin, and are equal in personal dignity and nature. Our needs, aspirations and last wishes are rooted in this (factors that shape our common good), as well as the rights and obligations that stem from our way of being. As a whole, they are used as the foundation that will later establish the order of that which is fair and just.

In days of yore, God also called man through Abram to an alliance between Creator and creature. He promised to make him the father of a great nation.<sup>4</sup> The monogamous family, a reflection of Jewish monotheism and a factor in structuring social relations, was thus impelled to move outward to open up first to the tribe and then to Israel, shaped as ‘God’s chosen people’ and, therefore, sacred people.<sup>5</sup>

2 Gen 1:1.

3 Gen 1:26-27.

4 Gen 12:2 and 15:5-6.

5 Ex 19:5-6 and Deut 7:6.

In the times of Moses, it was the same people, subjected to slavery in Egypt, whom Yahweh freed and providently led on a long pilgrimage whose destination was the land promised to their fathers. During this lengthy exodus, the ancient alliance reached its full expression and formulation: it was set down in law and commandments that also have a religious, moral and salvific nature<sup>6</sup>, and solemnly sealed with the blood of a sacrifice.<sup>7</sup>

The archetype of this people clarifies the historical momentum, the value of traditions, the moral and religious issues inherent to the human condition and even—at least embryonically—a somewhat sacral vision, naturally eschatological and soteriological, of our path through this world. In a very real, albeit imperfect, way, the fact that humanity as a whole, is called to be the new and final holy people of God, is foreshadowed.

b) This imperfection stems from the limits both of a nation (of race, language, worship) and with regard to time (still perhaps too attached to the present world and its particular history), by which the Old Testament conception of the people of Israel was defined.

These two limitations are surmounted in the New Testament with the advent of Christianity. This has also contributed, perhaps quite significantly, to profiling other traits of the idea of a people that—more or less coherently and successfully—have endured to the present day. On the one hand, the Gospel transcends the borders established by the tribes of Israel, representing the people chosen by Yahweh, to encompass the universality of all of humanity.<sup>8</sup> Humankind whom God the Father calls and with whom He establishes a second and final alliance<sup>9</sup>, sealing the covenant with the sacrificial and redemptive blood of His own son.<sup>10</sup> Just as Son and Father are one, Jesus Christ urges his disciples with his own prayer for them to also be one, pillars of the new people that is the Church<sup>11</sup> and to love each other as He himself loves them.<sup>12</sup> This love of the Father is also called to make us feel fraternal love, even for those we consider our enemies.<sup>13</sup> Charity is thus established as a connecting bond among the members of this people, the only bond that can imbue it with true unity. On the other, this alliance exceeds the merely temporary plane on which the life of nations is developed. It refers to a people—while migrant and alive in history—whose final destination is a blessed Kingdom, not of this world, that will never end.<sup>14</sup>

The Christian conception introduces the spiritual and eschatological into the

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6 Ex 20:2-17 and Deut 5:6-21.

7 Ex 24:8.

8 John 11:52 and Eph 2:11-18.

9 Heb 8:6-13 and 2 Cor 6:16.

10 Rev 5:9.

11 John 17:22-23.

12 John 15:12.

13 Mt 5:44.

14 Rev 7:9-17.

temporary and historical, endowing this life with a defined meaning and reconciling our history and the history of all humanity with God Himself. In this new idea of a people, among the rest of those children of God and our brothers, the poor and those spurned by the powers of this world all hold a very special place, whom God loves preferentially, calls blessed and for whom he has prepared the best places in the Kingdom of Heaven.<sup>15</sup>

### The “people” in Medieval Christian Philosophico-political Tradition

Thus conceived, with the spiritual order transferred to the philosophical plane, this Judeo Christian idea was the foundation for moral and political philosophies (first, Thomas Aquinas; then Francisco de Vitoria and Francisco Suárez), which not only had an enormous influence on modern political “science”, the emergence and establishment of democracy and international law, and on the contemporary recognition of human rights inherent in our personal condition, but they also laid the bases for—at least in theory—a solid conception of human relations both nationally and internationally.

a) Inspired by Aristotle, SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS handles the idea of a people indirectly, by classifying and examining the different forms of government. However, the concepts of people and common good—not government, and even less so that of state—were what he used as the basis for politics, interpreted as the most noble of the practical sciences.

