

The Texts of the Convivium

THREE ESSAYS ON THE ULTIMATE END OF MAN

I

**Spiritual discernment in its various dimensions
for the fulfilment of an integrated spirituality**

Each one of us humans is intimately open to God. We can therefore say that we humans as such, all have a certain experience of the Absolute.

The atheists themselves have a sharp sense of a moral law, which makes them do certain things and censures and reprimands others, if not actually condemning them with the utmost severity.

What is however lacking in an atheistic vision is a more substantial motivation, a deeper reason for such admonishment.

In an atheistic horizon it is no longer clear *why* one has to do or avoid certain things in *an absolute manner*.

At the most one can consider them *suitable* or not in a practical sense.

Suitable, if one considers them as the *means* to certain *ends*; *unsuitable*, if they represent *obstacles*.

However the problem of *why* those *ends* are pursued in an *absolute*, unconditional, inevitable *manner* still remains to be answered.

And so here we have the need to deepen the experience of God, to make an increasingly better clarification of the terms.

The source before the experience of the Absolute can only be the giving of the Absolute itself.

This self-revelation of God is received by every human subject in his own different way, within his own limits.

Therefore it is necessary that each and every one of us makes himself as receptive as possible.

The receptive attitude par excellence is that of he who, by invoking, totally, unconditionally entrusts himself in the revelation of God, so that he allows himself to be carried away.

However, at a certain point self criticism will become necessary.

It's true: every being and value, every goodness and beauty, every truth, all come from the Absolute, they are expressions of the Absolute. Having established this principle, on what basis will we be able to distinguish what has the greater value and degree of being, what should be considered more beautiful, better, or truer? How can we distinguish the truth from false, the deepest intuition from the most superficial?

Furthermore, the intuition that understands a given aspect of truth from that which understands another different one, could perhaps be complementary?

Let's remember the beginning verses of Dante's Paradise: "His glory, by whose might all things are mov'd / pierces the universe, and in one part sheds more resplendence / elsewhere less".

The Poet adds: "In heav'n, that largiest of his light partakes / was I..."

Here we have: the divine Glory and Light of God penetrates and shines in the multiplicity of beings, but in a different and graduated manner, in other words, more in certain realities and situations and less in others.

God manifests Himself according to a hierarchy of presences that are more or less rich of being.

He expresses Himself in an extremely particular way in the phenomena of saintliness, less in those of ordinary goodness, and profoundly less in those of wickedness.

We can mark out a parallel hierarchy – when and wherever possible – with reference to the different validity of works of art and of the creativity of the single artists.

One can also give criteria to evaluate how much a judgement could be "true" or "false".

Forms of evaluation can be used by the scientist, and not only, by the historian, the artist, the art critic, the politician and he who comments on his initiatives, the business man, the economist, the policeman who investigates to find out the who committed the crime and why, the sociologist, the clinician, the psychologist, the psychoanalyst and so on and so forth.

Between invocation and self criticism, between the attitude of the person praying who delivers himself to God with an act of faith, and the revision of the contents of faith which he carries out with strict analysis, it is better to establish an intimate and close collaboration between these two moments of the spirit.

By bringing everything together what takes shape is what we can simply call *discernment*. It is with discernment that we can reach a whole collection of conclusions.

The experience of the Absolute forcefully suggests that all the situations, all existing beings of the universe derive from this, like from the First Cause.

The question which comes to mind now is if God fully expresses Himself in the reality of this world, if everything that happens in the sphere of existence perfectly corresponds to the divine will. In other words, we are now faced with the problem of evil.

The religious experience makes us perceive God as the Supreme Good without any hint of evil, like the purely absolute Good.

So we may well ask ourselves: could it be possible that God *wants* evil? Or at least does he *allow* it? The sense I have of God is the sense of His total stainless goodness, in other words, without even the slightest use of evil with good intentions. This perception of God induces me to denying this kind of hypothesis.

However, theoretically speaking, there is another possibility: God is powerless in the face of evil: He is influenced by it.

To create is to give life to independent beings, by which the Creator himself can be influenced. He will still be able to carry out His creative work, but only with difficulty and a little at a time.

