Matter matters? Extending Christian materialism and theology of work of St Josemaría Escrivá to ecotheology



Emilio Chuvieco
Campion Hall, University of Oxford

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Faculty of Theology and Religion

Michaelmas, 2024

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

If you are a theologian, you will pray truly,
and if you pray truly, you are a theologian.

Evagrius of Pontus, The Philokalia

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Contents

ABBREVIATIONS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BOOKS. III
ABBREVIATIONS OF ESCRIVÁ'S PUBLISHED TEXTS. III
OTHER ABBREVIATIONS. III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS. IV
SHORT ABSTRACT. V
LONG ABSTRACT. VI
SECTION I: ROOTS AND CONCEPTS OF CHRISTIAN MATERIALISM 1
1 INTRODUCTION. 3
1.1 Thesis context and motivation. 3
1.2 Definition and concepts involved in Christian materialism. 11
1.2.1 Relevance of materialism and dualism in ecotheology. 11
1.2.2 Historical dualisms within Christianity. 13
2 CHRISTIAN MATERIALISM IN ST JOSEMARÍA ESCRIVÁ. 27
2.1 Escrivá's historical background. 28
2.1.1 Biographical sketch. 28
2.1.2 Cultural and theological roots. 30
2.1.3 Bibliographical sources. 34
2.2 Extent of Escrivá's ChM. 36
2.2.1 Main theological ideas. 37
2.2.2 Homily of Navarre. 47
2.2.3 Nature in Escrivá's spirituality. 55
2.3 Critical assessments and alternatives to Escrivá's ChM. 58
SECTION II: ESCRIVÁ'S CHM AND ECOTHEOLOGY: APPLICATION TO THE THEOLOGY OF WORK 71
3 WORK AND CHM IN ESCRIVÁ'S THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY. 73
3.1 Work in the core of the ChM. 75
3.1.1 Importance and purpose of work. 75
3.1.2 Work on the legal trajectory of OD. 80
3.2 Dimensions in Escrivá's spirituality of work. 83
3.2.1 Intrinsic dimension: Sanctified work. 85
3.2.2 Subjective dimension: 'sanctifier' work. 89

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

3.2.3 Relational dimension: sanctifying others through work. 93
3.2.4 The multidimensional vision of Escrivá's work. 96
3.3 Theological foundations. 99
3.3.1 Christ at the summit of all human activities. 100
3.3.2 The Hidden Life of Jesus: The World as Home. 105
3.3.3 The unity of life. 111
3.4 Novelty of Escrivá's theology of work. 116
3.4.1 Theologies of work in the Christian tradition. 117
3.4.2 Recent developments in the theology of work. 131
3.4.3 A critical appraisal of Escrivá's theology and spirituality of work. 138
3.4.4 Boundaries of Escrivá's theology of work. 147
4 THEOLOGY OF WORK AND ECOTHEOLOGY IN ESCRIVÁ'S CHM. 155
4.1 Framework for a systematic analysis. 156
4.2 Caring for nature in the vocational dimension of work. 158
4.2.1 Escrivá's biblical approach to professional vocation. 158
4.2.2 Ecotheological implications of Gen. 2:15. 162
4.3 Intrinsic dimension: sanctifying nature. 167
4.3.1 Sanctifying nature through environmental empathy. 167
4.3.2 Sanctifying nature through co-creative work. 178
4.4 Subjective dimension: sanctifying oneself through caring for nature. 186
4.4.1 Ecological conversion: personal sanctity and care for creation. 187
4.4.2 Sanctifying nature through co-redemptive work. 195
4.5 Relational dimension: sanctifying with nature. 203
4.5.1 Priests of Creation: returning creatures to the Creator. 204
4.5.2 Sanctifying nature through a co-sanctifier work. 213
4.6 Critical assessment of the proposed framework. 221
4.6.1 Summary of Escrivá's contribution to ecotheological categories. 221
4.6.2 Strengths and limitations. 227
5 CONCLUSIONS. 233
6 REFERENCES. 239

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Abbreviations of Holy Scripture books.[1]

Gen.: Genesis	Ju.: Judges	Mt.: Matthew	Gal: Galatians
Ex.: Exodus	Hag.: Haggai	Mk.: Mark	Eph: Ephesians
Deut.: Deuteronomy	Hos.: Hosea	Lk.: Luke	Thess: Thessalonians
Lev.: Leviticus	Is.: Isaiah	Jn.: John	Col: Colossians
Wis.: Wisdom	Je.: Jeremiah	Act.: Acts of Apostles	Rev.: Revelation
Ki.: Book of Kings	Ezk.: Ezequiel	Rom: Romans	
Chr.: Chronicles		Co: Corinthians	

Abbreviations of Escrivá's published texts.[2]

CPB: Christ is Passing By	HR: Holy Rosary
CMEB: Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer (or just Conversations)	PLW: Passionately Loving the World[3]
FoG: Friends of God	TF: The Forge
FU: Furrow	TW: The Way
IDL: In Dialogue with the Lord. Texts from oral preaching.	TWC: The Way of the Cross
ILC: In Love with the Church	Letters: Escrivá's pastoral Letters and Instructions are cited by their original date using the following format: Day.Month.Year.

Other abbreviations.[4]

AGP: General Archive of the Prelature of OD	LS: *Laudato Si'*, encyclical letter of Pope Francis
ChM: Christian Materialism	OD: *Opus Dei*, Catholic institution founded by Escrivá.
GeS: Gaudium et spes	ST: Summa Theologica
JOC: Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne	SVC: Second Vatican Council
LE: *Laborem Exercens*, encyclical letter of Pope John Paul II	

[1] Only from those quoted in the dissertation. I have used the translation of the New American Bible, available at the Vatican web site: https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0839/__INDEX.HTM, last access October 5th, 2024.

[2] Verbatim quotations from Escrivá's texts include the acronym of the book and the paragraph number, not the page number, since most of his books have many editions. These numbers are part of the official texts, publicly available at https://escriva.org in several languages (I have used here the English translation), although some are only available in Spanish (in this case, I have done my own translation).

[3] This homily is key to this dissertation and therefore I have quoted it as a separate text from the book in which it was eventually published, CMEB.

[4] References in the text are quoted as footnotes, except for Escrivá's writings and documents including in this list, which will be quoted with these abbreviations in the main text, to avoid excessive footnoting.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Acknowledgements.

This thesis has been carried out with the financial support of the 'Tatiana Pérez de Guzmán el Bueno' Foundation, which was also the first institution to support my interest in the ethical dimensions of environmental issues. I am very grateful for the academic guidance of my supervisor, Celia Deane-Drummond, who encouraged me to think critically about the theological issues involved in my research and to keep an open mind about them, even at times when her health was failing. I am also indebted to the suggestions and comments of Father Joseph Evans and Father Javier Lopez, who enthusiastically encouraged this dissertation. I am also very grateful to the residents of Campion Hall with whom I had the opportunity to share my time at the University, especially for the suggestions of Michał Karnawalski, Carl Scerri, Artur Susky and Piotr Szalek, and for the great help of the Hall's librarians, Wilma Minty and Peter Burnett. José María Vizcaíno provided valuable suggestions on formatting issues.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Short abstract.

Theological appreciation of the natural world has commonly been based on systematic and moral theology. Acknowledging the importance of arguments derived from such analysis, this dissertation proposes an alternative way to care for nature[1] based on a specific practical theology. My dissertation develops a novel approach to ecotheology based on the concept of Christian Materialism (ChM), as proposed by St Josemaría Escrivá (1902-1975), a Spanish spiritual writer and leader, which aimed to overcome dualisms that neglect the spiritual value of material realities by encouraging a loving attitude towards the world which is God's creation and Christ's home after the Incarnation. I focus on his theology of work which he considered the 'hinge' of the Christian vocation for the laity, by proposing a three-dimension approach aiming to sanctify work, sanctifying oneself at work and sanctifying others through work which I termed intrinsic, subjective and relational, respectively. I develop a new framework that apply these three dimensions towards ecotheology, emphasising the connection between work and care, derived from Gen. 2:15. My scheme includes six theological concepts: three from a metaphorical consideration of sanctifying nature as an extension of sanctifying work, and three from linking the sanctification of work with an earthcaring attitude. The first section of the dissertation presents an introduction to Escrivá's ChM and spirituality in the context of the various historical dualisms that have emerged in Christianity. The second section, key to this dissertation, includes a critical examination of Escrivá's ideas on work and presents the ecotheological framework I have built around them, based on reflection on his original writings in dialogue with other theologies of work and ecotheologies.

[1] Recognising that human beings are also part of nature, by default I will use the term 'nature' throughout the thesis to indicate the environment in which we live and which we share with other living beings.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Long abstract.

Environmental problems require new perspectives that better connect them with the concerns and values of ordinary citizens. This is especially necessary when the solution to these problems requires personal sacrifices. Religious motivations have been identified as one of the most prominent incentives for behavioural change. Therefore, developing religious arguments that establish a strong link between environmental concern and action alongside the core beliefs of a particular religious tradition should increase the commitment of those who identify with that tradition. Christian appreciation of nature has typically been based on creation theology, Christology, eschatology, sacramental and moral theology. Recognising the interest and importance of such grounds, this dissertation develops a different approach, building a framework based on practical theology, in particular connecting theology of work and ecotheology, with the aspiration that such scheme will strengthen the pro-environmental behaviour of ordinary Christians.[2]

Dualistic positions have been recurrent throughout the history of Christianity (Gnostics, Docetists, Albigensians, Bogomils, etc.), all having in common a certain disdain for the material component of human nature. In its crudest forms, dualism involved disregarding the value of our bodily dimension in favour of the spiritual, resulting in a negative view of the world and earthly realities. These dualisms have been considered a driver of environmental degradation, as they support an anthropocentric view that radically separates humans from nature, but they have also been considered as dissenting from the orthodoxy of the Church. However, the more subtle dualisms, which favour a 'spiritualised' version of Christianity, have met with much less resistance. Such spiritual dualisms tend to consider that only prayer and devotional activities are spiritually worthy, while secular activities would be marginal or incompatible with a holy life, implying a negative regard for the world. Consequently, professional, social and family activities, in which most lay Christians spend their lives, would have a marginal importance to their spiritual growth. In this worldview, only religious and priestly vocations would have spiritual value,

[2] This is my aspiration, but not an objective of my research, as testing this hypothesis would require a sociological analysis beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

while secular ones would be considered second-class. Within the Roman Catholic Church, manifestations of these spiritual dualisms have been quite common, even to this day, despite the message of the Second Vatican Council (SVC) declaring the universal call to holiness, regardless of canonical status (lay, religious or priest), and that sanctifying material realities is a primary goal for lay Christians.

St Josemaría Escrivá (1902-1975), a Spanish spiritual writer and leader, canonised by the Catholic Church in 2002, pioneered a new consideration of the universal vocation to holiness. He underlined that Christians should love the world 'passionately' since, far from being an obstacle to holiness, it is the right place to find and love God and to serve others; through a personal life of prayer amid ordinary activities, contributing with other fellow citizens to the progress of the entire society. Escrivá used the term Christian Materialism (ChM) to synthesize this appreciation of the material dimension of everyday life, stressing that these realities (work, family, social, political and cultural activities) are not isolated from the struggle for holiness, but are the very subjects to be sanctified. In contrast to an atheistic materialism that ignores or disregards the spiritual dimension of human nature, as well as the spiritualised versions of Christianity, which neglect the material element, Escrivá's approach considered that both the spiritual and material dimensions have religious value and, therefore, both must be considered when aspiring to holiness in the midst of the world. In addition to pioneering these ideas in the 1930s and 1940s, long before they were generally accepted by the Catholic Church, the relevance of St Josemaría's message in the spiritual appreciation of ordinary life was enhanced by the creation of a new institution within the Church, *Opus Dei* (OD), in which thousands of lay Christians try to put it into practice, sanctifying their professional, social and family activities. Therefore, the choice of Escrivá as the central figure of this research is justified by the relevance and novelty of his interpretation of ChM, as well as by the practical importance of his influence on the lives of many lay men and women.[3]

[3] Another personal argument for focusing on Escrivá in this thesis was access to primary sources, since he wrote all his texts in Spanish, my mother tongue, together with my familiarity with the history and cultural background of the country where he was educated and began his pastoral activity.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

St Josemaría Escrivá was not a theologian, but a spiritual leader, and his consideration of the natural world was aligned with the mentality of the first half of the 20th century, well before environmental issues became socially relevant. This explains that he did not deal explicitly with ecological issues, and it is therefore necessary to re-evaluate his conception of ChM to apply it to ecotheology. Although the original concept referred to the realm of the relationship between God and humans, this thesis shows that it can be extended to caring for nature and therefore it can serve as a strong basis of ecotheology. This extension can be sustained for several reasons. First, the valuing of the natural world is a logical consequence of valuing the material dimension of Christian life. Secondly, it provides support for the rejection of anthropological and spiritual dualisms that, by disregarding matter, have historically alienated human beings from nature, thus giving theological support to the consideration of its exclusive instrumental value. Thirdly, it connects ecotheology with core Christian values (goodness of creation, Incarnation) and practices (prayer, sacraments and liturgy), which may inspire many believers, particularly but not exclusively Catholics, to greater environmental concern and action over other secular motivations. Finally, ChM underlines the spiritual relevance of virtues that are especially important for environmental care, such as humility, frugality and simplicity.

The application of Escrivá's ChM to ecotheology requires first defining the main theological pillars of his spirituality, which lead to his proposal of 'passionately loving the world' (see 2.2.2), to later apply those theological arguments to support a similar passionate love for the natural world and, consequently, a greater commitment to care for creation. Consequently, the thesis is organised around two sections. In the first one, including chapters 1 and 2, I present the main motivations for my research, followed by an introduction to what Escrivá understood by ChM, together with the relevance of this concept in the context of the historical debate within Christianity about dualistic approaches and their impact on appreciation of nature. This section also includes a historical review of dualist positions in the Church, covering anthropological and spiritual dualisms. Then, I summarise the spiritual worldview of St Josemaría, within the historical and religious context in which he developed his ideas, with special emphasis on the Navarre homily (1967), where he presented

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

his vision of ChM to a large audience, although this concept was already a core part of his preaching since the 1930s. A specific section compares St Josemaría's approach to ChM with other authors who used this concept, whether or not in connection with that of Escrivá. A critical evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the different responses to his thought is also addressed in this chapter.

The second part of the thesis, the longest and most innovative, comprises chapters 3 and 4, which connects theology and spirituality of work and ecotheology. Work is a paradigmatic example of ChM, for several reasons. Firstly, it is the most direct ambit in which sanctification of material realities take place, since most Christians devote a large part of their lives to work. Secondly, it clearly expresses our relationship to the material dimension of reality, since work is the usual way in which people transform matter (and thus nature) into goods to satisfy their needs. Thirdly, it is probably the most obvious topic in which the differences between 'materialisms which are blind to the spirit' (in Escrivá's expression) and ChM can be observed.

Chapter 3 analyses Escrivá's theology and spirituality of work, its vocational importance within the charism of OD, and its relationship with other theologies of work. Following his proposal, I have considered three dimensions of work, which I call intrinsic (focused on sanctifying one's own work), subjective (oriented towards sanctifying oneself in work) and relational (concerned with sanctifying others through work). Among the theological arguments used by St Josemaría to support his spirituality of work, I have selected three that I consider the most original of his thought, both in relation to ecotheology and to other theologies of work: placing Christ at the summit of human activities, uniting work and material realities to his sacrificial offering on the Cross; the exemplary relevance of the working life of Jesus in Nazareth; and the concept of 'unity of life', which implies developing a profound connection between professional activities and contemplation. Finally, the chapter includes a critical analysis of the novelty of Escrivá's ideas in the context of historical and recent approaches to work, particularly in the Catholic and Protestant traditions. Although many of Escrivá's ideas have been incorporated into recent theological developments, I show that his comprehensive consideration of the spiritual

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

value of work in sanctifying professional activities and striving to sanctify oneself and others in those activities remains unique and, except for a few mainly Spanish-speaking theologians, largely unknown.