In summary, we could say that Aquinas characterises people as a natural community of free and equal men represented by a group of individuals brought together by tradition, and focused on the search for common good. He defined it as the “good life for the multitude” or as “communion in the good life”.<sup>16</sup> To the degree that it is “the perfect and ultimate purpose of human endeavour”,<sup>17</sup> it makes sense that it consists of many elements and facets: the satisfaction of our basic needs for survival and attaining a worthy life; the means necessary so that—through personal virtue and civic friendship—we can achieve complete perfection of our nature by living in society; and even heed our transcendent vocation that allows us to seek eternal happiness.

How must the relationship between the people and government be articulated? Considered as a whole (the “multitude”), the people receive the capacity for self-government from God. However, Doctor Angelicus would specify, given that it is one thing to seek one’s own good and very different to seek the common good, there must be “in this multitude a principle of governance”.<sup>18</sup> And the best type of government will be that which ensures the people the great-

15 Mt 5:3 and 25: 34–41.

16 Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia libri Politicorum II*, lect 17 n. 272.

17 Ibid, Prologue.

18 Thomas Aquinas, *De regno*, L. 1, c. 1, 6 and 7.

est degree possible of political freedom and participation, taking their specific situation and circumstances into account. In parallel, the rulers, while exercising their delegated power, effectively direct their actions to achieving the real good of those they lead with a spirit of service and by whom—given that both their appointment and the power conferred to them are received vicariously from the people, to whom they must be accountable—they are in one regard loved and respected and, in another, limited in their powers.

In the application of these criteria, Saint Thomas would conclude his reflections by choosing a mixed government.<sup>19</sup> However, given that all members of the people are free and equal in their political rights, and the multitude encompasses more poor than rich, it would be hoped that the cause of the most disadvantaged would be attended sufficiently. The two fundamental meanings of the concept of a people would therefore be represented here.

b) In many respects FRANCISCO DE VITORIA is a faithful and accurate exponent and commentator on Aristotelian-Thomistic postulates, perhaps even more systematic than the authors themselves. Thus, his political philosophy adopts man's natural sociability as its starting point, from there deducing the equally natural nature of civil society and political power.

Following the Aristotelian analytical method of the four causes, Vitoria believes that the aim of social life—different, but not separate or in opposition to man's ultimate purpose—is fulfilment of our natural roles and some natural happiness. This would consist of satisfying the needs related to our survival, but also and especially of developing intellectual and moral virtues, and the advancement of the spiritual faculties in which the former are inscribed and that specifically characterise us: understanding and will. With regard to understanding, he would say that "only with doctrine and experience can it be improved, which in solitude could never be attained". Whereas, he adds, will, "whose chief ornaments are justice and friendship, would of necessity be entirely deformed and, so to speak, crippled if it were separated from human society; justice, indeed, can only be practiced among the multitude, and friendship, without which (...) there is no virtue, would totally perish in solitude".<sup>20</sup> The conclusion is obvious: "The source and the origin of cities and republics were not a human invention, and should not be considered artifices, but instead as something that comes from nature itself".<sup>21</sup>

The justification of the natural need for authority and political power to conserve the integrity and harmony among members of a society, and the advancement of its members, fits perfectly as a continuation of this line of reasoning: "no society can persist without a force or power that governs and provides (...) just as the body of man cannot be wholly conserved if there is not an organising

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19 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, q. 105, a. 1.