Based on what we have said up until now, I think that the beings of this world adapt themselves to the divine will only insofar as God makes Himself present in them, only insofar as the divine Glory and Light (as Dante calls them) is present in each one of them, in other words, the divine Truth and Beauty, the divine Good and Value.

“In heav’n, that largliest of his light partakes / was I...” says Dante. Heaven seems to be definable as the dimension where God reigns in full. Therefore I think the first part of Our Father is suggestive, where the hope that the kingdom of God will come is expressed, and that the name is sanctified and the will is done, and all of this, needless to say, *in full* on this earth *as* everything is already *fully* realized in heaven (cp. Mt 6, 9-10).

Jesus’ expression “My kingship is not of this world” (Jn 18, 36) has a meaning that needs further analysis. That the fulfilment of the kingdom of God in this world is imperfect and lacking to extremes is obvious to anyone who looks at things with an objective eye, without any prejudices. Evil rages at all levels, in all possible expressions, often in the most atrocious and cruellest of ways.

Going back to the images proposed to us by the Gospel, the kingdom of God can be likened to a mustard seed destined to grow into a tree, or a seed that germinates and grows to become wheat (Mt 13, 31-32; Mk 4, 26-32). The present limit of the Kingdom is highlighted here as well as its unlimited ability to develop.

According to the Gospel and the Christian faith, we will have the full triumph of the Kingdom in the end. And it is at this point that the almightiness of God will be completely carried out. This will be the moment in which every truth will be fully revealed, in the same as way as every mistake and all evil, all ugliness and suffering will be dissolved. Everything will be beautiful and good.

If it is true that God is influenced by His creatures then it is sufficiently clear what each of them is called to do: the creature completely fulfils itself by opening itself to God to become the manifestation, the means of expression, the vehicle. Every creature plays a part in the creation.

Such behaviour becomes conscious in human creatures. The range of ways is immense and it is among the human creatures that we find the most varied examples.

We can find the highest expressions in the greatest of men: saints and mystics, painters and sculptors, architects, musicians, poets, writers, art and literature critics, sociologists, psychologists, doctors, politicians and statesmen, constructors and business leaders, creators of works, society reformers, educators, teachers and missionaries and so on and so forth.

As I was saying, each one of us is God’s collaborator in His creation of the universe; each one of us is God’s bearer and acts as His extension. The kingdom of God spreads out in the strictly religious forms of saintliness, but also in all forms of humanism.

Every single human being is committed first of all to turn his attention to the First Source of his own being. “Know yourself”, is the ancient saying written above the entrance to the sanctuary of Delphi. Now isn’t the true essence of our being in God? Without doubt knowing God and having a thorough knowledge of man run parallel to one another.

The true knowledge of God is chiefly that which one has in an intimate relationship with Him.

In the language of the Bible the same intimate relationship between man and woman is called “knowledge”.

The mystics of the Hindu Bhakti, the Christian saints, the “friends of God” in Islam all agree in comparing the religious relationship to human love: God appears as a male figure, whereas the human soul is essentially a female one.

Just as a woman gives herself to her man in love by complying with his initiative, the religious soul wants to be entirely of his God.

The individual who entrusts himself to God by letting himself be guided in everything to act as His extension and vehicle, is the saint. Each and every one of his spiritual discoveries is the result of his listening to God, who speaks to his souls from his heart of hearts.

Listen, abandoning oneself, trust and faith are all synonyms and means which lead to the knowledge of God. And it is in God that we penetrate the mystery of ourselves and every creature.

The essential call that God addresses to every creature is to make himself a saint. Saintliness is doing the will of God. But what does God want from us? He wants that each and every one of us makes himself God: in other words, that he becomes similar to his Creator and at the most, the same as Him.

The request to “become like God” could be understood in the sense proposed by Satan to Adam (myth of the original sin) or also in the sense of the claim to build a tower in Babel “with its top in the heavens” (Gen, chap. 3 and 11).

Essentially speaking man is trying to reach the heavens here to attain divine perfection exclusively on his own initiative.

But as far as we are concerned here, this request is on the contrary considered as obedience to the call that comes from God Himself. It is God who wants this and who offers us the possibility with His grace.

Become like God: but how can we define God in His perfections? By using a somewhat rough description He is definable as the omniscient Being, as the almighty Being (in the sense mentioned above, of the King destined to rule over everything at last), as the infinitely good and saintly Being, like the Supreme Artist of creation.