Finally, chapter 4 develops the connection between the three dimensions of work indicated above and caring for nature. It first reflects on the impacts that a vocational consideration of work entails in our relationship with nature, particularly from the analysis of biblical texts that Escrivá used to support that vocational role (Gen. 2:15). Then, it shows to what extent the idea of sanctifying work can be applied to nature, and also to what extent sanctifying work implies working with an attitude of care towards creation. I present six theological categories that connect theology of work and ecotheology.

1. Within the intrinsic dimension, I suggest the relevance of '**environmental empathy**' meaning the shared destiny of humans' moral behaviour and nature, and the importance of linking our role with the sanctification of nature through the 'communion of saints';
2. for the subjective dimension, I propose the concept of '**ecological conversion**' meaning that our sanctification is connected to caring for the natural world, and
3. for the relational dimension, I recommend the idea of being '**priests of creation'**, proposed first within Orthodox theology, which emphasises the spiritual leadership of humankind as the only material creature having free will.

These three theological categories are complemented by connecting the three dimensions of work with caring for Creation, by developing a Trinitarian view of labour,

4. In this sense, for the intrinsic dimension I comment on the **co-creative character of work**, helping the Father in His providential care for creation, through a work that respects God's original plan for His creatures.
5. In the subjective dimension I present the **work as co-redemptive**, being united to the hidden life of Christ by working with a contemplative attitude and fostering ecological virtues (generosity, frugality, humility)
6. In the relational dimension I comment on the **co-sanctifier role of work,** collaborating with the Holy Spirit in the sanctification of all creatures, through promoting for their own flourishing, participating with them in

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

the cosmological liturgy to praise God – recognising through them the divine Beauty and Goodness - and helping them to fulfil their eternal destiny.

I conclude the thesis with a brief chapter on conclusions and directions for future research.

This research is based primarily on original texts written by Escrivá: both published and unpublished documents, which are available in the central archives of OD; as well as critical reviews of Escrivá's spirituality, which have been used primarily to describe his theological concepts of work and ChM, with only three short texts linking his ideas to ecotheology.[4] I have also made an extensive use of texts related to theology of work and ecotheology. These readings have been substantial to build my framework, but also to discover the novelty and potentials of Escrivá's thoughts in providing spiritual meaning of work, a critical component of today's cultural, social and economic life, as well as their strength to connect environmental concern and action with the ordinary life of lay Christians.

[4] (Albareda-Tiana 2023; Derville 2015b; Hernández-Urigüen 2003). I will comment them in chapter 4.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Section I: Roots and concepts of Christian materialism

This first section of the dissertation serves as a preparatory analysis to develop the central framework of my research. In chapter 1 I briefly present the main motivation for this thesis and the intellectual background against which it is set: the impact of different dualisms throughout the cultural evolution of Western thought on the relationship between humans and nature. In order to have a better historical perspective, I introduce in this chapter a critical assessment of the different dualisms, which also serves to frame the protagonist of my research, St. Josemaría Escrivá, as a leading figure in the attempt to overcome one of those dualisms, perhaps the subtlest, but also the most influential and enduring, which tends to undervalue the spiritual value of material realities, the most common for ordinary Christians.

In Chapter 2, I summarize St. Josemaría's spiritual worldview, within the historical and religious context in which he developed his ideas, with special emphasis on the homily in Navarre (1967), where he presented his vision of the Christian Materialism (henceforth ChM) to a large audience, although this concept had already been a central part of his preaching since the 1930s. A specific section compares Saint Josemaría's approach to ChM with other authors who used this concept, whether or not in connection with Escrivá's. A critical evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the different responses to his thought is also addressed in this chapter.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

1 Introduction.

1.1 Thesis context and motivation.

Quite commonly, ecotheology textbooks begin with a chapter that describes environmental problems, calling for a stronger commitment towards mitigating them[1]. Behind this choice, two assumptions are implicitly included: on the one hand that the urgency and gravity of the problems demand a more efficient and ambitious environmental action, and, on the other, that theological cosmologies and associated moral values provide salient reasons to ground that action.

This dissertation aims to provide theological arguments that encourage greater environmental concern among lay Christians regardless the importance of ecological problems, real or perceived.[2] In my opinion, the reasons for taking action are not only related to the seriousness of the problems, but also to the responsibility, coherence, empathy and generosity that one feels for those who suffer from them, which in many cases are the most important arguments in practice. In this regard, relevant theological arguments should be enough to encourage believers to take environmental care seriously, even if the gravity of the problems were less important. In other words, I assume that even those sceptical about the existence of an ecological crisis may undertake ecofriendly actions if they connect them to their values and beliefs.[3]

The relation between theology and the environment is not self-evident. In fact, many environmental ethics books do not even mention the role of religious faiths as a source of ethical values.[4] Since this is a central issue in the current dissertation, and a significant part of my motivation to carry it out, I

[1] Among many others, this is the case of the works of James A. Nash (1991), Steven Bouma-Prediger (2010) Sallie McFague (1993), Celia Deane-Drummond (2008), Paul Collins (1995), or Ernst Conradie (2006).
[2] Since most of my professional life has been dedicated to environmental science, I do think the environmental crisis is acute, but in my opinion, this should not be the main motivation to live sustainable lives, but rather the conviction of being consistent with our own values, including the religious ones.
[3] It is out of my scope to demonstrate that my arguments indeed are in fact changing people's behaviour, since this would require a sociological approach, which is not the topic of this research.
[4] This is the case of several textbooks (Attfield 2018; Curry 2011; Keller 2010; Lorentzen 2001; Marcos 2001; Schmidtz and Willott 2012; Velayos 2008; Vilkka 1997).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

should dedicate a few paragraphs to justify why I consider the connection between theological reflection and environmental care very important.

The first aspect to consider is the social relevance of religions, and religious-related institutions, worldwide. In the preface of a book on religions and ecology coordinated by the 'Alliance for Religions and Conservation' (ARC), J. D. Wolfenson, then director of the World Bank, justified the collaboration of his institution with the ARC in the following terms:

> The 11 faiths that now make up ARC represent two-thirds of the world's population. They own around 7% of the habitable surface of the planet, they have a role in 54% of all schools, and their institutional share of the investment market is in the range of 6-8%. These are serious stakeholders in development. They are also the oldest institutions in the world and possess wisdom about how to live and how to keep hope alive, which we need to hear and respect.[5]

One can argue that Wolfenson presents mainly economic-minded arguments, but he also reflects on the social and cultural relevance of religious institutions around the world. Recent pools have shown that a large proportion of world's population still consider themselves religious believers (84%).[6] Since education is a key element of behaviour transformation,[7] simply considering the religious institutions' role in education would justify their relevance to foster pro-environmental changes.

Even more importantly, religions provide different worldviews about the relationships of human beings with God, but also among us and nature,[8] which greatly impact attitudes and behaviour.[9] However, those worldviews are not uniform, even within a single religion, but rather they may be very diverse, both historically and geographically. A well-known example is the alleged dominion tradition of Christianity – and its consequent anthropocentric bias,

[5] (Wolfenson 2003, p. xi). The ARC does no longer exist.
[6] See (Pew Research Centre 2017) and (Hackett et al. 2015)
[7] (Campbell et al. 1999; Driscoll 2019; Gifford and Nilsson 2014; Strieder et al. 2017; Warner et al. 2012).
[8] The book series edited by Harvard University Press in late 90s, as a result of a dedicated series of seminars on world religions and ecology, provides a good summary of religions worldviews related to the environment (Foltz et al. 2003; Hessel and Ruether 2000; Tirosh-Samuelson 2002; Tucker and Williams 1997).
[9] However, some authors are critical with this view, as they consider that modifying beliefs do not necessary implies changes in behaviour. In their view, practical changes are more associated to social context: 'No worldview or belief arrives into moral action without already having taken leave from embodied, socialized ways of living' (Jenkins 2013, p. 5).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

mainly derived from a literal interpretation of Gen. 1:28, which by no means has always been prevalent, but it had rather coexisted with other more sensible approaches to the natural world, with different degrees of relevance, including stewardship, empathy, and natural mysticism.[10]

Religions have also impacted on daily habits by connecting values and virtues, such as self-restraint and generosity,[11] which have shown to be the most important drivers of environmental action.[12] Different authors have indicated that internal factors (among which religious motivations can be included) are indeed relevant for environmental concern and action.[13] Several studies have explored the relationship between religious affiliation and environmental concern, but results are not conclusive, as other socio-economic factors (such as income, age or professional qualification) tend to outweigh the importance of religious values, particularly when referring to daily habits.[14]

In any case, the relevance of religious or cultural values to promote environmental change has also been brought up by several scientists, who recognise the need to complement scientific arguments with other motivations to foster behaviour change. In a famous statement, Gus Speth, a former Dean of the School of Forestry & Environmental Studies at Yale University said:

> I used to think the top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse, and climate change. But I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed, and apathy (…) to deal with those issues we need a spiritual and cultural transformation – and we scientists do not know how to do that.[15]

Along similar lines, other authors have recommended to link critical environmental problems, such as climate change or biodiversity loss, with other

[10] I tried to synthetize these and other approaches to God-human-nature relations in different religious traditions in a review paper published a few years ago (Chuvieco 2012).
[11] The sense of self-restrain to gain spiritual benefits is common to all religious traditions. In the context of environmental concern see Chryssavgis (2019) or Zizioulas (2021c).
[12] (Orellano et al. 2020).
[13] This relationship has been frequently established In the field of environmental psychology (Clayton and Myers 2015; Schultz et al. 2000; Steg and de Groot 2019)
[14] (Gifford and Nilsson 2014; Koehrsen 2015; Orellano and Chuvieco 2022; Poortinga et al. 2019).
[15] Quotation obtained from https://reflections.yale.edu/article/crucified-creation-green-faith-rising/dean-s-desk, last accessed in May 2022

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

spheres of human interest, including literature, art, philosophy and religious experiences and values.[16]

The relevance of religions to promote environmental commitment and action was already suggested by some of the pioneers of the environmental movement (Thoreau, Emerson, Muir), who had themselves solid religious principles. Aldo Leopold in his well-known essay on 'Land Ethic' acknowledged the importance of religious motivations by indicating:

> No important change in ethics was ever accomplished without an internal change in our intellectual emphasis, loyalties, affections, and convictions. The proof that conservation has not yet touched these foundations of conduct lies in the fact that philosophy and religion have not yet heard of it.[17]

The same idea, but with much greater impact on the intellectual debate was the paper by Lynn White in 1967, in which he accused a religious cosmology, in this case Christianity, of being the main ideological support of environmental overexploitation. Consequently, following White's arguments, the key to solve environmental problems was actually a change in our religious perception of human-nature relations:

> More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecologic crisis until we find a new religion or rethink our old one. [18]

This strong conclusion assumes, on one hand, that Christianity had backed an instrumental value of nature to exclusively serve human beings, and, on the other, that Christian principles were determinant for societal organization of Western countries. Regardless of whether one agrees with White or not, several

[16] Papers from different perspectives have suggested this connection (Amo-Usanos 2019; Clayton 2014; Hanchin and Hearlson 2020; Savino 2018). I had the privilege to organize a science and interfaith religious workshop in 2017, which ended with a declaration about the need to foster cooperation between environmental scientists and all religious traditions. This declaration was quoted by Nature (Chuvieco et al. 2016b).

[17] (Leopold 1949, pp. 209-210). However, I disagree with Leopold in this regard, as Christian Tradition had many centuries before showed religious appreciation of nature-Creation (Bavel 1990; Bentivegna 1972; Guess 2020; Munteanu 2010; Schaefer 2009; Wallace-Hadrill 1968), although this appreciation has certainly not been consolidated as a fundamental value of Christianity.

[18] (White 1967, p. 1206).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

environmental psychologists have indicated the importance of grounding environmental commitment on salient values.[19] In this regard, linking core religious principles to environmental care can be critical to change human perceptions of the natural world, not only, but mainly, for those persons who consider their faith as something relevant in their lives, but do not actually see the connections of that faith with ecology. On the other hand, believers are more willing to listen ecotheology messages when coming from people they trust because they share their main religious convictions.[20] This implies that for having a stronger impact in a faith community, ecotheological developments should also be adapted to different religious traditions.

The obvious question would be: which religious principles could form the basis of a widespread cultural change of attitude towards the natural world? There is not one simple answer to that question, which has been the main topic of the multitude of ecotheological studies published in the last 40 years.[21] To what extent these studies have a strong influence on the way that different religious communities think and act about the environment remains underexplored.[22] In my experience within the Spanish Catholic Church, ecotheology is still mostly unknown by the laity and to some extent also to most priests and bishops, who frequently consider ecology as something unrelated or marginally related to their beliefs. In this sense, the impact of ecotheologians is still small, both considering the formal theological education in Catholic universities and the common religious education of children at parishes and schools.[23]

[19] (Clayton and Myers 2015; Schultz et al. 2005; Steg and de Groot 2019).
[20] This has been observed by several authors.
[21] There are many textbooks that cover the basics of ecotheology. Some of those used for this dissertation are: (Attfield 2014; Chica and Granados 2015; Conradie 2006; Deane-Drummond 2008, 2017; Edwards 2014; McDonagh 1986; Nash 1991; Swearer and McGarry 2011).
[22] See for instance Orellano et al. (2020; 2022). The two papers by Bron Taylor and cols present a critical review of Lynn White arguments (Taylor 2016), and a literature compilation of social studies dealing with environmental concerns and attitudes of different religious communities (Taylor et al. 2016a)
[23] A systematic study of the extension of environmental concepts in the Spanish Catholic education has not been undertaken, but one can certainly observe much greater interest since the publication of the LS encyclical letter of pope Francis. Recent textbooks published on ecotheoloy are Chica & Granados (2015), Chuvieco & Martin (2023), Figueroa Clemente (2016), Sanz Giménez-Rico (2016) and Tatay (2018).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

To change this situation, the influence of religious leaders may be significant.[24] In the case of the Catholic Church, its hierarchical organization facilitates those new theological concepts particularly when they come from the papacy and can gain a global acceptance, albeit more slowly than the papacy may wish. For instance, the publication of 'Rerum novarum' an encyclical letter of Leo XIII in 1891, led to a long-term resurgence of interest amongst Catholic communities in social issues, the generation of Catholic trade unions and many social initiatives (cooperatives, rural banks, worker residences, etc.) inspired by the encyclical.[25] However, these changes took a few decades to gain effect. In a similar way, the publication of the *Laudato si'* (henceforth LS) the encyclical letter of Pope Francis on the environment, published in June 2015,[26] has already fostered many initiatives to promote environmental concern and action within the Catholic Church, complementing reflections from previous popes (Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI) on the need to change our relationship with nature, encouraging believers to be more concerned and committed to avoid further degradation.[27] LS nowadays is the central text on the Catholic vision of ecotheology for several reasons: it is the first encyclical letter entirely dedicated to the environment; it was published a few months before the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (November 2015), backing the adoption of the treaty, and it had a strong repercussion in the public media, certainly the highest among papal documents of the last few decades, thus creating ample public debate, both within and outside the Catholic Church. LS is not a theological treatise, nor a scientific essay, but rather a moral reflection and a call for action, being the social aspect of ecological degradation the main motivation of pope Francis to write the encyclical, as he recently acknowledged.[28] However, LS also included

[24] Behavioural change programmes based on religious values have been tested in different disciplines, such as health campaigns (Ruijs et al. 2013; Surur and Kaba 2000; Toni-Uebari and Inusa 2009), concluding that the involvement of religious-spiritual leaders improved the level of acceptance, participation and positive outcomes within their faith communities. There are a few empirical studies on influence of religions on environmental practices, such as recycling programmes (Lakhan 2018), coastal conservation (Warner et al. 2012) and climate change action (Chauhan et al. 2012), but most of these studies are focused on concern rather than on actual behaviour.

[25] Beckett (2021) covers some of these initiatives, although in some countries the Catholic social movement started before the 'Rerum novarum' and the encyclical further promoted it (Fitte 2003).

[26] (Pope Francis 2015).

[27] See for example Peppard (2016).