20 Francisco de Vitoria, *Relectio de potestate civili*, 4.

21 *Ibid*, p. 5.

force that is made up of all members, some in benefit of others and, above all, in benefit of the whole man. Thus would it happen in the city if each person were to heed his own usefulness and others were to neglect the public good".<sup>22</sup>

Vitoria employs "republic" as that which by natural and divine law is the material cause of civil society and the final foundation of political power, although one can clearly infer from his words that he is referring to what we have herein termed 'people': "the same republic is competent to govern itself, administer and direct all its powers to the common good. This is proven as follows: Since by natural and divine law there is power to govern the republic and, with positive and human law removed, there would be no special reason why this power rests more with one than another, it is necessary for this same society to be enough in and of itself and to have the power of self-government".<sup>23</sup>

With regard to the origin of the efficient cause of this power, according to the Dominican teacher it is found in God as Creator of human nature and author, therefore, of natural law. And people receive it immediately from God as formal cause of the political (in terms of power to govern civil society). Thus, nothing determines to whom people should delegate—by favour of the majority—the practice of this law. Vitoria states his preference for the monarchy as the ideal form of government. However, that which is most important here is that he clearly expresses his idea that all governments are subject to very precise limitations: not only the people, as it is also subject to the rule of law. Everyone's natural rights must be safeguarded and their endeavours aimed at searching for the common good for all. Finally, it is a good that—as he said—although distinct from our ultimate supernatural purpose (Vitoria did not hesitate to distinguish political from spiritual power), it also includes the condition of opening to supernatural virtues and the search for the eternal happiness of each and every human being.

However, the most original and important contributions of Vitorian thought are those that today are considered precursors to modern international law and are particularly significant when shaping a universalist idea of a people, which many of us have without exactly knowing which spirit to endow it with. These contributions refer to the possible application of his principles for the conception of a "universal community" or *totus orbis*.

Vitoria's principles have clear grounds in Thomistic anthropology that, in turn, come from the biblical concept of man. However, with him these ideas take on a systematicity and specificity that was lacking in Aquinas, both because he was attending to the birth of the modern State, which emphasizes the political, sovereign power with which the government is invested; and because of his need to respond to several important philosophical and theological questions that arose from the contact between Spain and the recently discovered New World.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 7

In this latter sense, the first issue that Vitoria outlines is the right to ownership of the goods and lands of Native American Indians, with whom the Spanish conquerors and the Crown immediately entered into conflict.<sup>24</sup> To respond to the controversy, the Dominican turned to the biblical concept of man as *imago Dei* and drew a clear conclusion: given that all human beings were created in nature, in the image and likeness of God, all humans are free and equal in dignity and natural rights. Thus, the right granted by God Himself to effectively control his goods and properties belongs to every human (and even some possession of themselves), regardless of their situation, origin, intellect, religion or moral condition.

Moreover, and supported by similar reasons and arguments found in the Scriptures and in the Church Fathers, Vitoria refutes that there is a legitimate control or power over the universe, neither temporal nor spiritual, which can be used as justification to assimilate a territory by force to which one does not belong.<sup>25</sup> As we can imagine, this was the case of the so-called Western Indians with regard to Spain. On the one hand, given that we are all free and equal in natural law, and that the institutionalisation of political power must be done by the people, voluntarily and by positive law, there is nothing here that could be used as an excuse for appropriating that which is not ours. However, and on the other hand, there are no supernatural reasons that could justify this.

In fact, in a strictly modern sense, Vitoria rejects the mediaeval idea of empire. Regarding the emperor, he will state categorically that “he is not the Master of the world”.<sup>26</sup> It has never been proved, he says, neither by divine nor by human right, the emperor has this mastery over the globe.<sup>27</sup> The idea that Vitoria actually uses as the basis for his reasoning is that the supernatural does not annul the natural, but instead incorporates and elevates it. Thus, that which is natural law must be respected as something wanted by God and granted (and consequently due) to man.