In this kind of prospect man fulfils himself by making progress in knowledge, in saintliness and in the power over things and himself and finally by developing and raising his own creativity also in the aesthetic sense.

It requires commitment of research, study, analysis, reasoning, artistic creation, practice of one’s mental faculties and relative powers, ascesis, contemplation, prayer, incessant talks with God and His creatures.

The fundamental thing is to maintain a high level of inner spiritual life, avoiding all vulgarity and banality. Whilst gliding in moments of rest one can fly high.

One can make one’s own life a work of art in continuous creation, not necessarily in D’Annunzio’s arrogant style, but also, and even better, in the simplicity of the minor modest tones of who recognizes his own limits and knows how to laugh at himself.

This is a job that man is called to carry out on himself as a single individual, but also in cooperation with all the others in order to complete and fulfil a common piece of work.

Any construction that is beyond the limits of the craftsman – by construction I mean a huge building, a railway, or any machine – requires the collaboration of various levels of technicians each one specialized in his own different sector.

However the same goes for any important research, any company, any organization, any institution from an assembly of condominium members to a nation’s parliament and government.

Many people tend to confine religion to a strictly personal fact; but this seems extremely reductive. The history of each religion is also a history of community.

At this point we could decide to consider the whole course of universal spirituality in ecumenical terms; and what opens up of in front of our eyes is a wonderful possibility: the evolution of religions would make them converge towards an integrated spirituality.

In an integrated spirituality all the information acquired from all the different forms of spiritual discernment would be added together.

Christianity reveals things to us that do not appear in different traditions; but this doesn’t mean they don’t have different intuitions, which go even further than Christian intuitions to complete them.

Christianity carried out to the full is also humanism. Therefore we can find hints of Christianity in other traditions: carried out in different ways, which doesn’t mean they

may not be capable of reaching a depth that has yet to be reached in the historical evolution of our religion.

A truly ecumenical spirituality should be total and includes all forms of perfection.

It aspires to almightiness, in other words, to the complete control of every reality. How can we portray this? When we normally place anything into being we plan it, we mould it or obtain the necessary tools and by using them we pass onto carrying out the task with difficulty. No passage of this kind is needed in the condition of almightiness. It is carried out with the sole act of thinking.

Let's try to imagine ourselves in a situation where, in order to achieve something, the most difficult and laborious, the most "impossible", all we have to do is think about it and it's done!

Another perfection we could aspire to in this kind of context is omniscience. Here we have "frontier experiences" in which a human subject benefits from particular ecstasies or finds himself in dangerous situations if not mortal. In these cases the subject could have a panoramic vision of the whole of his own past life. The events are presented to him in extremely rapid succession and sometimes even at the same time.

Well, true omniscience is conceivable as the contemporary vision of everything that has happened, is happening and will happen.

The succession of events will no longer lead to a becoming, but will be like a fourth contemporary dimension to each one. We can symbolically express it like the succession of the pages of a book, which follow one another whilst one is reading it but they are all bound together in the book the reader is holding in his hand.

If one had an adequate sight and mind, the pages stuck in order on a huge wall could be embraced in one look and one could read all the pages at the same time.

If we managed to conceive an immense book that contained the entire history of the universe we could imagine the divine condition as the ability to read that book by taking only one glance at it.

Up until here I have tried, by using a few weak words, to give an expressive form to the concept of omniscience as an aspect of the spirit's final goal.

Another aspect of this final goal is the supreme excellence attainable in artistic creation. A universe brought to completion will be a work of art unsurpassable in beauty. All authentic works of art and all things of beauty will represent firstlings, or offerings of that supreme splendour to our eyes.

The biographies of saints of all religions can also be considered as firstlings, or offerings of that which in the end will be the perfection of saintliness. A careful study of the phenomena of saintliness and those of paramystics could give us a true idea.

The achievement of the supreme goal coincides with that of unlimited happiness. Is it possible to have an idea of this and if so, how? Let's try to remember all the moments in which we were really happy. Then we should try and imagine an even greater happiness. This would be a first approach.

As you can see, the spiritual work that achieves such conclusions is all based on discernment: on a discernment that should be spread to every dimension beyond all limits.