[28] See Pope Francis (2020).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

very interesting reflections on other theological disciplines, such as Christology, creation and sacramental theology.[29] It is too soon to fully evaluate the practical impacts of this document. Producing a systematic assessment of the initiatives that LS has stimulated in the last years would be an investigation in itself, although there are already a few signs that prove its relevance.[30]

I also bring LS into this introductory section, since the origin of my research on ecotheology is closely motivated by this encyclical. First, because my interest in this discipline grew as I was asked by many Catholic communities — including academic, social and cultural associations, seminaries and parishes — to present the fundamentals and practical implications of this encyclical, which aroused my interest to further investigate on the theological principles behind the text. Secondly, because the establishment of the 'Laudato Si Research Institute' (LSRI) at Campion Hall in Oxford, where I am affiliated, was providential in my joining the DPhil programme in theology. Third, because I was able to get funding for my research from a private foundation that was interested to promote the practical implications of the LS document.

My main motivation to initiate this research was to explore new theological principles that may support environmental concern and action by ordinary Christians. The main theological arguments to ground the relevance of conservation of nature come from social justice and from Biblical and systematic theology. The former have been widely developed by many Catholic theologians, including Pope Francis himself, who consider that nature conservation is instrumental to human wellbeing.[31] The arguments based on systematic theology tend to emphasise scriptural and theological arguments that support the recognition of the value of nature, mainly including concepts derived from creation theology, Christology, eschatology and sacramental theology. Acknowledging the relevance of those arguments, I propose to develop an alternative

[29] Several books have been published with an in-depth analysis of the theological arguments included in the LS (Chica and Granados 2015; Cloutier 2015; Figueroa Clemente 2016; Kelly 2016; Kureethadam 2019).
[30] A recent review of the academic impacts of LS can be found in Molina and Pérez-Garrido (2022). To their findings, I can add that the Google scholar search engine currently identifies more than 53,500 academic references related to this document (last search in August 2024).
[31] See Deane-Drummond (2012), Hayes (2020) and Tatay (2017) among many others. They promote the concept of integral ecology to express this inner connection between social and environmental degradation.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

approach, bringing to ecotheology the concept of Christian Materialism (ChM), developed in the 20th century within the realm of practical theology. I will focus in this dissertation on how this concept was presented and developed by St Josemaría Escrivá (1902-1975), a Spanish Catholic priest, canonised by the Catholic Church in 2002. I should clarify from the very beginning that Escrivá was not a professional theologian, but a spiritual leader and the founder of a widely-extended Catholic institution, *Opus Dei* (OD).[32] Therefore, his theological concepts are much more practical than theoretical, not only in the sense of being less speculative than common academic theology, but also considering that his ideas have been in fact put into practice, as the lives of thousands of OD members, cooperators and friends testify.[33]

In the religious worldview of Escrivá, the expression ChM implies appreciating the religious significance of the ordinary (material) things and activities that are the backbone of everyday life for most Christians. St Josemaría never explicitly related ChM and ecotheology but I hypothesise that this concept provides a strong support of a new appreciation of nature, based in several reasons. First, the valuing of the natural world is a logical extension of valuing the material dimension of Christian life. Secondly, it provides support for the rejection of anthropological and spiritual dualisms that, by disregarding matter, have historically alienated human beings from nature, thus giving theological support to the consideration of its instrumental value. Thirdly, it connects ecotheology with core Christian values (goodness of Creation, Incarnation) and practices (prayer, sacraments and liturgy), which may inspire many Christians, particularly but not exclusively Catholics, to have a greater environmental concern and action than other secular motivations. Finally, ChM underlines the

[32] This dissertation does not address anything related to the history of OD itself, nor to the controversies which, for various reasons, have surrounded this Catholic institution, and which, in my opinion, have obscured the understanding of the true novelty and strength of Escrivá's message. The historical origins of these controversies (some of them artificially built) are analysed in detail by Aurell-Cardona (2012), while a well-documented discussion on their contents is provided by Allen (2007) and González Gullón and Coverdale (2021). I will deal in this dissertation only with those authors with critical positions on Escrivá's ideas, positive or negative, related to the main topic of my research.

[33] The OD's corporate website provides information about the institution in all countries where it has centres. The UK version is accessible at: https://opusdei.org/en-uk/ (last accessed August 2024).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

spiritual relevance of virtues that are especially important for environmental care, such as humility, frugality and simplicity.

1.2 Definition and concepts involved in Christian materialism.

1.2.1 Relevance of materialism and dualism in ecotheology.

> Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia's religions (except, perhaps, Zoroastrianism), not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends.[34]

Being Dualistic was one of the main accusations against Christianity given by Lynn White's hypothesis on the religious causes of environmental degradation. Christianity would have alienated humanity from nature, providing a religious support of strong anthropocentrism. Beyond historical and theological differences, all dualisms imply separating two realms: matter and spirit, body and soul, human and nature, assuming also that both are somehow in confrontation. In terms of the religious consideration of nature, a dualistic view affects two aspects: on one hand, the most obvious one of separating humanity from nature, which is what White explicitly criticises, and, on the other, the subtler separation between the human body and soul. Stated more generally, a separation of matter and spirit, along with the relegation of the former. To what extent Christianity is responsible in promoting the separation between human beings and nature is not the topic of this dissertation, and it has been widely answered in the large body of literature that followed White's paper.[35]

---

[34] (White 1967, p. 1205).

[35] See, for instance, Conradie (2006); Taylor (2016); Osborn (1993); Taylor et al. (2016a), Bouma-Prediger (1995) and, from a historian perspective, Harrison (1999). The hypothesis of White assumes not only that Christianity is dualistic, but also that it shapes the behaviour of a society, which has also been criticised. For instance, Nash (1991) indicates that no religion perfectly matches societal values and vice versa. On the other hand, our own research showed that considering the actual environmental indicators of countries with different religious traditions, one cannot sustain that Christian states have worse performance than others with supposedly more environmental affinity (particularly Hindu or Buddhist traditions) (Chuvieco et al. 2016a). Another interesting issue, but again aside of my research, is whether this supposed dualism is common to all Christian traditions or rather it is linked to Protestantism, prevalent in those countries that led the scientific and technical revolution and which were instrumental for the practical degradation of the natural world: 'Protestantism did not expel the goodness from the creation,

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Another issue is how to overcome the negative implications of that dualistic view on the appreciation of the spiritual value of matter, which affects the religious consideration of nature. This is a central topic of this research, more specifically in the spiritual dualism which ChM is aiming to overcome. Within this topic, I have reviewed the different proposals of pioneer ecotheologians who have stressed the importance of overcoming dualisms to achieve a proper appreciation of nature.[36] For example, Christopher Derrick in the early 1970s presented the environmental problem as an anthropological and religious one, basically associated to an incorrect perception of the relations between humans and nature.[37] He considered that dualistic views of Christianity were behind a religious disdain to matter, and as, an extension, to the material world, which was not perceived as having religious significance but rather as an obstacle to Christian holiness. Derrick proposed regaining a stronger appreciation of the material world based on considering the goodness of Creation, the Incarnation of Christ, the material dimensions of sacraments and the resurrection of bodies. One aspect in which Derrick sees the impact of these deviated views of Christianity is their poor conception of sexual intercourse within conjugal love, as if matrimony were only a concession to human weakness.[38] In his vision, overcoming matter-spirit dualism should also support a new appreciation of the natural world, while better connecting human nature (flesh and soul) with the unity between human beings and nature. These two aspects are closely linked, as failing in one or the other implies an unbalanced consideration of either human values to despise natural ones, or natural ones to demean human's. This equilibrium may overcome the perception of many mainstream Christians that

salvation from incarnation, or sacramentality from the edible body. But the way was being vigorously and inadvertently cleared for the (then) new materialism of natural science and, therefore, for the whole modern history of the bifurcation of science and religion, of matter and meaning (…) And as mere matter of fact, matter ceases to matter spiritually or ethically'. (Keller 2017, p. 64). On the other hand, orthodox ecotheologians strongly reject the accusation of Christianity being dualistic in relationship to nature (Chryssavgis 2010; Theokritoff 2010; Zizioulas 2006).

[36] (Edwards 2014, 2016, 2020; Levering 2017; McFague 1993; Turkson 2019). Summarizing this idea Binde writes that a dualistic approach '…degrades nature, wrongly portrays man as nature's ruler, and obscures the crucial interdependence between human beings and nature'. (2001, p. 20).

[37] (Derrick 1972).

[38] Despising marriage has been common among dualistic movements (Gnostics, Manicheans). As I will comment, Escrivá greatly valued this sacrament, which he considered a true Christian vocation (Cf. CPB, n. 22-30).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

pro-environmental values imply undervaluing human nature, which may explain their hostile position on environmental issues.[39] A balanced view is needed, where both social and environmental problems are properly considered and integrated. This is essential in the concept of 'integral ecology' proposed by LS:

> A true ecological approach 'always' becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear 'both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor' (LS, n. 49).

Valuing the matter obviously does not imply to worship it. Far from pantheism and idolatry of some pagan traditions, Christianity maintained a balance between despising and adoring nature, while simultaneously maintaining the relevance of human dignity:

> At the same time, Judaeo-Christian thought demythologized nature. While continuing to admire its grandeur and immensity, it no longer saw nature as divine. In doing so, it emphasizes all the more our human responsibility for nature. This rediscovery of nature can never be at the cost of the freedom and responsibility of human beings who, as part of the world, have the duty to cultivate their abilities in order to protect it and develop its potential (LS, n. 78).

1.2.2 Historical dualisms within Christianity.

This section aims to frame the ChM of St Josemaría in the context of theoretical and practical dualisms that have appeared in the History of the Church from the first centuries. I will introduce here the main dualistic movements within Christianity, leaving the implications of those dualisms in the historical consideration of work for chapter 3.

The conceptions about spirit and matter within Christianity and Western thought have been very diverse. The most extreme are those which deny the existence of matter and regard it as part (or a manifestation) of God (panthe-

[39] An example, among many others, in this paragraph of a Spanish theologian: 'The foundation of environmental movement in a monist view of reality, instead of in the faith in a personal God Creator, brings it to verifiable contradictions in the field of ethics. While, this movement rightly insists in the need to adopt an ethics that goes beyond human species, by including rights for animals and plants, which overcomes the limits of co-humanity and moves into the realm of co-creaturely, it seems blind when it deals with human rights' (he explicitly mentions the acceptance of abortion by environmental groups as an example of this attitude) (Guerra Sancho 1987, p. 107).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

ism), and those which deny God, and limit all reality to matter (atheistic materialism). In between these extremes there are a full range of philosophical and theological positions: deism, advocating for a creator but also a world-uninvolved God; panentheism, where God is both immanent and transcendent, and different types of dualisms and monisms.

It would not be feasible in this research to provide an in-depth review of all philosophical and theological positions towards matter, even just from the Christian tradition, much less adding to it the analysis of how different religions conceive God-spirit-matter relations. I focus here on a critical review of those positions that are more related to the concept of ChM. Table 1 includes my summary of the different types of dualisms, including the main movements and the official position of the Catholic Church about them. Generally speaking, the Church has always recognized the bounty of the world and the unity of human nature, considered these dualistic positions to be deviations from orthodoxy.[40]

Table 1: Types of dualism, main adherents and Catholic positions on each type

Type of Dualism	What does it separate	Followers	Catholic alternatives
Cosmological	God or Demiurge	Gnostics Manicheans	One God / World is Good
Christological	God or Human	Monophysites / Arianism Nestorianism	One person / two natures
Anthropological	Soul or Body	Plato & Neoplatonic Cartesians Materialism	Soul is the form of the body
Spiritual	World or God	Iconoclasts Clericalism / Monasticism Lutheranism	Christian materialism Universal call holiness (SVC)
Ecological	Human or nature	Strong anthropocentrism	Stewardship

'Cosmological dualisms' are those accepting two creative principles (God and the demiurge), and therefore explaining the presence of evil in the world as a result of a wicked divinity. These positions were very common in oriental religious traditions, including Sumerian myths and Manicheism, well known to

[40] Controversies with dualistic views were central to the first Christian apologetics texts, including the works of Irenaeus, Hippolytus of Rome, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria and Origen. See also Chadwick (1980) and Dussel (1974).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

St Augustine, who was Manichean for nine years (373 to 382) and later on criticised them in several books.[41]

Chronologically, the first deviation of Christianity was Gnosticism. Although recent studies have nuanced the traditional view of this movement,[42] common to the Gnostics is the idea of supreme understanding, which implies an awakening of the human soul to restore the divine spark it possessed before it was cast into this world. This must be achieved through Gnosis (knowledge) implying an illumination received as a gift from God, but also entailing a struggle to liberate the soul from its attached material component. In a similar line to Greek philosophers, the world would have been created by two antagonistic principles (light and darkness, God and demiurge), which explains the presence of evil, ignorance and fate in the world. Since matter is evil, Gnostics negated the true Incarnation of Christ.[43] Even though the Gospel of John had already answered this position ('And the Word became flesh', 1:14), the most systematic answer to Gnosticism was the five-book treaty 'Against heresies' (AH), of St Irenaeus of Lyon, most probably written between 175–189.[44] Irenaeus provided a solid basis to build a Christian anthropology, by reflecting on the relations between body, soul and spirit, defending the need of human freedom to gain salvation, the relevance of human's adoptive divine filiation and a positive view of the material world, based on the goodness of Creation. Against the Gnostic dualism, Irenaeus advocated for the unicity of God the Creator, the unity between God the Creator and Redeemer, and the concord of Old and New Testament. Another critical aspect of the Christian valuation of matter pointing out by Irenaeus is the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, since material

[41] The most important are *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* (Augustine 388-393) written at the end of the 4th century and *De Genesi ad litteram* (Augustine 403-415), composed two decades later (see Weinberg (2022) for an analysis of the ecological links of this book). I have used in both cases the Spanish translation of the original Latin text provided by Lope Cilleruelo, OSA (https://www.augustinus.it/ spagnolo/genesi_lettera/index2.htm).
[42] The work of Kurt Rudolph (2001) is a good introduction to the Gnostic movement. Most recent interpretations by Mark Edwards (2017) and Karen King (2017), considered that Gnosticism was not a uniform movement, but rather a collection of doctrines by several authors who were sometimes in mutual disagreement or in partial agreement with the mainstream Christian principles, the most renown are Marcion, Basilides, and the Valentinians. The seminal works of Hans Jonas (Jonas 1972) on the Gnostics provided also important insights to understand this religious movement.
[43] Docetists also did not accept the Incarnation and considered Christ to be only human in appearance, but not a real human being.
[44] (Minns 2009).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

realities of bread and wine are a receptacle of the true Body and Blood of Christ. Finally, Gnostics' declaration 'that marriage and generation are from Satan' (AH 1.24.2) implies for Irenaeus a contradiction of 'the original creation of God, and indirectly blaming Him who made the male and female for the propagation of the human race' (AH 1.28.1).

The first centuries of Christianity were particularly fruitful, both in terms of geographical expansion and doctrinal development. 'Christological dualisms' were present in those centuries, giving rise to theological controversies that helped to clarify the Christian faith about the relationship between the two natures and the single person of Christ. The positions ranged from accepting only his human nature (Arianism) or his divine nature (Docetism), to having two persons (Nestorianism) or only one will (Monotelism). The first apologetical writings were directed towards clarifying these Christological concepts, particularly in the writings of St Athanasius and the Cappadocian Fathers (St Basil of Caesarea, St Gregory of Nazianzen, and St Gregory of Nyssa), who adapted concepts borrowed from Greek philosophy to the theological explanation of the person and nature of Christ as well as the relationships within God (Trinitarian controversies). The first ecumenical councils were oriented to solving these theological arguments, from Nicene (325) and Constantinople (381) (fixing the Creed) to Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451), fixing the concepts of substance (*Ousia*) and person (*Hypostasis*).

Once Chalcedonian Christology was generally accepted, dualistic controversies in Medieval theology were mainly concerned with 'anthropological dualism' (soul-body), within the effort to explain three core Christian dogmas: the immortal character of the human soul (its existence separated from the body), the resurrection of bodies, and the transmission of the original sin. Christian theologians used philosophical concepts that somehow departed from the Hebraic tradition of the early Church and compromised the unitarian view of human nature.[45] This was mostly evident in Christian theologians influenced by Neoplatonism, and to some extent from Augustine, who accepted the substantial unity of soul and body in human nature, but underlined their autonomy,

[45] Dussel (1974) and Cooper (2000) share this opinion. The former reviews anthropological dualism in detail.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

mainly to justify the possibility that the soul maintains an unembodied —at least temporarily— existence afterlife.