Vitoria claims humans’ same freedom and dignity, and the inviolability of their consciences, to reject imposing Christian faith on the Indians, even if—which is the case—he considers it the one true faith.<sup>28</sup> Nobody can be obliged to believe since, by its own nature, faith is a supernatural gift that requires acceptance by human freewill. Man’s moral (not legal) obligation to adhere to the truth, in this case the truth of faith, depends on multiple circumstances for its application, some of which are not directly related to the person being preached to, but instead are related to the preacher’s exemplary conduct, perseverance and good sense. Even if these conditions were met, Vitoria would say, if the Indians

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24 Francisco de Vitoria, *Relectio de Indis*, 1, Part. I, n. 4-24.

25 *Ibid*, 1, Part. II, n. 1-7

26 *Ibid*, 1, Part. II, n. 1

27 Francisco de Vitoria, *De potestate Ecclesiae*, I, Included in *Relecciones teológicas*.

28 Francisco de Vitoria, *Relectio de Indis*, 1, Part II, n. 8-16.

do not accept faith 'it is not lawful, for this reason, to make war on them or strip them of their possessions'. Whatever the case may be, in short "war is not an argument in favour of the truth of the Christian faith".<sup>29</sup>

Vitoria's aim is obviously neither to justify religious indifference nor to erect obstacles to the propagation of Christian faith. Indeed, he recognises the right/duty to evangelise—with the consequent mission mandate of protection and responsibility—whose origin is human being's natural openness to the truth, especially for issues related to salvation and happiness. His intention is to purify the order of the resources used on this evangelising mission and to establish the suitable causes for its realisation. And he does so in a way that in many aspects anticipates the human right to religious freedom, as it has been recognised in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It is in this same right/duty to evangelise, in "society's natural right and free communications" stemming from innate human sociability, in the Indians' right to freedom of choice, and in the right/duty of humanitarian intervention to defend the most humble and innocent from tyrannical laws (along with other reasons of less interest to us herein), which Vitoria uses as the basis for justifying the conquest of the Americas by the Spaniards.<sup>30</sup> Whether or not this justification is legitimate, these rights are framed in a universalist conception of human society (*totus orbis*). All human beings are part of this society due to their community of nature, and Vitoria recognises this community's own status and organisation, its own good and its own laws, which are inscribed in the scope of natural law and divine law.

c) The Grenadian Jesuit FRANCISCO SUÁREZ also understands the human being as a sociable being by nature. Further, since human nature is divine creation, the origin and ultimate purpose of society are also found in God. Nonetheless, unlike his scholastic predecessors, Suárez additionally adopts a type of contractualism. How is that possible?

In his viewpoint, all men are both equal and free and, thus, no-one has authority over another, but *driven by nature itself*, they agree to live in society and seek the common good governed by natural law. He analyses that "human multitudes must be viewed in two ways: first, insofar as they represent a mere agglomerate of men without any order or physical or moral union. In this regard, (...) they do not form, properly speaking, a political body". But he also stresses that "by a special act of their will or common consent men come together in a political body with a social bond to mutually help each other for a political aim".<sup>31</sup> The latter is the only one we could call "people" in a rigorous sense.

However, brought together as a community by this "contract" or common consensus, the resulting society is still not fully established: plurality must be re-

29 Ibid, 1, Part II, n. 15

30 Ibid, 1, Part III, n. 1-18

31 Francisco Suárez, *De legibus* III, 2, 4.



duced to unity supervised by the political authority or power. Thus, as Suárez warns “it is impossible to conceive of a united political body without political governance and suitable organisation”.<sup>32</sup>

