

Presentation of the document *Quo vadis, humanitas?*

Thinking through Christian anthropology in the age of AI and posthumanism

International Theological Commission

"In the face of unprecedented technological acceleration, theology attempts to outline the boundaries of the future of human beings. Between the dream of technological immortality and the risk of cultural amnesia, the new document of the International Theological Commission (ITC) proposes a 'vocational or responsive anthropology' to save the integral human." With this initial script, the site www.vatican.va offers this presentation of the recent International Theological Commission document.

"What is a human being?" Perhaps, this question in Psalm 8 has never before been so timely and dramatic. The International Theological Commission has approved a document entitled, *Quo vadis, humanitas?* which aims to accompany navigation through the troubled waters of the twenty-first century. Sixty years after *Gaudium et Spes*, theology does not limit itself to observing technological development, but questions the very nature of the human being in the face of scenarios that until a few years ago belonged to science fiction. In fact, the affirmation of the Second Vatican Council resonates today: "The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light." (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22).

1. The ambivalence of technological development: between greatness and fragility

The starting point of the analysis is the observation of a paradox: humanity today experiences a technological push that enhances an almost divine potential, yet it has never been so aware of its fragility. The Covid-19 pandemic, global wars, and the climate crisis have laid bare a limit that technology cannot erase.

This document warns that this ambivalence cannot be simplified. Exalting only blind force in the search for new technological means implies ignoring the reality of limits. And on the other hand, it resigns us to a finitude that implies a forgetting of our spiritual nature that is always open to something more. To be human is a free gift and a task that makes human life an adventure to be played out in freedom and in relationship with other brothers and sisters.

2. Critical judgment on the "new myths": *Transhumanism and Posthumanism*

One of the Document's key components is a critical discernment of two currents of thought that are beginning to shape the collective imagination:

-- *Transhumanism*: considered as an expression of "existential presumption", this movement, not to be confused with the right value of technology in many social spheres, aims to use technoscience to overcome biological limits such as ageing and death. The dream is that of a "super-man" who redesigns himself to become immortal in an immanent way.

-- *Posthumanism*: in this case, the theological critique is more radical. *Posthumanism* questions the distinctive nature of human beings, promoting the idea of the *cyborg* and making the boundary between human and machine fluid. It is described as an "escape" dictated by an exaggerated pessimism towards human nature as it is.

Theology opposes these visions with Dante's concept of "*transumanar*": a human overcoming that is not the result of strengthening techniques, but a historical journey with the gift of grace in union with God and for the good of all our brothers and sisters.

3. Artificial Intelligence: not just a tool, but an environment

The document analyzes the impact of the digital revolution driven by Artificial Intelligence (AI). AI is no longer just a tool in the hands of human beings but has become a real "living environment" that conditions the way we think and relate.

The consequences are profound on four levels:

-- *Relationship with the environment*: the expansion of the artificial (plastic, concrete, biotechnology) risks creating the illusion of an unconditional freedom that disregards the laws of nature.

-- *Relationship with others*: the digital transforms the perception of community, often replacing the experience of deep relationships with mere "global connection."

-- *Relationship with oneself*: "intellectual technologies" shape the self-understanding of the subject, who risks seeing himself as a set of data to be optimized.

-- *Relationship with God*: when the world is reduced to material that can be shaped, the value of nature as a sign of the Creator is lost, and the vocation to transcendence is replaced by technological surplus.

4. Risk of cultural amnesia and the "Urban Age"

A danger sign concerns the loss of the sense of history. Digital culture tends to dissolve memory, transforming life into a "present closed in on itself." Without memory, the human being loses his identity and becomes the object of unlimited experiments.

Added to this is the challenge of the megacities. We live in the "Urban Age," where more than half of the world's population lives in cities that are often soulless, marking the definitive transition from rural culture to media and information technology.

5. The Theological Proposal: Human Identity as a "Vocational Anthropology"

What humanity really needs is not an evolutionary leap, but a relationship that saves and gives meaning to the full realization of each person. Salvation in Christ does not

replace the human: it respects and transforms it, taking it up, purifying it and recreating it. It is not a question of accelerating development towards new forms of life, but of accompanying the journey of peoples by offering a horizon and a meaning that will allow each one to discover his or her own vocation as sons and daughters of God, in universal brotherhood and in harmony with nature. On the contrary, the promises of *transhumanism* and *posthumanism*, which claim to simplify the tensions of human experience, turn out, on closer inspection, to be dehumanizing.

To respond to these challenges, the document proposes a positive paradigm shift: emphasizing the responsive character, in dialogue with others and with God, of human experience, in the context of a *situated anthropocentrism*. Precisely by virtue of the dialogue between the human being and God from the moment of creation, people are not called to exercise absolute dominion over the world, but to recognize the central value of the human being as a "responsible steward" inserted into the symphony of all other creatures. The main categories of this vision are:

-- *Integral Development*: a development of "the whole human being and for all human beings," which avoids the exaltation of technoscience alone as the dominant form of existence.

-- *Vocation*: human identity is not something that we build on our own (constructed identity), but a response to a divine call (received identity) and that makes us responsible protagonists of ourselves, of others, of the cosmos (proactive identity).

-- *Dramatic Condition*: identity is a complex process that passes through freedom, history and even suffering, rejecting technological shortcuts and inviting a profound comparison with the polar tensions characteristic of human existence.

Conclusion: True Humanization

The document closes by emphasizing the hope linked to the mystery of the risen Christ and the figure of Mary, seen as the paradigm of a human being completely fulfilled through the free acceptance of God's gift, rather than through self-empowerment.

The challenge put forward by the International Theological Commission (ITC) is clear: humanity's future is not decided in bioengineering laboratories, but in the capacity to engage with the tensions of the present while maintaining a sense of boundaries and openness to the Mystery. "True humanization" corresponds to a willingness to allow ourselves to be "divinized" by a Love that precedes us and makes us protagonists of a new humanity.

Finally, we turn our gaze to the poorest and most defenseless, who are the ones who run the greatest risks in the face of growing technological power and Promethean dreams of *transhumanism* and *posthumanism*. They risk becoming 'collateral damage,' swept away without mercy.