The influence of these ideas is manifested in early Medieval writers, such as Alcuin (732-804) and Rabanus Maurus (780-856), who defended the existence of two constituents in human nature, but also the creation of each soul along with the body in time: John Scotus Eriugena (810-877), who envisioned humans as composed by two natures, an invisible and a visible one (body and soul); Hugh of Saint Victor (1097-1141), who supported the existence of two substances, the body formed from the dust and the soul created out of nothing, although it also acknowledged that the complete humanhood requires the unity of both parts, and Peter Lombard (1100-1160) again maintaining the existence of two-substances with different origins. Not even St Bonaventure (1217-1274), the most important Franciscan theologian of that time, was free from this dualist tradition, as he considered body and soul being two substances, both including spirit and matter, since everything but God has matter.

Only with the recuperation of the works of Aristotle in the 12th century and the theological synthesis of Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274), the Christian approach to the union of body and soul could reconnect with the original worldview of the early Fathers. Aquinas presents his conception on human nature in several writings of his extensive works, but it is mainly synthesized in his 'Treatise on Man', one of the main sections of his Summa Theologica (ST), covering Questions 75-102.[46] Aquinas adapts the hylomorphic theory of Aristotle to the Christian understanding of body-soul relations, defending the substantial unity of both, but also the possibility that the soul may subsist without the body. The soul is the form of matter for all animated ('ensouled') beings, not just for humans, as their principle of operation, and therefore all living organisms (plants, animals, humans) have a soul that allows them to perform operations, actualizing the potentialities of matter. In the case of humans, the

[46] The main concepts are though included in the first section (Q75-89), dealing with human nature, while the remaining cover the creation of humans and their characteristics before the original sin. Robert Pasnau (2002) dedicates a whole book to analyse Q75-89 from a philosophical perspective. An introductory view on St Thomas thought is provided by Francis Selman (1994).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

soul is a subsistent entity (can subsist disembodied), but not properly an independent substance.[47] Death entails the interruption of the substantial union between body and soul, which implies that the bodily components remain the same just after death, but when the soul abandons the body, the principle of life is disrupted. Therefore, for Aquinas the post-death persistence of the soul is possible insofar as it is able to subsist *per se*, although naturally it tends to be reunited to the body (and it will be, either at the end of times or by miraculous personal resurrections).

Modernity brought this anthropological dualism to a growing emphasis on the material component of human nature, particularly from the influence of Rene Descartes (1596-1650), who provided philosophical support for anthropological dualism.[48] His positions were later extended by rationalism and German Idealism, which greatly influenced the alienation of humanity from the natural world, as several authors have acknowledged.[49] With the growing secularization of Western thought, this separation of spiritual and material dimensions has led to rejecting the former, developing different alternatives to materialism. On the other hand, those affirming the validity of the body-soul complementarity have moved to even more drastic dualistic philosophies.[50]

In addition to these strong dualisms, we can also identify other mitigated versions, in which the unity of human nature is recognised, but spiritual and corporal dimensions are unequally valued. I will use the expression 'spiritual

[47] Aquinas qualifies a substance as having two properties: being subsistent *per se* and being part of a specific species and genus: 'An individual in the genus of substance possesses not only per se subsistence, but is also something complete in a particular species and genus of substance' (Questions on the Soul 1.co, quoted by (Van Dyke 2009). A bodiless soul would meet the first criterion but not the second one.

[48] The seminal role of Cartesian philosophy to ground the dominance paradigm of Modern Western thought is analysed in detail by Kureethadam (2017, particularly chapter 7). He considers that Descartes separation between *rex cogitans* and *rex extensa* also entailed a sharp separation between humans and nature, emphasising our uniqueness at the cost of blurring our interconnections with other creatures.

[49] 'Much of Christian and Western thought has led to the radical alienation of man from nature. Greek idealism, Gnostic dualism, neither wholly conquered in medieval theology, German idealism all have contributed to this alienation. All attempt to rescue man from his oneness with nature, and to exclude nature from the history of salvation. (Frank Moore Cross, 'The Redemption of Nature', quoted by Wirzba (2003a, p. 23). See also Habel (2011).

[50] (Plantinga 2007) makes a strong defence of dualism as the only way of reconciling current knowledge, including scientific one, and the Christian worldview on the existence of a 'post mortem' soul. The alternative of dualism for him is materialism. He presents seven arguments against that materialistic conception (see pp. 120-136).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

dualism' to refer to the attitude that does not negate the religious value of material realities, but in practical terms only values spiritual practices (prayer or devotions), while in practice ignoring 'profane' activities, such as work or family relations, as if they were unconnected to the Christian life.[51] Although strong dualisms have been rejected in the Catholic tradition, this subtler spiritual dualisms have been present throughout Church's history, implying in practical terms emptying material realities from spiritual value. An additional consequence of this growing separation of spiritual and secular activities was that social progress became increasingly disconnected from Christian thinking. The hope of eternal life displaced the interest about the present one, Christian societies became more secularised, and human beings were growingly disengaged from nature.[52]

Spiritual dualism can be traced back to the first centuries of Christianity, particularly after the expansion of monasticism, which was growingly considered as the paradigm of Christian vocation. Lay Christians gradually considered that spiritual perfection was only attainable by being separated from the world (*contemptus mundi*), far from their ordinary activities. This explains that after the saints of the first centuries, who were mainly martyrs (including laity, priests and bishops), most canonized saints until the 20th century have been priests, monks or nuns, with a minority of lay men and women.

The iconoclast controversy of the VII-VIII centuries can also be considered related to spiritual dualism (and directly to ChM), as it implied a theological discussion on the spiritual value of matter. The controversy started by the decrees of Byzantine Emperor Leo III Isauric in 726 which initiated a dispute over the reverence to images, affecting the Oriental Church for several decades. The most eminent defender of using images for the Christian cult was St John of Damascus (675-749), who wrote a three-books treaty on the reverence of images, [53] as he considered that the Incarnation of Christ superseded the Old Testament's prohibitions of representing God — to avoid risk of idolatry — providing matter of a spiritual signification. Damascus also emphasised the

[51] John Cooper (2000, pp. 182-190) distinguishes four broad categories of dualisms: religious, functional, social and axiological. The spiritual dualism that I referred to resembles the last one.
[52] The impact of the attitudes of *contemptus mundi* on the appreciation of the natural world is covered by Nash (1991). See also Santmire (1985).
[53] (Saint John of Damascus 726-730).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

goodness of Creation, as everything from God has a purpose, and therefore rejection of the created matter would be a rejection of its Creator. He argued too that material representation of spiritual realities facilitates our understanding of them. Several authors have recently noted that John Damascene's contribution to the revival of the importance of the material dimension has also had a positive impact on the increased appreciation of the natural world..[54]

Within the Protestant Reformation, the religious role of the laity became more prominent, because of the abandonment of religious orders and the new approach to the spiritual value of ordinary activities. In his classic book on the sources of the modern mentality, Charles Taylor considers that the Reformation was instrumental in creating in Christianity a new appreciation of work and ordinary life, which he defines as one of the hallmarks of modernity. During the medieval period,

> There was an intense consciousness of the dependence of laypeople on the life of prayer and renunciation of religious through the mutual mediation of the church, but the reciprocal dependence was lost sight of. The result was a lesser spiritual status for lay life, particularly that of productive labour and the family.[55]

Thus, the rejection of monasticism and of all mediations through *sola fide* '...led to an improved status for (what had previously been described as) secular life'. However, this new appreciation of material realities maintained a certain 'spiritual dualism', since on one hand — following Luther views — those material realities did not really count for the sanctification of the agent (as deeds do not impact justification),[56] and, on the other, Luther somehow alienated ordinary life from contemplation, precisely because the appreciation of ordinary life was done in confrontation with the monastic life: now the material realities became spiritually relevant at the cost of reducing the value of spiritual ones.[57] In summary, one can conclude that spiritual dualism acquired a different perspective in the Reformed Christianity, but remained essentially unresolved.

---

[54] Deborah Guess (2020) relates the Treatises to ecotheology: 'they are representative of, a strong Christian trajectory which can undergird a revitalised theology of matter that might enable a Christian response to the present ecological crisis' (p. 34). Other authors in a similar line are Nash (1991) and Schaefer (2009).
[55] (Taylor 1992 p. 217).
[56] The analysis of Hanson on Luther's theology of work provides a good guidance for this interpretation (Hanson 2022, ch. 6). See in this regard section 3.4.1, which develops further this idea.
[57] This argument is solidly explained by Dale (1991). I will come back to this in section 3.4.2.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Protestant revival of ordinary life also affected Catholic spirituality, endorsing a growing appreciation of lay realities. This movement is traditionally associated to the ideas of St Francis of Sales (1567 – 1622), St Joanne Chantal (1572-1641) and Pierre de Bérulle (1575-1629). They stressed that all faithful, just by being baptized were called to sanctify their common activities. Sales aimed that all lay Christians amidst their worldly occupations had a similar devotion to those living in monasteries.[58] In the first decades of the 20th century, Sales' legacy to promote lay spirituality was recalled by Pius XI (1922-1939), who dedicated his second encyclical letter, *Rerum omnium* (1923), to the centenary of the canonization of the former bishop of Geneva. He also promoted the 'Catholic Action', an association of faithful coordinated by local bishops to encourage the influence of Catholics in social and professional atmospheres. St Josemaría was a contemporary of this movement, which he greatly appreciated, but he was never involved in it as he considered that lay Christians ought to promote their values within their own environments; rather than being 'dispatched' by the Catholic hierarchy to extraneous ones.[59]

Another interesting step in the appreciation of material realities as a pathway of sanctification was the development of the concept of common priesthood, that all faithful receive with Baptism, which stresses their right and responsibility to somehow consecrate their ordinary activities (priest=*sacerdos*=*sacer dhe,* make sacred). Precursors of this concept were Johann Adam Möhler (1796-1838) and St John Henry Newman (1801-1890) in the 19th century, and Paul Dabin (1891-1949) in the 1930s and 40s.[60] Dabin reflected on the similarities and differences between common and ministerial priesthood, its Patristic base and its attachment to the sacramental character of Baptism and Confirmation.[61]

[58] Despite the importance of Sales, his message was still highly influenced by a religious mentality, and in this sense quite separated from Escrivá's. Actually, Sales himself founded a religious order along with Joanna of Chantal. An interesting comparison between Sales and Escrivá was written by cardinal Luciani, a few weeks before being elected as pope John Paul I. For him, Sales…'popularized a sanctity for all, but he taught a spirituality of laymen, rather than a lay spirituality, as Escrivá later on developed' (Luciani 1978).
[59] This issue is covered by (Burkhart and López 2010 - 2013, introductory section).
[60] (Dabin 1950).
[61] In spite of this relevance, still Dabin considered that the role of laity in the Catholic Action movement consisted mainly in a collaboration with the priestly apostolate, not proceeding from the actual vocation of laity as indicated by Escrivá.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

The idea of ChM that St Josemaría Escrivá promoted in the first half of the twentieth century tried to overcome these 'spiritualistic' versions of Christianity, by highlighting that lay Christians should encounter God in the midst of their ordinary activities. The first time Escrivá used the term ChM was within a homily preached during the celebration of Mass at the University of Navarre, in northern Spain in 1967 (see 2.2.2), although this concept — coined with diverse terms — was central to his spiritual message since the 30s. The exact words of Escrivá in the Navarre homily were:

> Authentic Christianity, which professes the resurrection of all flesh, has always quite logically opposed 'dis-incarnation', without fear of being judged materialistic. We can, therefore, rightfully speak of a 'Christian materialism', which is boldly opposed to that materialisms which are blind to the spirit.[62] (PLW, n. 115).

St Josemaría meant by this expression that both matter and spirit are part of the spiritual life of an ordinary Christian, within the unity of human nature which comprises both dimensions, body and soul, and therefore both bodily and spiritual dimensions should have religious relevance. Escrivá's ChM did not attribute religious value to matter (or to the material dimension of reality) as 'itself', but rather only when the material dimension of human life is filled with a contemplative attitude, when material activities are done 'for the glory of God', in union with Him through prayer and sacrifice (see 2.2.3).

The same expression ChM was used a few months prior to Escriva —but unrelated to him— by Jean Danielou (1905-1974), a French Jesuit theologian (later appointed as Cardinal of the Catholic Church in 1969), within an introductory book on the fundamentals of the Catholic Faith. He was reflecting on the contemporary separation of Christian values from social concerns:

> This is one of the reasons because of which many people today have a sentiment of gap between them and Christianity, rupture that is not related at all to the true nature of Christianity, but rather to a false image that Christianity gives of itself. Because truly, a Christian is not more spiritualist than materialist, and it should be emphasised that there is a Christian materialism, not in the sense that for the

[62] The original Spanish text was: 'El auténtico sentido cristiano que profesa la resurrección de toda carne se enfrentó siempre, como es lógico, con la desencarnación, sin temor a ser juzgado de materialismo. Es lícito, por tanto, hablar de un materialismo cristiano, que se opone audazmente a los materialismos cerrados al espíritu'.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

> Christian everything is reduced to matter, as this would imply exactly the opposite error of privileging exclusively the spirit, but in the sense that matter has something perfectly valuable, being one of the expressions of God's Creation.[63]

Even though the concept is similar to Escrivá's, Danielou is mainly emphasising the importance of the material component in the philosophical rather than the spiritual sense that is predominant in Escrivá's thoughts. Danielou's paragraph is part of the section entitled: 'Union of contraries', where he argues about the need to update the traditional view of God as pure spirit, which may imply for the ordinary Christian that God does not have any relation with the material created world, as if matter were completely independent from Him. Considering that contemporary society is very concerned about matter (by research and technique mainly), this idea of Christianity as isolated from matter would alienate Christians from their ordinary activities. In this regard, reclaiming the value of matter has primarily an apologetic character for Danielou, but in the case of Escrivá it has also a deep spiritual meaning, as the proper realm of personal sanctification, emphasising the relevance of material things to encounter God in the middle of the world.

Also contemporary with Escrivá were several young theologians who became interested in the theology of laity, eventually being very influential in the main documents of the SVC.[64] One of the most important was Yves Congar (1904-1995), who published a seminal essay on the theology of the laity in 1954, where he discussed the relations between the Church and the world historically, and the interactions between laity and hierarchy within the notion of Kingdom.[65] Other two key figures for the theology of the laity were Gerard

[63] These were his original words: 'Et c'est une des raisons pour lesquelles il y a chez beaucoup d'hommes d'aujourd'hui le sentiment d'une coupure entre eux et le christianisme, coupure qui ne tient pas du tout à l'authentique nature du christianisme, mais qui tient l'image fausse que trop souvent le christianisme donne de lui-même. Car en réalité, un chrétien n'est pas plus spiritualiste que matérialiste; et il faudrait précisément souligner qu'il y a un matérialisme chrétien, non pas au sens ou pour le chrétien tout se réduirait à la matière, ce qui tomberait exactement dans l'errer inverse que de privilégier exclusivement l'esprit, mais au sens où la matière est quelque chose qui est parfaitement valable, une des expressions de la création de Dieu' (Danielou 1967, p. 62-63).
[64] A good summary of these theological discussions about theology of laity is covered by Saranyana (2018).
[65] (Congar 1954).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Philips (1899-1972), member of the Louvain school of theology, who emphasised that laity should be defined by its presence in the world and by living their Christian vocation in their professional and social activities, and Gustave Thils (1909-2000), also from Louvain, who wrote an essay on the theology of terrestrial realities and several on the theology of work.[66] He distinguished three types of sanctity: priestly, religious and laity, and considered the latter closely linked to seeking for God in the middle of the secular activities, including family and social life, leisure and work.