The reason for this is twofold: there is no unity without respect and subjection to fundamental rules and a single power, and only this power can guarantee that the community is centred on the common good, which is its final purpose. Thus, the authority emerges from society naturally (both form and the specifics without any dependence on human judgement) and has its primary origin in God, as the creator of the natural order. The people immediately receive it from Him. The subject of this authority is therefore the people itself, conceived—we must repeat—not as a simple multitude or bunch of men, but as a “perfect community” or “mystical body”—ecclesiological resonances are evident here—united in a moral sense<sup>33</sup>: “The supreme public power, considered abstractly—says Suárez—was conferred directly by God to men united in a perfect political state or community, not necessarily in virtue of an institution or special granting and as positive, completely different than the creation of the nature (of the state), but instead necessarily following from its first founding act. Due to this, in virtue of this way of granting, (political) power does not rest with a single person or a specific group, but in the entirety of the people or community body”.<sup>34</sup>

How the people delegates this power and its conditions will be determined by some other type of agreement between its members, which can be verified in different ways: direct decision, admitted legitimate succession, and so forth. The concrete selection of the form of government therefore corresponds to men, their views and circumstances: “even when political power is natural law in absolute terms, its specifics in a determined type of power or governance depend on the free decision of man”<sup>35</sup>, namely, human law.<sup>36</sup>

32 *Ibid*, 2, 4.

33 The expression *corpus mysticum*, with Pauline resonances (Rom 12: 5; Eph 3:6 and 5:23; Col 1:18 and 1:24), was first coined to mention the Eucharist, and transferred some later to the Church (see: Henri De Lubac *Corpus mysticum: L'Eucharistie et l'Église au Moyen Âge*, Étude historique, Aubier, Paris, 1944), and even to Humanity taken as a whole: “in all centuries of the Middle Age Christendom, which in destiny is identical with Mankind, is set before us as a single, universal Community, founded and governed by God Himself. Mankind is one ‘mystical body’; it is one single and internally connected ‘people or ‘folk’; it is an all embracing corporation (*universitas*), which constitutes that Universal Realm, spiritual and temporal, which may be called the Universal Church (*ecclesia universalis*), or, with equal propriety, the Commonwealth of the Human Race (*respublica generis humani*)” (Otto Von Guericke, *Political theories of the Middle Age*, University Press, Cambridge, 1913, p. 10). Besides, from “thirteenth century” on, and in conjunction with the Aristotelian notion of ‘*corpus morale et politicum*’, the idea of ‘*corpus mysticum*’ served to nurture the reflection on political power and to lay the foundation both of absolute and republican regimes (the latter, when the community is taken, along with or even above the sovereign, as the subject of the state rights). (See: Ernst Percy Schramm, *Sacerdotium und Regnum im Austausch ihrer Vorrechte: eine Skizze der Entwicklung zur Beleuchtung des Dictatus Papae Gregors VII*, *Studi gregoriani*, 2 1947, pp. 403–457; Ernst Kantorowicz, *Mysteries of State. An absolutist Concept and its late Mediaeval Origins*, *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 48, 1955, pp. 65–91; and *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*, Princeton University Press, 1957. And more recently, Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Problèmes religieux de la genèse de l'État modern*, in: J. Ph. Genet, y B. Vincent (Eds.), *État et Église dans la genèse de l'État moderne*, Biblioteca de la Casa de Velázquez, Madrid, 1986).

34 Francisco Suárez, *Defensio Fidei*, III, p. 2, 5.

35 Francisco Suárez, *De legibus*, III, 4, 1.

36 Here they are, at least implicitly, the foundations for the rejection of divine right of king theories, sustained by James I of England,

As also occurs with Vitoria, Suárez clearly distinguishes the secular from the spiritual, and political from ecclesiastical power: the first has its ultimate origin in God and its expression in the people's free judgement, while the origin of the second is the express will of God manifested in Christ (a matter of positive divine law). One is natural and the other supernatural, where political power "is arranged for the maintenance of the nation's peace and for moral dignity (...) Ecclesiastical power is arranged to obtain eternal salvation".<sup>37</sup> Thus, one understands that once again the common good (aim of political life) should be primarily established for the people's survival, peace and social wellbeing, respect for the ontological dignity of all mankind—as participants of the same nature created by God—and the promotion of their moral dignity. What it obviously does not mean is that one should forget, disregard or, even less, restrict the human needs and aspirations that stem from our spiritual side and from the consideration of our ultimate purpose, supernatural, which is eternal happiness.