II

How we can refer every act and thought of ours to man's final end

In other written works of mine and particularly in one which goes by the title of *Spiritual discernment in its various dimensions for the achievement of an integrated spirituality*) I have dealt with the argument of man's ultimate end.

The conclusion I arrived at can be summed up in these very few words: the ultimate end of man is making himself God.

Nearly all Christian theologians talk about Christ who makes himself man so that man can make himself God.

At this point I ask myself what "making oneself God" actually means.

By summing up the essential divine attributes I mentioned omniscience, almightiness, absolute goodness and saintliness, and the supreme creativity also in the aesthetical sense.

So making oneself God means pursuing these goals as attainable at last by man himself with the divine help.

This evolution should be carried out all together, transforming ourselves and the entire universe, bringing about the completion of the creation of the world and, at the same time, the fulfilment of each one of us, the self-creation of every single individual.

If all of this is true, what should the right direction of our thoughts be? Generally speaking we think of things that we hold close to heart. But what really is close to heart? Can we truly say that most of our attention is turned to what we were created for?

As a matter of fact, as children we think more readily about playing and games.

Then as we grow older and become adolescents we are more inclined to dreaming about a career that is perhaps entirely imaginary, a pipe dream.

But life turns out to be more difficult than we had imagined. So our intentions and plans become more concrete. And then, unless if we haven't been inflicted with some form of deviance, or we haven't chosen to be adventurers or worse, if we don't judge ourselves as being incapable of upholding higher ambitions, if we don't have any missionary resolutions of particular commitment (religious, political etc), if we decide to lead a "normal" existence, we have the problems of studying and work, marriage, children, of making sure our family has a decent standard of living, if not a prestigious one.

There are also cultural interests, which we need to make room for. To some extent one can open up one's mind to that which concerns the ultimate end of man and creation. But the question is: are there many people in whose soul such thoughts appear to be dominant?

Every single individual has his own thoughts, which he keeps for himself until the time comes for him to express them. What follows is that we can have an idea of other people's thoughts only by listening to them speaking and by reading the documents they have written.

What topics arise? Sociology, politics and religion, but also art and literature, if one has a particular interest in these subjects. If not then careers, money, purchases, houses, cars, holidays, clothes, food to the highest levels of cuisine.

As we can see, we have not mentioned any negative thoughts: rivalry, envy, low ambitions and so on. The above mentioned things all have their positive aspects and are a part of our lives. However we consider each one of them in itself, detached from that vital relationship with all the others that would make each one notable in the prospect of man's final end.

Religious life itself is concentrated on the relationship with God and His saints, in the request for grace and in the commitment to improving as single souls, but it is mainly separated from the context of our common human condition and all kinds of its problems, which are often serious. As far as the final end is concerned, that we are all called together to pursue, it's the thing that one speaks of the least.

Christianity points out a supreme end for us to achieve in the universal resurrection. But in order to rise up again we have to first of all pass through death.

There have been many philosophical, clever and extremely lofty discourses made on death and what happens after it. However when there is no reference back to experience, how can we stop such a discourse from plunging into abstraction?

It seems that the experience of passing away and life after death is the subject matter of a whole series of testimonies that have supposedly come to us from those who have passed away.

Furthermore, according to what mediumistic testimonies have revealed to us, after passing away there is a stage in which one gains consciousness and purification. For many souls who reach this stage weighed down by the dross of sins, imperfections, excessive earthly attachments, this supposedly proves to be a painful and difficult period.

However what awaits us is a long period of pure spiritual life, a "celestial", "heavenly" period.

But just who are the people who talk willingly about death, especially a death that concerns them personally?

The Convivium has carried out particular studies and research on what supposedly happens after physical death and, before that, at the moment in which one passes away. Our results have found significant confirmation in those obtained in different epochs by researchers from all over the world.

Good news for everyone would be this: although preceded by the sufferance of an illness or worse, passing away is a sweet and gentle and also the existence that follows could be full gratifying experiences.

This information arouses vivid interest in many people who have approached the subject of survival and eternal life induced by various reasons.

There are those who have lost dear loved ones and want to come to terms with it and be comforted.

A scholar and an experimenter could be stimulated by scientific requests, wishing to apply the rigour of science to research extended to those border territories.