All these reflections were precursory of the critical documents of the SVC on the lay vocation, confirming Escrivá's core message and setting up the basis for overcoming 'spiritual dualism'. In addition to the universal call for holiness, the Council encouraged lay Christians to take active part in the progress of the societies where they live, fostering their coherence between faith and daily activities, since the '...split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age' (GeS, n. 43). This sentence very much resembles the intuition of Escrivá on the 'unity of life', which he was preaching since the 1930s (see 3.3.3). An even closer relationship to Escrivá's message is the apostolic exhortation '*Christifidelis laici*' (1988) of St John Paul II dedicated to the lay vocation in the Church, following a special bishops' synod focussed on this topic. One of the paragraphs almost literally quoted Escrivá's Navarre homily (see 2.2.2):

> There cannot be two parallel lives in their existence: on the one hand, the so-called "spiritual" life, with its values and demands; and on the other, the so-called "secular" life, that is, life in a family, at work, in social relationships, in the responsibilities of public life and in culture.[67]

The creation of new Catholic institutions mainly oriented towards lay people (OD, Communion and Liberation, Focolarii, Neocatechumenal Way) have further fostered the overcoming of spiritual dualism in the last decades. They are examples of the new appreciation of Catholic theology on the spiritual value of those material realities that constitute the essence of most lay faithful's lives.

[66] (Thils 1949, 1952). I will comment further on Thils' theology of work in chapter 3.
[67] (John Paul II 1988, n. 59). The equivalent words of Escrivá are in n. 114 of PLW.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Finally, the last dualism that I have identified in table 1 refers to the separation between humans and nature, as if human beings would be unrelated to the natural world, which was one of the main criticisms of Lynn White (see 1.2.1). Neither Danielou nor Escrivá apply the concept of ChM to support concern or action about the environment, and therefore the connection between ChM and ecotheology had to be developed. This has been the main objective of my research, derived more specifically from Escrivá's approach to the ChM, as it is a core concept of his spirituality. I have selected his theology of work, since he considered it to be the axis on which the Christian vocation of the laity is developed, proposing a new spiritual path (OD) in which the sanctification of ordinary Christians is achieved through their professional activities. To develop my research, I have first made a critical analysis of Escrivá's theological ideas (chapter 2), and then reviewed in more detail his spirituality of work (chapter 3), which will be the basis for constructing a framework that connects the theology of work with ecotheology (chapter 4).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

2 Christian Materialism in St Josemaría Escrivá.

This chapter presents my personal approach to the spiritual message of St Josemaría Escrivá, based on his original writings and secondary scholars in his spirituality. I do not aim to develop a complete analysis of his ideas but just present those aspects that I judge pertinent to understand his approach to ChM better and in particular his theology of work, which will be the core of the second section of my dissertation.

Within Catholic theology, the spiritual ideas proposed by saints have a distinct relevance, not just on practical but also on systematic theology. Quoting St Thomas Aquinas, Joseph Ratzinger, then Prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith, in an introductory address to a theological conference centred on Escrivá's ideas, stated that 'theology is a subaltern science of the science of God and that of the saints', since 'theology, when it is born from faith, is, ultimately, subaltern with respect to the knowledge that God has of himself, which the saints already enjoy in an immediate and definitive way'.[1] In the same regard, Fernando Ocáriz published an article on the seminal value of the inspirations and charisms suggested by saints, which have provided new insights, sometimes very innovative ones, to theological reflection:

> There is a theological knowledge accessible through the discursive process of reason, but there is another one that comes from the connaturality that the love of God creates. This is the most common in saints, and the theologian should take it into account.[2]

Within this framework and the relevance of using the theological categories of a Catholic saint to foster the importance of the natural world, I will identify first Escrivá's core theological ideas (2.2.1) and then those more connected to

[1] This message is included at: https://opusdei.org/es-es/article/mensaje-inaugural-en-el-simposio-teologico-santidad-y-mundo/ , last access October, 2023.

[2] (Ocáriz 2013, n. 1). Ocáriz was then member of the Pontifical Academy of Theology and consultant of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. He became Prelate of OD in 2017. In my interpretation, he is indicating here the importance of the practical inspirations received by the saints in the construction of Catholic theology, since they can contribute new ideas for systematic thought, although this does not mean that the writings of the saints cannot also be the object of theological criticism.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

ChM, selecting the main text when this concept was expressed (2.2.2), and what connections with the non-human Creation Escrivá himself foresaw (2.2.3). I will finalize this chapter by including a critical comment on the theological framework of Escrivá's spirituality in the light of 20th century theology of laity (2.3). Before this, I will introduce this chapter by framing Escrivá's life and cultural framework of his message (2.1).

2.1 Escrivá's historical background.

2.1.1 Biographical sketch.

St Josemaría Escrivá was born in 1902 in the small town of Barbastro, located in Northern Spain.[3] His father was a middle-class businessman dedicated to the importing and selling of clothes, and his mother was a housewife. The family was formed by Josemaría and four sisters, but the three youngest died between 1910 and 1913. This greatly impacted him as a young child and reinforced his Catholic piety during his adolescence. As a result of his father's business downturn, his family had to move to another town, Logroño, where he finished secondary school. There he had a strong spiritual experience when he was 15 years old, as he saw the bare footprints of a Carmelite after a heavy snowstorm. He considered this event as a milestone of his spiritual vocation. After reflecting on which decisions to take to be more available for following God's will, he joined the Catholic seminary of Zaragoza in 1920, receiving the priestly ordination in March 1925. He simultaneously studied civil law at the University of Zaragoza.

St Josemaría moved to Madrid in April 1927 to start his doctoral studies in law. He combined this task with the priestly care of a charitable foundation (*Patronato de Enfermos*), to which he dedicated many hours to the spiritual attention of hospital patients and needy people in the poor neighbourhoods of Madrid. On October 2, 1928, he felt a divine inspiration to initiate a new Catholic

[3] There are many biographies already published about St Josemaría, but the most complete was written by the Spanish historian Andrés Vázquez de Prada in 3 volumes (1997-2003). An English translation is available (Vazquez de Prada 2001-2005). I have used the Spanish version, which includes many literal quotations of Escrivá, both from his published works and his unpublished personal diaries and letters.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

institution (*Opus Dei*, OD) that would aim to encourage lay persons to seek holiness in their ordinary lives and professional activities.[4] During the early 1930s, Escrivá started to spread the spiritual charism of OD, mainly among young students and professionals whom he offered spiritual direction. His first followers were mostly university students, who committed themselves to live a celibate life and to make their study and work compatible with a close dedication to God, keeping their lay character. The Spanish Civil War (1936-39) was particularly difficult for Escrivá, as in Madrid a severe religious persecution started in July 1936. He had to hide in different places for more than one year, until he was able to flee to the other side of the country, where Catholic activities were allowed.

After the end of the conflict, St Josemaría presented his doctoral dissertation (December 1939), but never aimed to follow an academic career, as he was fully dedicated to the expansion of OD, first in different Spanish cities and, after the end of the Second World War, in other countries (France, Portugal, Italy, UK, Ireland, USA, Mexico...). In addition to lay men and women, Escrivá wanted to include priests in OD, to help its expansion for different cities and countries, which was possible by the foundation of the 'Priestly Society of the Holy Cross' in 1943, in which lay members who become priest can serve apostolic activities of OD. After 1950, this society could receive secular priests, who benefit from OD spirituality while keeping their diocesan commitments.

St Josemaría moved to Rome in 1946 to obtain a suitable legal status for OD from the Vatican authorities. It was quite a challenge to obtain that legal recognition, considering the divergence of OD's lay outlook from the Catholic institutions at that time, mostly based on religious spiritualities.[5] During most of his Roman residence, from 1946 to 1975, Escrivá had few public appearances, as he was fully dedicated to the governance of OD, the support of its apostolic activities, and the formation of its members, particularly those working or studying at Rome, where two international study centres were opened, one for men and another for women.[6] He visited occasionally European countries

[4] In February 1930 he got the inspiration to include women in OD, which did not initially consider.
[5] A review of the juridical approvals of OD is included in 3.1.2.
[6] Most priests and lay directors of OD worldwide studied in those centres, under the careful impulse of St Josemaría.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

where OD had university residences or other social activities (mainly in the UK, France, Austria, Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands), and met there with small groups of members and their friends. In early 1970s, he initiated several long travels to participate in much larger gatherings: Mexico (1970), Spain (1972) and several Latin American countries (1974 and 1975). He called these gatherings 'tertulias'[7] and the travels themselves 'Catechesis', since his main intention was to explain basic points of Christian doctrine and life to those attending the events, with the occasion of the questions they publicly posed.[8] In addition to his direct oral preaching, he wrote numerous letters to members of OD, where the main lines of its spirituality were clarified, as well as a few instructions on specific aspects of OD spirituality. His published books were oriented towards helping mental prayer (TW, HR), compiled some of his homilies (CPB), or collected interviews with international media (CMEB). A few more were posthumously published (see 2.1.3).

St Josemaría died in Rome on June 26th, 1975. He was beatified and canonized in 1992 and 2002, respectively, by Pope St. John Paul II. As an indication of the impact of his spiritual message, it is worth noting that OD had 32,800 members when he died, the vast majority laymen and women, with residences in 32 different countries. Estimations from the city of Rome's local police indicated that more than 350,000 people were present in his canonization ceremony in 2002.[9] Many more people have benefited from the message of Escrivá, as indicated by the fact that his most widely distributed book, 'The Way', has sold more than 5 million copies in 50 different languages.[10]

2.1.2 Cultural and theological roots.

To frame the spiritual message of St Josemaría in the historical context, it is convenient to present at least a background of the predominant viewpoints of the Catholic atmosphere where he was educated and initiated his priestly

[7] This Spanish word is difficult to translate to English ('get together' would be a resemblance). It implies a meeting of people (generally a few, although in the case of Escrivá occasionally those 'tertulias' were very numerous) talking about different issues in a familiar atmosphere.
[8] Many of these 'tertulias' were filmed and can be watched in several video platforms. The main one is hosted by the Betafilm foundation (https://www.bfplay.org/ last accessed in May, 2024).
[9] Both data are included in (González Gullón and Coverdale 2021)
[10] Data from https://escriva.org/es/camino/ (last access February 24th, 2024).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

ministry. This would provide a better picture of what are the novelties and potentials of the idea of ChM in the recent Catholic tradition.

The education of Escrivá was that common to a middle-class family in the Spain of the beginning of the 20th century. The country had suffered the last episode of the decolonization process at the end of the 19th century, with the loss of Cuba and Philippines. The practical end of the former colonial empire had a relevant impact on some Spanish intellectual circles, that reconsider the history of the country as a failure and disdained some of its traditions (particularly the Catholic ones) as obstacles to the social progress occurring in other European countries. Another group of intellectuals thought the opposite and considered that the deterioration of the country was somehow caused by the demise of its historical traditions, therefore supporting a traditionalist nationalism. These two positions, growingly polarized, were the seeds of the intellectual struggle that led to the Spanish Civil War a few decades later (1936-39).

The education of St Josemaría was affected by those positions, particularly when he moved to Madrid for his doctoral studies (1927), where he experienced the impact of anticlerical movements, first during the episodic burnings of churches at the beginning of the II Republic (1931) and, moreover, during the religious prosecution within the Civil War, particularly in the first months (July-November 1936), when some of his priest friends were killed and he had to go into hiding for more than one year.[11]

Jaume Aurell-Cardona distinguishes three periods in the education of St Josemaría:[12] The first one based in Barbastro (1902-15), a predominantly rural environment where he spent his first years, which was closely linked to the main values of the Catholic tradition, as most educational establishments were in fact led by Church congregations. This period left memories of agricultural landscapes that he used throughout his later preaching.[13] A second period covers his secondary-school and priestly studies in Logroño and Zaragoza (1915-1927), two medium-size towns. There, he started to realize the influence of lay movements that had an opposite vision to many traditional religious values. He

[11] See in particular González Gullón (2018), who describes the political and social atmosphere of the Spanish civil war in Madrid, while focusing on how that affected the life of Escrivá.
[12] (Aurell-Cardona 2003).
[13] For instance, see, FoG, n. 1 and n. 314 or CPB, n. 146.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

gained a greater understanding of contemporary lay conceptions in the faculty of law of Zaragoza, where he made simultaneous studies with the seminary. The third period includes his studies in Madrid (1927 to 1936) where he found a more diverse society, both from a cultural and ideological point of view, and had the opportunity to meet different groups of students and professionals. He taught ethics in a university centre and tutored law students to support economically his family,[14] which gave him an even closer contact with intellectuals, as well as with the Spanish cultural *milieu* of the first decades of the twentieth century.

From a theological perspective, the atmosphere that St Josemaría lived at the beginning of his pastoral work could be qualified as very conservative. The anti-modernist dispositions of Pius X were mostly followed within the Spanish seminaries and Catholic cultural centres, which implied a certain prevention towards contemporary cultural proposals, including the renewal of Catholic theology. The main textbooks he followed at the seminary were quite conventional in this regard.[15]

Despite these conservative influences, the message of St Josemaría can be qualified as very innovative in the cultural and religious context where he started to disseminate it. The unity between the spiritual and material life sounds for most Catholics nowadays quite self-evident and in line with the developments of the SVC, but this was not the case in the cultural and theological atmosphere where Escrivá started his preaching, which was influenced by centuries of spiritual dualism. The universal call to holiness, including ordinary men and women, the importance of sanctifying the professional, family and social activities of their daily existence or his defence of the marriage vocation were quite unusual or even scandalous when Escrivá began to preach them in the early 1930s, as he himself would recognise a few years later.[16]

[14] His father had died in 1924, and therefore he became the head of the family and responsible for their maintenance, following the then Spanish conventions. After a few months living alone in Madrid, he could bring his mother, sister, and little brother, who was born in 1919. He always attributed this late birth (his mother was already 40) to a special grace of God since, after he decided to become priest, he had prayed to have a male brother to replace him in the familiar heritage.

[15] Herrando (2002) has analysed the historical period when Escrivá was in the seminary (1920-25).

[16] Letter 9.01.1932, n. 91: in Cano (2020b). In relation to sanctification of work see section 3.4.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

The increasing consideration of the relevance of material realities, in a world that was growingly secularised, fostered the interest of theologians and Popes during the second half of the 20th century to propose a new consideration of lay vocation in the Church, leading to the developments of the SVC in this regard. Being the core of his message the sanctification of ordinary activities, St Josemaría enthusiastically welcomed the Council's universal call to holiness, confirming what he was preaching since the early 1930s':

> … one of my greatest joys was to see the Second Vatican Council so clearly proclaim the divine vocation of the laity. Without any boasting, I would say that, as far as our spirit is concerned, the Council has not meant an invitation to change but, on the contrary, has confirmed what, with the grace of God, we have been living and teaching for so many years (CMEB, n. 72).

In addition to the cultural and theological atmosphere influencing Escrivá's message, one should keep in mind that it is primarily the message of a spiritual leader and writer, the founder of a Catholic institution that has opened new ways of pursuing holiness for thousands of lay men and women. Within the Catholic tradition, it is commonly accepted that founders of institutions approved by the Church bring new charisms, which may not be necessary attached to previous theological developments, but rather to those peculiar charismas they receive. In fact, the writings of Escrivá have no references to contemporary theologians, even though he was aware of theological trends, through his collaborators and friends.[17] In any case, he was clearly more influenced by traditional sources, mainly by his meditation of the Holy Scripture, particularly the Gospels and the Letters of Paul, which were the central source of his oral preaching.[18] Along with the Holy Scripture, Escrivá used frequently

[17] He received frequent visits from different ecclesiastical authorities, where these issues were commented (Herranz-Casado 2011). The doctoral dissertation of Jesús Gil-Sáenz (2014) analyses the working library of St Josemaria in the central house of OD, where he lived the last 30 years of his life. There were many biographies of Christ and saints, books about the Eucharist and liturgy, treaties on Moral and Dogmatic theology, history, pastoral and practical theology and dictionaries and other reference works. There were very few books of contemporary theologians (one by Thils and some liturgical treaties), but no books from theologians of work or laity such as Chenu, Philips, or Danielou.