From the above, one can also infer that, for Suárez, political power enjoys autonomy with regard to the Church. The same thing does not happen with respect to natural law, inscribed by God in men's hearts and which is obligatory both for leaders and those they lead, in both public life and private life. Indeed, the power of making laws, in which Suárez sees supreme political power<sup>38</sup>, cannot be opposed in any way. In manifest opposition to Machiavelli's thought and referring to the specific scope of the virtue of justice (not the specifics of other virtues), our author would specify that civil laws "can only have good as their objective, prohibiting that which is bad (...) so that an unjust or immoral law is not true law (...) The principle reason is that natural law forbids everything that is immoral. That said, civil law cannot abolish natural law, and man cannot be bound simultaneously by opposing laws".<sup>39</sup>

### **The evolution of the idea of a people in Modern Western Political Thought**

Through a long process that we have summarised greatly, we have seen how a specific idea of a people was progressively defined, with its roots sunk into Aristotle's classical thought, but especially on biblical theology and on the moral and political philosophies of diverse Christian thinkers: a group of persons and families who, moved by the nature created by God that they all share, shapes a social and political body united by bonds with some civic friendship and/or mutual charity; who live in common to obtain the purposes inherent to this same nature; under an authority the people itself elects or accepts as the subject of an

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and against which, Suárez wrote his *Defensio Fidei*.

37 Francisco Suárez, *Defensio Fidei*, III, 6, 17.

38 Francisco Suárez, *De legibus*, III, 1, 6.

39 *Ibid*, 12, 4.

inalienable power that God has conferred upon it; around a tradition and beliefs from which its members drink and that enliven their existence; and governed by natural law or by just positive laws issued from the legitimate political power, a power—however—from which he differs and that he could resist under exceptional circumstances.

Further, in this people those whom Christ considered his favourites, those to whom he showed the greatest understanding and whom he was devoted to in some way would merit special attention and would even enjoy a singular moral dignity: the poor and those scorned by the powerful, the humble, those who lack social relevance or are not deemed superior to others due to their position, their talents or their alleged virtues.

Lastly, we conclude that, from a Christian viewpoint, this people is not called to shut itself off or seek comfort from this world. Instead it has aspirations of “Catholicity”—to coin some term—, a catholicity that would have to be reached through testimony, proposals and example, and that can never be imposed by force. In the end, this people peregrinates in time without being of time, since they walk toward an end beyond history.

This notion certainly did not include enough reflection, and its frequency was also lacking, on the social and political life. Nonetheless, it would endure for a long time, and it even continued to have an influence on the field of political philosophy over a good part of the Modern Age even though, at the end of the Mediaeval Age, a long process which would lead to a substantial change of concepts that had already begun.

Indeed, as von Gierke (1913:72) stated, at first “people thus conceived was personified in the guise of an *universitas* and could be distinguished from the individuals that were comprised within it; but, the impulse towards an organic construction having been repressed, men were steadily driven onwards to a mode of thought which explained the right-possessing *universitas* to be in the last resort merely a sum of individuals, bound into unity by Jurisprudence, and differing only from the plurality of its members for the time being in that those members were ‘to be taken collectively’ and not ‘distributively’”. And he adds: “the influence of this ‘individual-collective’ explication of the idea of the People becomes always more evident in the theories that men hold touching the base and limits of the representation of the Whole by the Majority or by Conciliar Bodies or by the Ruler”.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, little by little, it did slowly start to be transformed (particularly in Europe, as the United States would need to be handled separately), at least in the two regards to which we will limit ourselves herein.