However there may be an even more fundamental reason: if it is good for man to aspire to knowing everything, why should we stop ourselves from finding out what happens after death?

There are those who say: They are the secrets of God. But doesn't God Himself want to reveal everything to us?

There are those who say: We have to trust in what God reveals to us through the Holy Scriptures. Those who give this reply should realise that in this kind of context, the Revelation, while still having its first source in the Absolute, has to express itself through the words of men influenced by the widespread mentality of a certain population in a certain epoch. This does not at all mean mistrusting God; it only concerns submitting a human discourse to opportune criticism.

Granted the full legality of the mediumistic communications and their thorough exegesis, what we now have to deal with is to have a look at the contents they express and what they tell us about man's final future.

The communications received by the Convivium research group give us confirmation of the prophecies made on the final events that the monotheistic religions – Judaism,

Christianity, Islam – all propose. Although this confirmation is not exactly precise down to the last letter it is nevertheless certainly substantial.

We are told that at the moment of physical death what follows is a stage of ascesis, during which the souls purify themselves of all dross connected to earthly attachments and then they pursue saintliness.

When the process of sanctification reaches its highest goal, the sanctified souls will return altogether to manifest themselves on this earth, to sanctify it. This will be the moment of the final universal resurrection.

The living beings on this earth – as we have been told – will have completed every evolution in a humanistic sense. What we call “progress” will have reached its highest point. Progress in science and technology, in the same techniques of psychic and spiritual development, in artistic creation.

The living beings on earth will give the saints in heaven the fruits and acquisitions of thousands of years of humanism which has reached its final development. In exchange they will receive the perfection of saintliness.

Mankind will be reunited in the condition of the resurrected: of the resurrected risen up to the supreme peaks of saintliness and progress in all possible fields of action. It is in this final condition that man’s human adventure will find its final completion.

In this kind of prospect, what thoughts will occupy the mind of man in the most in keeping and worthiest manner?

There will be a live gain of consciousness, where each one of us will feel involved in the wave of the universal evolution.

The thought of God will be dominant as He carries out the entire process giving each one of us inspiration and energy and putting into being every form of life. A personal relationship will be established with this God, divided up into moments of prayer, talk and contemplation.

Each being, every act of life will clearly appear a divine manifestation.

Man will live each one of his positive actions as an act of collaboration offered to God. God and men will appear to be committed to cooperating together in the completed creation of the universe.

We will live the act of knowledge as a participation to the divine knowledge that has no limits.

We will live work as a participation to the creative work of the Divinity. In the same work each man will see himself as an independent active organ of an immense Being involved in a universal task.

In the same way as we willingly talk today about sport, fashion, women of easy virtue, gossip, tomorrow men who have risen to the highest levels of consciousness will still willingly talk about the great prospects that have unfolded.

Needless to say, there will also be moments of recreation, in which playing and laughing will flourish. But also here we can fly high giving a superior quality of refinement to the discourse making it more creative: a modest contribution to that universal creativity we are talking about.

In other words, at that level of consciousness everyone will contribute to bringing men closer and closer to the supreme goal.

III

A necessary examination of one's conscience

This piece of written work is the development of two others of mine which go by the titles:

1) *Spiritual discernment in its various dimensions for the realization of an integrated spirituality;*

2) *How we can refer every act and thought of ours to man's final end.*

The conclusion I came to in the first essay concerns the final end of man and it is identified in making oneself God.

As I said before, making oneself God means pursuing the essential attributes of the Divinity. If we whittle down the entire discourse to a few brief words, then what we are left with is pursuing omniscience, almightiness, the supreme good and saintliness, the full and perfect creativity also in the aesthetical sense. Whilst still cooperating with the divine initiative, it means that each and every one of us humans has to complete one's self creation and all together the creation of the universe, making the Kingdom of God stretch to every level.

In the second essay I was asking myself: can we really say that most of our attention is turned to what we have been created for?

Well, now here we have the opportunity of examining our own consciences. In days gone by people used to try and give the entire human existence a religious definition. Therefore examinations of one's own conscience became a daily habit. Many people used to keep a spiritual diary, which they used to revive with moments of prayer and one to one conversations with God.