[18] According to direct witness, his oral preaching was particularly moving especially when he glossed passages of the Gospels in a very vivid way, as something long meditated, which made a strong impression in their lives. See for instance some of the testimonies included in the book of Cano (2017), particularly in the section entitles: 'La predicación de San Josemaría' (The preaching of St Josemaría).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

patristic sources in his writings, mostly from the apostolic Fathers, Augustine and John Chrysostom. From Catholic theologians, the most quoted in Escrivá's texts is Thomas Aquinas. In addition, Escrivá was influenced by traditional spiritual authors of the XVI to XVIII century, such as St Ignatius of Loyola,[19] St Therese of Avila, St John of the Cross, Luis de la Palma, St Francis of Sales, Alonso Rodríguez, St Alfonse Liguori, or St Therese of Lisieux.[20]

2.1.3 Bibliographical sources.

In Spanish, Escrivá sounds very similar to 'scribe' (someone who writes), and he noted that parallelism — with good humour — when mentioning that he had written quite a lot in his life. However, most of those writings were addressed to his spiritual followers, including members and cooperators of OD, as well as personal friends with whom he had abundant epistolary exchange. A good part of these writings is not yet published, which has impacted the dissemination of Escrivá's spiritual message(see 3.4.3).

St Josemaria published two books in the 1930s. In 1934 he released a collection of meditations on the Catholic devotion of the Rosary (*Holy Rosary* HR),[21] and the first version *The Way* (TW), initially called *Spiritual Considerations*. It was published in its final version in 1939, with many additions and changes.[22] TW includes a collection of spiritual reflection and advice, organised in short meditation points to facilitate dialogical prayer and help disseminating the spiritual charism Escrivá was promoting. It is his most renowned book, widely distributed worldwide.[23]

---

[19] A paper of Armando P. Puigbó (2005) presents an analysis of influences of Ignatian spirituality on Escrivá, in the framework of the rich Catholic spiritual tradition of Spain, recognizing also significant differences between both saints in terms of historical conditions and the strong lay-oriented spirituality of Escrivá.

[20] Some of spiritual practices recommended by those authors were in fact incorporated to OD spiritual devotions. The paper of Cano (2020a) includes an analysis of those practices taken from other authors that were appreciated and recommended by Escrivá in his oral preaching.

[21] *Holy Rosary* is a personal meditation on the 15 mysteries of the life of Jesus and Mary that composed this traditional Catholic devotion (pope John Paul II extended the list with another 5 mysteries in 2002). HR is currently published in 25 languages, and it has sold over 700,000 copies (https://escriva.org/en/santo-rosario/, last access October 9th, 2023).

[22] See the critical edition of Pedro Rodríguez (2004).

[23] *The Way* has 140 editions with more than 5 million copies sold. It is considered a classic of Catholic spirituality, being the fourth most translated book of the Spanish language (https://opusdei.org/es/article/camino-entre-los-clasicos-presentacion-edicion-critica-camino-pusc-roma/, last access October, 8th, 2023).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Several decades later, during the 60s, he accepted several interviews in different newspapers and journals (Times, Le Figaro, Palabra, La Gaceta Universitaria…), questioning OD's spirit and practices, as well as the position of Escrivá about different theological and social issues (the SVC and trends in the Church, his position on university and culture, the role of women and other lay people within the Church, etc.). These interviews were published in a single book under the title: *Conversations with Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer* (CMEB) in 1968, which also included the Navarre Homily (PLW). A collection of homilies preached by Escrivá was published in 1973 as a book entitled: *Christ is Passing By* (CPB), followed by a second volume, called *Friends of God* (FoG) in 1977, a couple of years after his death. Posthumous publications were also *The Way of the Cross* (TWC, 1981), a book with a meditation on the Catholic practice of *Via Crucis*,[24] and two books with a collection of spiritual counsels to facilitate mental prayer: *Furrow* (FU, 1986) and *The Forge* (TF, 1987). A few additional homilies related to his vision of the Church were published in 1986 within the book: *In Love with the Church*, and a collection of his oral preaching was published under the title: *In Dialogue with the Lord* (IDL).[25] A recent online publication collects Escrivá´s discourses related to the University (*Speeches on the University).*[26] I should add to the list of the published works *The Abbess of las Huelgas*, which was his doctoral dissertation in law first published in 1944.[27]

In the last few years, the historical institute of St Josemaría Escrivá (ISJE)[28] is undertaking the publication of the critical edition of all his texts. They are quite useful to understand better the historical and cultural circumstances linked to specific expressions of Escrivá, as well as to document the sources and theological implications of his works. At the time of writing this chapter,

[24] This pious devotion implies considering 14 moments of Jesus Passion and Death, mostly derived from the Gospels, and it has a long tradition in the Catholic remembrance of the Holy Week.
[25] All these works were published initially in Spanish, but they have been translated to many languages. The original texts are collected in a new web site: https://escriva.org (last accessed in October 2023), which includes their translation to 20 languages. I will use throughout this dissertation the English version of the texts provided by this site, which does not yet include translation of recently published books and letters. For those documents, I will provide my own translation.
[26] Available at https://escriva.org/es/josemaria-escriva-de-balaguer-y-la-universidad/, last accessed on September 9th, 2024.
[27] This essay has marginal interest to describe the spirit proposed by Escrivá, as it is academic research on the legal jurisdiction of the abbess of a medieval monastery in Burgos (North-central Spain).
[28] https://www.isje.org/en/, last accessed in February 22nd, 2024.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

the following critical editions are available: *The Way* (2004),[29] *Holy Rosary* (2010),[30] *Conversations* (2012),[31] *Christ is passing by* (2013),[32] *The Abbess of las Huelgas* (2016),[33] *In Dialogue with the Lord* (2017),[34] *Friends of GOD* (2019),[35] and two volumes of Letters (2020[36] and 2022[37]). These pastoral letters sent by St Josemaria for the spiritual formation of OD members are a relevant source of information on his theological ideas. The 'Instructions' were also written by Escrivá to clarify different aspects of OD spirituality, and therefore they contain interesting insights on the spirit and organization of the institution.[38] The spiritual diaries of Escrivá, mostly covering the early years of OD (1930-36) are still unpublished, but many texts extracted from them had already been included in other books.[39]

In addition to Escrivá's works, I have considered in this dissertation a wide variety of documents dealing with his life and message. A good summary of those works was published a few years ago, covering the period from 1975 to 2008.[40]

2.2 Extent of Escrivá's ChM.

As an introduction to the concept of ChM in St Josemaría Escrivá, I will present a summary of his spiritual message, which would help to understand the novelty of his ideas, particularly in relation to the growing recognition of the spiritual value of material realities within the Catholic church. After this review, I will focus on the homily of Navarre, where he presented to a large audience

[29] (Rodríguez 2004)
[30] (Rodríguez et al. 2010).
[31] (Illanes and Méndiz 2012)
[32] (Aranda 2013)
[33] (Blanco and Martín 2016)
[34] (Cano and Castells 2017)
[35] (Aranda 2019)
[36] (Cano 2020b)
[37] (Cano 2022). At the time of writing this dissertation, nine of those letters have been published, and another twenty-nine are still unpublished. I read at the General Archive of the Prelature (AGP) of OD two of them related to the Escriva's theology of work (dated in 1948 and 1954). I acknowledge here the kindness of the staff of the AGP during my stay there in January 2024.
[38] I also read at the AGP these 'Instructions', which confirmed the importance of work within the charism of OD. I reviewed at the AGP personal testimonies of people who participated in the preparation of the homily of Navarre, as well as unpublished texts of the 1930s and 1940s related to St Josemaria ideas about work, taken mostly from notes prepared for his oral preaching.
[39] Particularly in the first volume of Vázquez de Prada's biography (1997-2003).
[40] See the articles of Fernández Montes et al. (2008a, 2008b). In addition, I have used more recent theological studies referring to his spiritual message, quoted in different sections of my text.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

his understanding of ChM, to finalise the section with my own judgment on how Escrivá was related to nature from a theological perspective.

2.2.1 Main theological ideas.

> We have come to say... that holiness is not a matter of privileged people: that all are called by the Lord, that from all he expects love: from all, wherever they may be, whatever their living conditions are, whatever their professional activity. Because the customary, ordinary life, can be a means of holiness: we do not need to abandon our state in the world to search for God, if the Lord does not give you a religious vocation, because all the ways of the Earth can be an occasion to encounter Christ (Letter 24.03.1930, n. 2).

This text, coming from one of the first letters that Escrivá sent to the then few members of OD in 1930,[41] properly summarizes the nucleus of his message and its main novelty. He tries to remind to all Christians that their ordinary professional, familiar or social circumstances are not an obstacle, but rather the proper realm, to encounter Christ. In my opinion, this is the core of the concept of ChM that he proposes, which implies a new conception of Christian vocation to holiness, embracing all men and women, regardless their cultural and social background. Escrivá sometimes indicated that his message was 'new, but as old as the Gospel' (CPB, n. 1), as the universal call for holiness was clearly portrayed in the words of Jesus: 'Be ye perfect, as my heavenly Father is perfect (Lk 19, 13),[42] and Paul's: 'This is God's will for you, your sanctification' (1 Thess. 4:3; Eph. 1:4), but it was somehow forgotten during the centuries, and even at the beginning of Escrivá's preaching, in the 1930s and 40s, found the opposition of many religious mentalities that consider impossible to attain sanctity in the midst of the world.[43] In one of his first letters to the members of OD, after including a quotation from St John Chrysostom and reviewing the holy lives of several lay Christians quoted in the Acts of the Apostles (Aquila and Priscilla,

[41] It is difficult to date precisely the Letters sent by St Josemaria to members of OD, as they had several editions (see Cano (2020b), and the AGP only stores the final version (generally from the late 1960s). However, I have kept the date selected by Escrivá corresponding to the first version, implying that the ideas included in the Letters were originated at that time. Whenever possible, I have contrasted the main ideas of those Letters with other contemporary documents which are more precisely dated.

[42] Quoted, among other places, in TW, n. 291.

[43] An example of the novelty his ideas had among certain religious minds in the 1930s and 1940s was that some considered him heretical. It is documented that the bishop of Madrid had to defend him before the ecclesiastical authorities against similar criticisms in the early 1940s (González Gullón and Coverdale 2021, ch. 4).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Lydia, Cornelius, Onesimus), Escrivá reflected on this abandonment of a core evangelical message that was evident in early Christianity:

> How clear it was, for those who knew how to read the Gospel, this general call to holiness in ordinary life, in the profession, without abandoning one's own environment! However, for centuries, most Christians have not understood it: the ascetic phenomenon could not occur in which many sought holiness in this way, without leaving their place, sanctifying the profession and sanctifying themselves with the profession. And, very soon, due to not living it, the doctrine was forgotten; and theological reflection was absorbed by the study of other ascetic phenomena, which reflect other aspects of the Gospel (Letter 9.01.1932, n. 79).[44]

I consider that this text implicitly indicates that the spiritual reputation of people who left the world in search of a more committed life, through different religious vocations,[45] would have blurred the original relevance of the lay vocation in the rest of the Church, as if the search for holiness in Christianity necessarily implied abandoning the world.

This basic message of St Josemaría can be better understood when complemented with other aspects of his practical theology. In doing so, I shall follow the main guidelines of the detailed study of Escrivá's spirituality developed by Ernst Burkhart and Javier López.[46] These authors organize their analysis around three sections: ends, fundamentals and means. The first one covers the three main objectives that Escrivá envisioned to live a deep relation with God: primarily pursuing the glory of God, aiming to promote the kingdom of Christ in the world (in a spiritual, not a political sense) and building the Church. The fundamentals ground his spiritual message in the concepts of divine filiation,

[44] The same idea appears in CMEB, n. 55, and in IDL, Meditation on St Joseph, n. 4.
[45] Escrivá indicated on many occasions that he had a great appreciation for those vocations leading to join a religious order (CMEB, n. 8, 13, 43, 54, 62, 118), but he made it clear that it was not his or that of those called to OD.
[46] (Burkhart and López 2010 - 2013). This is doubtless the most detailed analysis currently available about the message of St Josemaría, presented in 3 volumes totalling 1832 pages. A critical review of this text was published by Join-Lambert (2014), who acknowledged that it was the best systematic review of Escrivá's spirituality, although he considered that the analysis required further historical contextualisation. I have introduced the historical framework of Escrivá's ideas particularly in 2.3 and 3.4, and I have complemented Burkhart and López's study with the book of Aranda (2020), which also presents theological categories that are quite useful to frame the spirit proposed by Escrivá.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

freedom and virtues. The means indicate how to carry out this spiritual itinerary: sanctification of work and social activities, interior struggle (prayer and sacraments), and Christian formation activities.

The ends identified by Burkhart and López are obviously common to all Christians after receiving Baptism, but the main novelty of Escrivá's message was adapting those ends to the ordinary lives of lay men and women. Seeking the glory of God should be a distinctive character of all Christian lives – 'Deo omnis gloria' (to God all glory) was one of Escrivá's most common mottos, avoiding that selfishness guides their actions towards self-complacency or pride:

> ...let us never forget to do everything for His sake. If we were to do it for ourselves, out of pride, we would produce nothing but leaves, and no matter how luxuriant they were, neither God nor our fellow men would find any good in them (FoG, n. 202).

Give glory to God implies also collaborating in extending His kingdom. This is the second goal that Escrivá proposes ('*Regnare Christus volumus*', 'We want that Christ reigns', is another common motto in his writings). The idea is parallel to the encyclical letter *Quas primas* (1925) of Pious XI, where he introduced the feast of Christ the King in the liturgical calendar, but Escrivá avoided any potential confusion between proclaiming the kingdom of Christ and supporting any particular political position: the key is recognizing the sovereignty of Christ over all Creation, bringing back all human realities to the original purpose God had for them, rather than creating a kingdom of God on earth. Therefore, imputing material realities with Christian value should not mean a confusion between the material and spiritual realms, much less it implies that Christianity is the reference point for building a political party or that a particular political proposal should be considered the only Christian solution to a specific problem.[47] This would be integralism, admitting that religious doctrines (or even religious leaders) should guide public policies, which he explicitly rejected:

> I never talk politics. I do not approve of committed Christians in the world forming a political-religious movement. That would be madness, even if it were motivated by a desire to spread the spirit of Christ in all the activities of men. What we have to do is put God in

[47] On the other hand, he never supported considering the 'Old regime' an ideal period of Christianity, which should be somehow restored (Guerra 2003).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

> the heart of every single person, no matter who he is. Let us try to speak then in such a way that every Christian is able to bear witness to the faith he professes by example and word in his own circumstances, which are determined alike by his place in the Church and in civil life, as well as by ongoing events (CPB, n. 183).

He never publicly mentioned his political ideas nor asked any of his followers what they were, because he valued the freedom of all Christians to choose their political, social or cultural solutions according to their personal preferences, with the only limitation of what the ecclesiastical hierarchy might indicate in certain national circumstances.[48] This respect for the freedom of all Catholics in political matters created frequent misunderstandings about OD from people who identify the personal activity of its members with the whole institution.[49] Ironically, the allegedly 'integralist' character of OD and Escrivá himself has been one of the most extended criticism, almost exclusively based on the involvement of a few OD members in the Spanish policy of the 1960s, which was indeed quite relevant.[50]

The third goal is the edification of the Church. Searching for the glory of God also implies extending His kingdom, that is allowing all people to know Him, making the universal redemption be effective in the lives of everyone. Escrivá considers that God calls everyone personally, but not individualistically. He

[48] See, for example, FoG, n. 11. His letter of 15.10.1948 indicates that "Catholic doctrine does not impose concrete, technical solutions to temporal problems, but it does ask you to be sensitive to these human problems, and to be responsible to face them and give them a Christian outcome' (n. 28).

[49] Jaume Aurell-Cardona (2012) establishes the origin of what he calls 'The great narrative' about OD (referring to the public perception of it as a controversial institution) in the Spanish clerical and political environments of the 1940s, when OD was presented as a secret organisation with connections with the Masons and even denounced as such to the official authorities (González Gullón and Coverdale 2021). Aurell-Cardona indicates that the first controversy about OD was created by the 'Falange' party (the only legal party at that time in the Franco's regime) precisely because OD members involved in politics were not fully aligned with the official regime. Escrivá never imposed any political direction to OD members, neither in Spain nor in other countries. Another confrontation with Franco's regime, which reflects the relevance that Escriva assigned to political and personal freedom has been studied by Antonio Tormo-Ederra (2022).