The Liberal tradition (first, and in an incipient way, in Locke; later, and much more clearly, in Rousseau and others, leading a line of thought and political ac-

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40 Otto Von Gierke, *Political theories of the Middle Age*, p. 72.

tion that extends until our time) ended by replacing the “people”, conceived as a natural group of men and families united by love and tradition to obtain the common good, with “society”, understood as a conglomerate of citizens who form a group for a general interest under the auspices of a state that arose from a contract. Consequently, the relationship between its members was also modified, and fraternal love—the result of the fact that we are all children of the same Father and Creator—was slowly supplanted by philanthropy and solidarity. Their basis would be our similar condition (not nature), the feeling of spontaneous empathy that we regularly experience when seeing others’ suffering, and the need we have to all work together on a project whose aim is radical innovation, sustained by a freedom lacking objective and immutable criteria, primarily articulated around the right to ownership. Lastly, the universalism toward which Christian theology and philosophy pointed would eventually be replaced by the globalisation of the economy, and even by the homogenisation of mentalities and consciences; and the transhistorical dimension of humanity by the announcement of a supposed “end of history”.

On its part, the Marxist conception replaced the Christian idea of a people, whose constitution was all-inclusive, although showing predilection for the most humble, with the excluding idea of class that identifies the people exclusively with the proletariat. It replaced charity, which must govern the relationships between men, with the fight between the dominant class and the dominated class in the manner of the dialectic relationship between master and slave. Christian universalism, respectful of the traditions of the peoples, by an internationalism that would have its most effective dissemination mechanisms in world revolution, violence and propaganda. Finally, eternal happiness was replaced with a utopian paradise on Earth for which one should be willing to sacrifice everything to obtain.

### **Conclusion: To exist with and for the “people”**

Neither of these two “mutations” (or their multiple variations) has proven capable of simultaneously achieving the internal unity that peoples need, the universality to which the identity of our human nature points, of sustaining the transcendent hope whose seed holds our desires of complete personal and community happiness, or of providing due coverage and attention—expressed not only in the services required, but also in the spirit with which these services are provided—that the situation of our neediest brothers demands of us. In modern-day Europe, we see these difficulties with increasing clarity when there are attempts to foster national and international harmonious coexistence, sustained by hostile socio-political ideals—when not merely economic—or at least distant from Christianity. These ideals are also far from the vision of the founding fathers of the European Union itself (especially Schuman, De Gasperi and Adenauer).

In our understanding, all signs point to the fact that if we do not somehow revive the spirit that Christianity was able to breathe into the culture of our peoples, the hope for a prosperous and peaceful future will slowly be extinguished. Indeed, there already seem to be many signs pointing in that direction. Sometimes, true that it is increasingly less, the terms and formulas are kept, and it is not difficult to find strange paradoxes in the depths of our mentality, of our customs and even our laws. However, even if these concepts—like the idea of a people—still maintain the connotations that continue to appear in current dictionaries, have been robbed of their original substance and transmuted so that they are scarcely recognisable. Thus, they turn out to be confusing and pointless, when not pernicious.

We live in a globalised world in which territorial borders have become much more porous than in earlier times. Our Western societies are populated with persons from extremely diverse origins and backgrounds with regard to economic circumstances, geography, religion, language and even race. How do we confront this new challenge so that this diversity can be articulated harmoniously, be a source of mutual enrichment, and not of conflict or division? If our analysis is correct, only the peoples whose members attain some communion and relate in terms of a reciprocal belonging have the chance to endure in stable harmony and peace. We are not speaking here of a homogenising unity that would end diversity and differences (individual or group). Neither is a strict unity of beliefs or customs necessary. It is a moral unity that consists of the acceptance—or at least respect—of certain values understood as traits of human nature, which emanate from their natural dignity and can be accessible to the human heart and to a healthy moral conscience, but that indeed (the concept of a people is only an example here) have been lighted and spread by Christian faith. In parallel, only with this outlook can we approach the ideal, apparently increasingly distant, for humanity that becomes conscious of its essential identity and—why not?—the fraternity that unites all of us, to manage to live in communion, peace and harmony.