This personal relationship with the Divinity should be the starting point.

God creates us and gives us everything. The creation of each one of us is not something that is already completed, but is in fact work in progress.

God gives Himself to us gradually insofar as we make ourselves more receptive. When God has given Himself completely to us, it is only then that the creative process can be declared complete. It will be the moment in which we will have reached divine perfection.

As long as we are still on our journey towards this goal, we will receive inspiration, impulse and energy from God.

What kind of attitude would be the most suitable to have before the Divinity? It will be the attitude of he who receives, invoking and preparing oneself to receive more and more, better and better. It will be the attitude of listening to God and abandoning oneself to the divine initiative. In one single word, it will be the attitude of faith.

A man and woman of faith trust in God and place themselves in His hands with trust, because they know that the Lord, although influenced by His creatures, although crucified to the end of the world, will prevail in the end to establish His kingdom everywhere. Therefore men and women of faith never lose heart and become discouraged, but they insist in the ways of good, certain that they are never alone.

Faith needs to be cultivated and strengthened. Meditation could be of help here. It's good to turn our thoughts to God, to that which He is for each one of us humans, to the strength that He can give each one of us, to His gifts of grace.

This thinking of God doesn't have to be intellectualistic. With divine help we have to refine our inner spiritual senses so that we can reach and perceive God, His active presence. Feeling and hearing God and how He carries out His creative action, also through our collaboration. Feeling that we are carried by the divine action and at the same time autonomous in obedience.

Whatever work we do, man will feel he is an instrument of God, he will perceive the passing of the divine Current in his own being that moves everything. He will feel God like the First Actor and Guide and Companion.

What develops between those in love with God is a most spontaneous relationship of love. It's only natural that a community of spirits comes to be formed between them. We should then hope that once every fanaticism and spirit of sect has been dissolved, this community feeling embraces all the faithful and devout of all religions.

Therefore we can well understand that those who plunge themselves into a relationship with the Divinity also feel vitally united to all the "friends of God", and feel close and united to them.

In a meditation that feeds off this sense of communion with God and with all men, we will put any far too personal plans aside and embrace the divine plan aimed at universal evolution. What we will hold most to heart is the completion of creation. Our attention will then be concentrated on everything we have to do in order to cooperate efficaciously in every step we take towards our goal.

So here we have the great problems of humanity, its sufferance, its tragedies: hunger, poverty, physical and mental illness, crimes of all sorts, every form of violence and slavery inflicted on the weakest even in the most subtle and treacherous forms. Here we have the need to wipe out ignorance and prejudice, to fight for a fairer society, one that is more correct, to promote education and science, to feed and nourish devotion, encourage the arts, so as to make ourselves and all our other weaker brothers less fragile in the face of negative temptations, to be more generous and willing to make sacrifices, to be more sensitive to beauty and goodness, to religiousness and every form of value and good.

Our thought should spontaneously run to all of this, isolating as much as possible any kind of particularistic anxiety.

Another form of anxiety to be mitigated, from a different point of view, is the one that says we are destined to die. Life after death is the continuation of this earthly life. It depends on how we are prepared for our passing away. It depends on what we have done with our souls with the practice of good deeds and, before that, of good thoughts. A luminous soul will enter into a happy condition of light.

Thinking every now and then about death could be good training for us, as long as we think positively, as long as we know how to make it represent a happy future for us. Therefore it's important to gain knowledge of this, to gather information on the various details of what Life after life will be for us.

The prophecies on the final universal resurrection, that the monotheistic religions proclaim, find substantial significant confirmations in many mediumistic communications.

Until this event happens, the generations of living men on this earth will carry on with the progress of science, the arts, civilization, everything that we can call humanism. In the meantime, the disincarnate souls of heaven will progress into saintliness.

But when such parallel evolutions reach their highest points, there will be a final and definitive meeting between the living and the defunct. There will be an exchange of gifts between heaven and earth. The souls of heaven will donate perfect saintliness, earth will donate perfect humanism.

Each individual will be a saint on a supreme level, in the fullness of his own humanity and in the perfection of knowledge, in the perfection of power on himself and all things, in the perfection of creativity and art.

Let's try to imagine, try to feel what this kind of condition will mean for each one of us and how each one of us can actually live it.