[50] One of this criticism comes from Hars U. von Balthasar (1963) in an article published in a Zurich newspaper who considered OD, 'The greatest concentration of integralist power in the Church today,' based on the presence of a few OD members in the government of Franco after 1959, ignoring those who were in the clandestine opposition (González Gullón and Coverdale 2021). Among them, a few who became later on important figures of the first governments after the return of democracy to Spain. For instance, Antonio Fontan was the first president of the Spanish Senate. In any case, as I indicated at the beginning of this dissertation, my interest is not dealing with historical controversies around OD, but with the spirituality of Escrivá, and from the analysis of his texts it is clear the Escrivá never supported 'integralism'.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

emphasised the relevance of common priesthood, that every Christian receives with Baptism:[51]

> This priesthood — though essentially distinct from the ministerial priesthood — gives him the capacity to take part in the worship of the Church and to help other men in their journey to God, with the witness of his word and his example, through his prayer and work of atonement (CPB, n. 120).

Pursuing a holy life entails also concern about the sanctity of friends and professional colleagues. Because of common priesthood, for Escrivá all lay Christians should also have a priestly soul, which leads to the eagerness to bring other persons to God. Sanctifying ordinary realities and sanctifying others were inseparable to Escrivá, who reminded that all Christians, not just priests or missionaries, are responsible for spreading the 'good news' to others.[52] This priestly soul should be attached, following Escrivá's spirituality, to a secular outlook, as seeking for holiness and propagating Christ' message occurs for lay Christians in the midst of their ordinary circumstances.

Following again Burkhart and López's scheme, the three main fundamentals that ground Escrivá's spiritual goals are the sense of divine filiation, the value of freedom and the practice of virtues. For St Josemaría, the conviction that God is our Father should permeate all dimensions of Christian life, and provides inner meaning even in painful events, based on the appreciation that God loves and cares about His children. In October 1931, he received what he understood as a supernatural inspiration to base OD's spirit in the sense of divine filiation:

> I wanted to do my prayer, after holy Mass in the quietness of my church. I could not do it. In Atocha[53] I bought the newspaper and took the tram, but even now I have not been able to read but one paragraph. I felt receiving prayer of affections, abundant and burning. I was like that in the tram until I got home. (...) I felt the action of God who made me germinate in my heart and lips, with the strength of something really necessary, this tender invocation: *Abba* Father.[54]

[51] I will come back to this figure in my analysis of 'Priest of Creation', see 4.5.1.
[52] I will develop this further in 3.2.3 within the relational dimension of work.
[53] A popular street and square in Madrid.
[54] Quoted from Escrivá's spiritual diary by Vázquez de Prada (1997-2003), vol. I, p 389. The second sentence was also included in Letter 9.01.1959.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

This incident was for him a clear sign that divine filiation should permeate everyday facets, from the way of praying to approaching professional and social activities, including illness or contradictions:

> Our spirit leads us to feel very deeply the divine filiation: *carissimi, nunc filii Dei sumus* (1 Jn 3,2); Dearest, we are now children of God. Joyful truth that bases our entire spiritual life, that fills our inner struggle and our apostolic tasks with hope (Letter 11.03.1940, n. 2).[55]

Sons and daughters deal with their parents in a free and confident way. Therefore, for Escrivá the freedom that Christ has gained for us, through his redemptive death and resurrection, is a necessary condition for living a thorough Christian life. This entails that relationship with God should be imbued with the same trust and closeness that children have with their parents, implying that the relation with God should be motivated by an inner desire to love a Father, rather than by servant's obedience:

> Freedom is very close to my heart — that is precisely why I so love the Christian virtue of obedience. We should all realize that we are children of God, and should want to fulfil the will of our Father. We should do things as God wants them done, because we feel like it, which is the most supernatural of reasons (CPB, n. 17).[56]

This also implies respecting other people's freedom, and even loving the diversity of opinions in all those matters that have not set as official positions of the Church:

> How sad it is to have a Caesarist mentality, and not to understand the freedom other citizens enjoy in the things God has left to the free choice of men (FU, n. 313)

---

[55] Escrivá himself indicated that 'divine filiation is the basis of the spirit of Opus Dei' (CPB, n. 64). The statutes of this institution indicates that: 'The solid foundation upon which everything in Opus Dei rests and the fertile root which vivifies everything is a humble and sincere sense of divine filiation in Jesus Christ, leading to a gentle belief in the fatherly love that God has for us' (https://opusdei.org/en-uk/article/statutes-of-opus-dei-eng/, n. 80. § 1, last access August 2024). This aspect is also important in my framework, as co-redemption is attached to divine filiation (see 4.4.2).

[56] Another frequent criticism of Escrivá's spirituality is the supposed blind obedience demanded to OD members (Ávila García 2022; Castillo 1978). This text suffices to indicate the profound sense of Christian freedom in Escrivá, compatible with understanding obedience as the personal desire to fulfil God's will. It is also important to remember that St Josemaría was not in favour of vows, but of commitments based on one's own responsibility and personal choice, and therefore did not require his followers to take a vow of obedience, precisely because of his understanding of Christian freedom. See in this regard the article of a well-known theologian unrelated to OD (Fabro 1980).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Respect for freedom is also particularly relevant for the apostolic mission of Christians, which Escrivá based on 'friendship and confidence' (Cf. CMEB, n. 62), suggesting that apostolate 'must be the overflow of your life 'within'' (TW, n. 961), and therefore entails extending one friendship with Jesus Christ to the environments around, communicating one Christian values to colleagues naturally, never aggressively, respecting the freedom of their consciences.[57]

The third basis of the spirit preached by St Josemaría is the practice of virtues. Among them, the first is Charity, which should not be a formal virtue, but rather fill with warm, affection, and deeds. Escrivá encouraged that all human actions be filled with the love of God: 'Do everything for Love. Thus, there will be no little things: everything will be big' (TW, n. 813). He highly valued the other 'theological virtues' (Faith and Hope), but also stressed the importance of the 'human virtues', referring to those qualities that are desirable for all people, regardless of their religious beliefs (or lack of them), as he considered them to underpin the practice of the Christian virtues.[58]

After ends and fundamentals, Burkhart and López deal with the means of Escrivá's spirituality. They summarize them in three aspects: sanctification of work and ordinary activities, practicing of interior struggle and self-control to overcome imperfections, and a frequent recurrence to the means of sanctification offered in the Church, that are prayer and sacraments, particularly Eucharist and Penance, plus attaining a solid formation. The nucleus of ChM is the first aspect, as St Josemaría always emphasised that the professional and social environments are, for most lay Christians, the place to encounter God. Within this scope, sanctifying the work becomes a core teaching of Escrivá, as I will analyse in detail in chapter 3.

Sanctifying ordinary activities entailed in his vision promoting social progress, collaborating with other colleagues, even with those agnostics or atheists, being simultaneously faithful to the moral values of the Church. Escrivá insisted that lay Christians are not in the midst of the the world to make it holy

[57] Escrivá always refused to use any kind of violence, moral or physical, to win new souls for Christ: 'Violence is not a good method to convince anyone. Even less so in the apostolate' (FU, 866). See also CPB, n. 36; FU, n. 668. In one of the interviews he gave to the media, he recalled that OD was the first Catholic institution to accept non-Catholics as co-operators, as a practical manifestation of this respect for personal conscience (cf. CMEB, n. 44).
[58] The practice of virtues is key for ecological conversion, as I will comment in 4.4.1.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

(as an external mission), but rather they are there because this is their natural place to be, following their baptismal vocation to sanctify the world, in order to become saints themselves. Christians would be able to increase the 'spiritual temperature' of the environments where they develop their ordinary activities only when they hold a continuous dialogue with God, even within ordinary activities, trying to bring them closer to Christ.[59] For doing so, Escrivá recommended a set of devotional practices, which he called a 'plan of life', including daily Holy Mass, mental and vocal prayer and spiritual reading. A synthesis of what Escrivá understood by mental prayer was included in TW, written precisely to help lay Christians to progress in their mental prayer:

> You write: 'To pray is to talk with God. But about what?' About what? About Him, about yourself: joys, sorrows, successes and failures, noble ambitions, daily worries, weaknesses! And acts of thanksgiving and petitions: and Love and reparation. In a word: to get to know him and to get to know yourself: 'to get acquainted! (TW, n. 91).[60]

Sanctifying the ordinary life implies encountering Christ also in family life and relationships. Escrivá valued the sacrament of marriage as a true vocation and encouraged members of OD (most of them married) to consider the importance of conjugal love and the critical role of their spouses and children in their pathway to holiness.[61] He frequently uses the adjectives 'luminous and joyful' to refer to Christian homes. Despite the respect and encouragement that Escrivá had for the professional development of women, he also defended the dignity and irreplaceable importance of their role in home caring, which in his

[59] I will extend this analysis in the subjective dimension of work, see 3.2.2.
[60] Surprisingly this point of TW was selected by von Balthasar (1963) as an example of auto-referential prayer, within his critique of Escrivá's spirituality. Surprisingly, because Escrivá conceives prayer as an encounter with God, that is the opposite of what Balthasar implies. To sustain his argument, he distorted the quotation, removing the last sentences and adding words on his own, which changed the meaning of Escrivá's thought. Balthasar exact quotation is: 'About Him, about yourself: joys, sorrows, successes and failures, noble ambitions, daily worries and *above all* your human weaknesses' (in italics his addition). The last two sentences, missing in Balthasar quotation, clearly expressed that Escrivá conceived prayer as a loving dialogue with God.
[61] His consideration of marriage, as a Christian vocation (CPB, n. 22-30) was particularly novel when he preached in the early 1940s, and it is directly connected to his ChM, as it indicates a high appreciation of material realities that constitute the core of ordinary Christians' life.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

opinion was not properly appreciated by modern society.[62] Following the tradition of the Catholic Church, Escrivá also very much esteemed the spiritual celibacy for the kingdom of God, both including priests and lay men and women. This may be considered a counterargument to his ChM, which would be the case if appreciating celibacy would imply rejecting marriage as something unworthy, which is strongly contrary to his vision.[63]

St Josemaría frequently talked about interior struggle to overcome the inclination to evil caused by original sin. This struggle should be approached with a positive mentality, oriented to get virtues rather than to abandon vices, and led by the grace of God but also by human effort. Following traditional Catholic ascetic practices, Escrivá suggested the recourse to mortification (self-sacrifice), including corporal and spiritual practices. This may also be considered contradictory to ChM, as if ascetism implied a negative vision of the body. However, he considered mortification -which sometimes called 'the prayer of the body'- not against the body, but only against its evil inclinations, a means to achieve a higher goal, not and end in itself, such as pain is necessary to cure illness or hard training to improve sport abilities. It is worth emphasising that he particularly favoured those mortifications that would help anyone become more devote (better fulfilling mental prayer, for example) or more serviceable to others (doing unwanted tasks at work or at home, giving up one's own preferences for the benefit of others, etc.), as well as those that are compatible with

[62] One of the most widespread criticisms of Escrivá's spirituality is his supposed misogynistic character (Ávila García 2022; Keller 2017), as if he considered women to be at the service of men or of reproduction in marriage. It is worth reviewing the interview on the situation of women in the world published in CMEB (n. 87-112) to get a better idea of his views on this issue.

[63] Critics of Escrivá have frequently quoted this point of TW: 'Marriage is for the soldiers and not for the General Staff of Christ's army' (n. 28), forgetting many others that complement it, for instance the previous: 'You laugh because I tell you that you have a 'vocation for marriage'? Well, you have just that: a vocation' (n. 27), while he always considered that the vocation of married members of OD was the same as the celibates (see also the critical edition: (Rodríguez 2004). On the other hand, this criticism joins the common arguments of detractors of priestly celibacy within the Church, who relate it to material ends (avoiding inheritance or being more available to serve others), but traditionally the Church has considered virginity for the kingdom of heaven superior to marriage because of the end for which it is intended, the eschatological destiny (Juan Pablo II 1982), and to achieve greater intimacy with God, following Paul's suggestions (cf. 1 Cor., 7:32-33), both motivations that Escrivá embraced too (Derville 2015a).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

an ordinary life: delaying a glass of water, eating a little less of what one likes the most, choose a less comfortable seat, etc.[64]

Along with prayer and mortification, a third spiritual means to achieve a deep Christian life is the frequency of sacramental reception. He considered all relevant but gave greater priority to those two that lay Christians most frequently receive: Penance and Eucharist. In the Catholic tradition, the Sacrament of Penance facilitates God's forgiveness of individual sins. St Josemaría encouraged the frequent practice of this sacrament, which he considered the greatest manifestation of God's mercy and a sound sign of personal conversion: 'The Christian life is a continuous beginning again each day. It renews itself over and over' (CPB, n. 114). If all sacraments are signs of the grace of God, the most important is certainly the Eucharist, as it is not just a sign of grace, but an actual re-incarnation of Christ in the sacramental species of bread and wine. He advised OD members to attend Mass daily, dividing their day in two halves: the first one in thanksgiving for having received Jesus in holy Communion and the second one in preparation for the following day.

Finally, Escrivá instructed all lay Christians to obtain a sound religious, spiritual, cultural and human formation, to understand better — and eventually help improving — the world where they live and make more informed choices in their professional or familiar commitments. As part of this formation, following a traditional practice in the Church, he recommended having a spiritual director, where anyone could freely and intimately talk about his/her own spiritual progress and seek advice.[65] Escrivá's religious ideas would not be complete if the centrality of Jesus Christ were not properly underlined:

> In the spiritual life, there is no new era to come. Everything is already there, in Christ who died and rose again, who lives and stays with us

[64] The practice of certain corporal mortifications by members of OD (such as disciplines or cilice or sleeping on the floor) have been frequently distorted by media. It should be noted that these practices are only done by some celibate members, which are a small proportion of the whole membership, and therefore should not be considered the essential approach to mortification proposed by Escrivá.

[65] This aspect has also been criticised by several authors, which envision it as a mean of controlling the members and accused Escrivá's spirituality of disregarding spiritual discernment (see, for example, Castillo (1978). This contradicts many of Escrivá's texts, which encouraged cultivating spiritual judgment, both in prayer and in examination of conscience: 'We must ask the Lord that we may know how to discern what is for His glory from that which offends Him; that we may know what is for the good of creatures, and what is for evil; what will make us happy, and what will rob us of happiness, eternal happiness and the relative happiness that we can attain on this earth' (IDL, ch. 10). See also CMEB, n. 59; Letter 31.05.1943; Letter 16.07.1933.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

> always. But we must join him through faith, letting his life show forth in ours to such an extent that each Christian is not simply 'alter Christus': another Christ, but 'ipse Christus': Christ himself! (CPB, n. 104).

A further summary of the Escrivá's message can be found in the words of Pope John Paul II, who after the thanksgiving mass for his canonization (October 7th, 2002), call him 'the saint of the ordinary'.[66] This sentence resumes the spiritual pathway proposed by Escrivá, who dedicated his life to extend the idea that all lay men and women, regarding their professional, social and cultural status could search for spiritual perfection in their daily activities. The previous day, during the homily of the canonization mass, St John Paul II stressed the convergence of spiritual and material dimensions of ordinary life as the basis for Escrivá's proposal to seek holiness in the middle of the world:

> He never stopped inviting his spiritual children to invoke the Holy Spirit to ensure that their interior life, namely, their life of relationship with God and their family, professional and social life, totally made up of small earthly realities, would not be separated but would form only one life that was 'holy and full of God. He wrote: 'We find the invisible God in the most visible and material things' (PLW, n. 114).[67]

2.2.2 Homily of Navarre.

The main description of Escrivá's understanding of ChM was included in the homily he preached at the University of Navarre (in Pamplona, Northern Spain) in 1967. This text can be considered as his most theologically refined, as well as the most studied and quoted.[68] Escrivá prepared the text with great care, with inputs from different theologians.[69] He wanted to leave a document that

---

[66] https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2002/october/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_ 20021007 opus-dei.html, last accessed on January 2024.
[67] Homily of John Paul II at the canonization of Josemaría Escrivá on October 6th, 2002 (https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/2002/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_20021006_escriva.html, last accessed on January 2024).
[68] See for instance: (Aranda 1987, 2018a; Fernández-García 2004; García-Suárez 1970; Guerra 2003; Illanes 2017; Leonard 2003; Rodríguez 2017), including a theological congress organised in Colombia on this specific topic (Bermúdez Merizalde 2016). All these authors indicate the novelty of the expression, but also the continuity of the idea with previous concepts developed by Escrivá.
[69] I had the opportunity to read the testimony of Pedro Rodriguez in the AGP (series A.3.87-2-3) about this homily. He was then a young theologian and director of studies of the theology department at the University of Navarre. He received the assignment in August 1967 of drafting some ideas for the homily. He delivered the document a few weeks later, after asking Alfredo García (then dean of the department) to review it. Escrivá asked García to extend the text with a

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

may summarise the relevant characteristics of his spiritual message. In this sense, the homily is paradigmatic of his message and clearly defines his ideas on ChM. On the other hand, the very positive reception of the text and its ample diffusion in several languages convinced Escrivá about the utility of publishing other homilies in the following years.[70]

To frame better the contents of the Navarre homily, it is worth indicating the social and cultural conditions that rendered it unique.[71] Firstly, it was delivered before a great crowd of around 25,000 people, who gathered in the University of Navarre to celebrate a convention of alumni and benefactors, with attendants coming from all over the country.[72] Most other homilies of Escrivá were preached to a small number of people, generally in the oratory of the central headquarters of OD. Secondly, it was Escrivá's first public appearance in a large gathering, after 20 years living in Rome, and therefore, his words were to have great repercussions to clarify the spiritual message of OD, not merely on those followers who had not seen him before, but also on the public authorities of Spain.[73]

---

few additions and further modified it himself, after careful examination with his close collaborators. I found no other documentation to confirm which specific parts of the text were drafted by Rodriguez, but the most likely is the first half, where the concept of ChM is included. In any case, Rodriguez affirms in his testimony that the ideas he used were not his own, but what he had read or listen to St Josemaria's preaching about the spiritual value of ordinary life.