Jacques Maritain, perhaps one of the most lucid 20<sup>th</sup> century thinkers who reflects on these issues, would say that these values are basically: the recognition of the dignity of human beings and their transcendence over the state, the idea that we as humans are equal in nature, faith in human rights and in justice as a necessary foundation for the life in common and an essential property of the law, the feeling of freedom and the belief that their conquest matches the vocation of our being, faith in human progress (progress that must not attend only to material issues, but also and especially moral ones), the people's dignity as a community of free men who are equal in law (a people from which the concrete types of authority emerge and to whom it owes obedience, provided that its rulings are fair and aimed at the common good), the concept that politics has an ineluctable moral side and, finally, the deep conviction that the only principle for liberation, hope and peace is fraternal love.

In a multicultural society and world, we can still nourish the hope that this 'faith' in the aforesaid principles and values can be used so that individuals and groups belonging to different spiritual 'families', but honestly seeking truth and working for justice—even entering into free and peaceful competition from a theoretical viewpoint—can cooperate on a common earthly task whose result is the good of the entire human family. Although Maritain worked seriously—this essay is along the same line—so that the Christian origin of many of these values would be recognised in his time, he considered this faith as secular and on a merely practical plane. Experience lets us state today that this is probably not enough and that without—at least—acknowledging that we all have a common Father, a recognition of Judaeo-Christian roots, it will be extraordinarily difficult for us to all find the fraternal communion that our ideal of a people demands. This is right up to the point that, lacking this recognition, it nowadays turns out extremely difficult to find out where the people really is. Even those who boast about existing with it and working for it, tend to confuse it with anonymous and impersonal entities, forgetting or disregarding its moral dimension and its ontological dignity (prior to its political expression).

In another sense (Pope Francis insists on this issue time and again, at the same time interpreting its notion in the way we have pointed out here<sup>41</sup>), loving and existing with and for the people is also essential for the Church, doing justice to the mission Jesus Christ entrusted it with, and in which He freely wanted to be involved and toward which He oriented his redemptive and evangelizing purposes.

As Maritain (2016) said: "existence with the people is involved in the very good of the earthly community, and in the very good of the Kingdom of God militant here below. Separated from existence with the people, the common good of the political community would become artificial and fragile, and the mission of the Church (her very life) would not be fulfilled".<sup>42</sup>

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41 Pope Francisco, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, n. 6.

42 Jacques Maritain, *The range of reason*, Part II, c. 9.

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## **ПОСТОЈАТИ СА И ЗА НАРОД: ФИЛОЗОФСКО-ВЕРСКЕ ОСНОВЕ ПОТРЕБЕ ЗА МОРАЛНОМ ЗАЈЕДНИЧКОМ ВЕРОМ**

### **Сажетак**

Историјска динамика, морална и верска димензија, чак и сакрални смисао нашег постојања може бити пронађен у јудаизму. Међутим, ипак је хришћанство било то које је превазишло временске и националне лимите концепције Старог Завета, нудећи нове особине идеје народа. Ова идеја је постала основа политичких теорија (поготово код шпанаца Виторија и Суареза) које су утицале на модерно доба. Ипак, хришћанство је суштински трансформисано од стране либералне и марксистичке традиције. Ове две традиције су, пак, показале да нису способне да нити да изграде јединство народа, нити да одговоре на универзалност наше природе, као ни на наше потребе. Данас, како би одговорили на ове изазове у демократским и плуралистичким околинама, од суштинске је важности да постоји морална заједничка вера, структурирана тако да обухвата сет циљева који су доступни свима. У случају политичара, то значи да они морају радити са и за народ.

**Кључне речи:** библијска теологија, хришћанство, људско биће, народ, политичка теорија

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