[70] In fact, two collections of homilies were published in the following few years: CPB in 1973, and FoG in 1977. See in this regard Illanes (2017).

[71] The critical edition of CMEB includes a brief introduction to the historical framework of this homily (Illanes and Méndiz 2012). De Pablo (2017) provides also a historical background from the point of view of the university students' actions against the political regime of Spain in the early 1960s.

[72] The official name was 'Association of Friends of the University' (*Asociación de amigos de la Universidad)*. The University of Navarre was promoted in 1952 by St Josemaría who wanted to develop high-education centres defined by elevated professional standards and Catholic inspiration. It was the first university defined as corporate work of OD. In the 1960s and 70s other universities were created with a similar spirit in Perú, Kenia, the Philippines, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Italy, Colombia, Nigeria, Venezuela and Mexico.

[73] It is important to remember that Spain was then still a dictatorship ruled by General Franco (in power from 1939 to 1975), who facilitated the activity of the Catholic Church after the severe religious persecution that occurred during the Spanish civil war, but who distrusted any activities—even Catholic ones—that would weaken his regime. Post-war Spanish Catholicism was significantly affected by a close union of politics and religion, with frequent clerical abuses of power and a tendency to consider single opinions as the only ones accepted from a Catholic perspective. As indicated earlier, Escrivá always defended personal freedom of OD members in all political and social matters, with the sole limitation of following the Magisterium of the Church in dogmatic or moral issues (see 2.2.1). In fact, at the time of the Navarre homily, there were a few OD members in both the government (López Bravo, López Rodó, Espinosa and García-Moncó) and the clandestine opposition (Calvo-Serer, Fontán, Cebrián), the latter mostly unacknowledged by OD critics. In any case, Escrivá's words in Navarre aimed to clarify his spiritual message against those that interpret OD as a social or political group.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Before reflecting on its content, it is worth remembering that the homily did not have a specific title when it was delivered. It was simply called 'homily of Navarre'. The homily was first published in 1967 by the French journal 'La Table Ronde' under the title '*Le Matérialisme Chrétien*' (ChM),[74] and in Italian by 'Studi cattolici: rivista di teologia pratica' as '*Amare il mondo apassionatamente*' (Passionately Loving the World, PLW),[75] while the English version was initially called '*Encounter with Christ in the world*'.[76] All three designations refer to the same idea with different nuances, but they can be considered theologically equivalent. All emphasise the spiritual value of material realities and the relevance of searching for God amid the world, which Christians should love ardently. The expression ChM was used by Escrivá only in that homily (it is not found anywhere else in his published works), but it is closely aligned to his message from the early 1930s, as it synthetically reflects the importance of the material dimension of ordinary activities for encountering and loving God.[77] The equivalent expression of 'passionately loving the world' or just 'loving the world' is, however, frequent in both his oral preaching and writings.[78]

St Josemaría started the homily by referring to the readings of that Sunday (October 8th, 1967: Eph., 6:10-17 and Mt., 18:23-35). Reflecting on the Eucharist ceremony, Escrivá invited his listeners to think about the eschatological character of this sacrament ('the promise of future glory'),[79] which might be misunderstood, as if the goal of Christian life were to escape from ordinary realities. There, he started the core section of the homily:

> And indeed it has been, whenever men have tried to present the Christian way of life as something exclusively 'spiritual', proper to pure, extraordinary people, who remain aloof from the contemptible things of this world or at most, tolerate them as something necessarily attached to the spirit, while we live on this earth (PLW, n. 113).

[74] Vol. 239 (XII-1967), pp. 231-42.
[75] *V*ol. 80 (XI-1967), pp.35-40. This was the title finally selected by Escrivá when the text was included in CMEB in 1968.
[76] First published by Scepter Booklets #13, Chicago, in 1968.
[77] I was not able to confirm in the AGP documentation whether the expression ChM was suggested by Rodríguez or introduced by Escrivá himself. In any case, he accepted it, as part of the core message of the homily.
[78] For instance: FU, n. 290; CPB, n. 65 and 112; FoG, n. 137 and n. 206; CMEB, n. 70; Letter 9.01.1932, n. 59. See Burkhart and López (2010 - 2013), particularly vol. III on the sanctification of material realities.
[79] Common expression in Catholic theology, taken from the hymn *O sacrum convivium*.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Following this 'spiritualised' version, Christianity would only value spiritual practices (devotions performed at the temple), thus leaving aside the daily realities that are the main environment of most Christians. Therefore, those ordinary realities would not have any real implication in one's relation with God, as if Christian life would develop aside of professional, familiar and social circumstances that constitute the essence of normal people's daily lives:

> When things are seen in this way, churches become the setting par excellence of the Christian life. And being a Christian means going to church, taking part in sacred ceremonies, being taken up with ecclesiastical matters, in a kind of segregated world, which is considered to be the ante-chamber of heaven, while the ordinary world follows its own separate path. The doctrine of Christianity and the life of grace would, in this case, brush past the turbulent march of human history, without ever really meeting it (PLW, n.113).

Escrivá criticises this distorted image of Christianity, linked to a spiritual dualism that despises—or at best marginalises— Christians' material realities. Far from being an obstacle, Escrivá conceived those material realities as the proper realm for our 'daily encounter with Christ. It is in the midst of the most material things of the earth that we must sanctify ourselves, serving God and all mankind' (PLW, n. 113).

God calls all Christians to live in an intimate relationship with Him throughout their daily material and secular realities, precisely because they were created by God, who 'saw what he had made, and all was very good' (Gen. 1:31). This is precisely one of the most solid foundations of Escrivá's ChM, the intrinsic goodness of the world as God's creation. Only human sin 'makes it bad and ugly', and only through assuming the redemptive sacrifice of Christ would it return to its original created order. Therefore, leaving the world is a temptation for most Christians who are called to sanctify their ordinary activities, such as work, familial and social relations, and even leisure and rest, finding Christ in those material realities.

St Josemaría stated that these ideas were not new, but rather a central part of his preaching since the 1930s, when spiritual dualism was more vivid within Spanish Catholicism, and he stressed the need of joining contemplative and active life amidst ordinary professional and family circumstances:[80]

[80] See section 3.3.3 on 'unity of life'.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

> I often said to the university students and workers who were with me in the thirties that they had to know how to 'materialise' their spiritual life. I wanted to keep them from the temptation, so common then and now, of living a kind of double life. On one side, an interior life, a life of relation with God; and on the other, a separate and distinct professional, social and family life, full of small earthly realities.
>
> No, my children! We cannot lead a double life. We cannot be like schizophrenics, if we want to be Christians. There is just one life, made of flesh and spirit. And it is this life which has to become, in both soul and body, holy and filled with God. We discover the invisible God in the most visible and material things (PLW, n. 114).

But valuing material realities is not only related to our material and spiritual composition (flesh and soul). It is also a consequence of a more practical certainty: material circumstances are the scenario to encounter Christ, as they frame the life of the vast majority of Christians. Therefore, finding God in those realities is the only alternative for them to live a deep spiritual life.

> There is no other way. Either we learn to find our Lord in ordinary, everyday life, or else we shall never find Him. That is why I can tell you that our age needs to give back to matter and to the most trivial occurrences and situations their noble and original meaning. It needs to restore them to the service of the Kingdom of God, to spiritualize them, turning them into a means and an occasion for a continuous meeting with Jesus Christ (PLW, n. 114).

This paragraph links directly with the idea of ChM, which Escrivá considers to be an essential part of a true understanding of Christianity, connected to the central dogma of the Incarnation of Christ and the resurrection of the bodies:

> Authentic Christianity, which professes the resurrection of all flesh, has always quite logically opposed 'dis-incarnation', without fear of being judged materialistic. We can, therefore, rightfully speak of a 'Christian materialism', which is boldly opposed to that materialism which is blind to the spirit (PLW, n. 115).

The most obvious example of this ChM is the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, God made matter (bread and wine converted into flesh and blood), as well as the other sacraments (defined by Escrivá as 'the footprints of the Incarnate Word': PLW, n. 115), where the grace of God is rooted into matter (water, oil, bread, wine, and the body of spouses). Therefore, all material activities can be converted into spiritual treasures if they are filled with the love of God and performed for His glory and with human perfection:

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

> I assure you, my sons and daughters, that when a Christian carries out with love the most insignificant everyday action, that action overflows with the transcendence of God. That is why I have told you repeatedly, and hammered away once and again on the idea that the Christian vocation consists of making heroic verse out of the prose of each day. Heaven and earth seem to merge, my sons and daughters, on the horizon. But where they really meet is in your hearts, when you sanctify your everyday lives (PLW, n. 116).

Escrivá indicates that this doctrine has been the backbone of OD's spirituality from its founding in 1928: living a full Christian life through encountering Christ in ordinary work and family circumstances, putting love in those little things that embrace quotidian activity. Holiness, therefore, does not require the doing of extraordinary things, but rather of common things with extraordinary love and care, living extraordinarily that which is ordinary, transforming the conventional (the regular prose of each day) into something exceptional (heroic verse).

A direct consequence of valuing material realities as the amphitheatre of our Christian struggle for holiness is love for the world, for the society in which one lives, and a profound interest in the improvement of that society to make it somehow closer to God and more suited to human progress. But this positive attitude towards society should not imply a new integralism, in which personal solutions to social problems are presented as the 'Catholic solution', thus leading to new forms of clericalism, mixing political and religious atmospheres. In the specific cultural atmosphere of most of Escrivá's listeners — considering the conditions of Spain at the time — this was a real danger, but he was not half-hearted in his criticism of it:

> That would be completely inadmissible! That would be clericalism, 'official Catholicism', or whatever you want to call it. In any case, it means doing violence to the very nature of things (PLW, n. 117).

Within this line of thought, Escrivá reiterated the importance of promoting a lay mentality, which implies undertaking work with a professional mentality, respecting other people's opinions 'in matters of free discussion', and participating in political or social movements with personal responsibility, instead of using the Church to back up personal opinions, mixing religion and politics, as if there were 'Catholic solutions' to those problems that the faithful should

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

follow.[81] Addressing an audience who lived (then) in a confessional Catholic country, where in many cases this mixing occurred, the words of Escrivá are particularly significant, encouraging his listeners to participate in public life following their personal freedom and responsibility:

> Interpret, then, my words as what they are: a call to exercise your rights every day, and not merely in time of emergency. A call to fulfil honourably your commitments as citizens, in all fields – in politics and in financial affairs, in university life and in your job – accepting with courage all the consequences of your free decisions and the personal independence which corresponds to each one of you. A Christian 'lay outlook' of this sort will enable you to flee from all intolerance, from all fanaticism. To put it in a positive way, it will help you to live in peace with all your fellow citizens, and to promote this understanding and harmony in all spheres of social life (PLW, n. 117).

Then Escrivá summarised the charism of OD members, predominantly lay men and women who strive to live faithfully their relationship with God in their ordinary circumstances. He clarified that vocation to OD was theologically different from that of religious congregations, the former being based on a secular commitment and the latter on a public consecration. Even OD priests should have a lay mentality. Actually, Escrivá defined himself in the homily as 'a secular priest: a priest of Jesus Christ who is passionately in love with the world' (PLW, n. 118).

After commenting on the implications of this lay outlook, Escrivá reminded his audience of the importance of marriage and family life. This is an important consideration in ChM, as several authors have emphasised that the sacrament of marriage is closely attached to the bodily dimensions of Christianity and, for that reason, has been controversial whenever dualistic approaches were more dominant,[82] as the same text discreetly criticises.

> I want to say once again that this holy human love is not something merely to be permitted or tolerated alongside the true activities of the spirit, as might be insinuated by false spiritualism to which I alluded previously. I have been preaching just the contrary, in speech and in writing, for forty years and now those who did not understand are beginning to grasp the point (PLW, n. 121).

[81] I have already commented on Escrivá's position in political matters (see section 2.2.1), leaving personal freedom to take whatever solution one considers the best for his-her country, with the only limitation of what the Catholic Magisterium may indicate.
[82] I already mention this issue in 1.2.2, particularly clear in Derrick (1972).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

If the spiritual pathway proposed by St Josemaría is addressed to ordinary Christians, the relevance of conjugal love for encountering Christ amid the world is a logical consequence, as most lay Christians live with their spouses. For Escrivá, marriage was not only a sacrament but a real vocation, which was not well understood in the first decades of his preaching, as the term vocation was reserved to religious or priestly commitments.[83] St Josemaría saw in family life an evident application of finding God in ordinary circumstances: in this case, in the familiar events that make up the life of most homes, by taking care of the little details that manifest real affection for God and others. There, couples can also find the 'divine something'[84] hidden in ordinary life, which provides spiritual relevance to normal circumstances. Linking again material and spiritual realities, Escrivá reminded that Christian spouses are also temples of the Holy Spirit:

> ...something as material as my body has been chosen by the Holy Spirit as His dwelling place... I no longer belong to myself... my body and soul, my whole being, belongs to God... And this prayer will be rich in practical consequences, drawn from the great consequence which the Apostle himself proposed: 'glorify God in your bodies' (1 Cor 6:20) (PLW, n. 121).

He went even further, in another document, comparing the sanctity of the spouses' bodies with the material component of Eucharist, in which something as material as bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ (Cf CMEB, n. 92).

As a summary, the ChM proposed by Escrivá opposes both spiritualising versions of Christianity that despise the value of material realities, and materialistic philosophies or theologies that only see worth in matter and do not recognise the value of the spiritual dimension.

---

[83] The critical edition of TW (Rodríguez 2004) emphasises the novelty of this affirmation, particularly at that time, as some of the first married members of OD have testified. They met Escrivá in the early 1940s and were very surprised by hearing him to use the term vocation to refer to their married life, as it was then only applied to priestly or religious consecration.

[84] In this expression, 'divine something', St Josemaría means the discovery of the traces of God that are concealed in daily events, which is one of the main applications of the ChM's approach. The expression is used in other sections of the homily (n. 114 and 121). Sometimes Escrivá used in his preaching the Latin translation: *quid divinum*. Illanes and Méndiz (2012) in the critical edition of CMEB indicate that this expression was common in classical Rome when referring to genius in art or medicine.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

2.2.3 Nature in Escrivá's spirituality.

Several authors have identified that 'passionately loving for the world' is the core principle of Escrivá's spirituality.[85] 'Loving the world', 'Encountering Christ in the world' and ChM are somehow synonymous concepts for Escrivá, but to connect better this concept to environmental concern and care it seems convenient to clarify what exactly meant St Josemaría by 'loving the world', or more precisely, what he meant by 'world'. In this regard, his thought is ambiguous: although most of the occasions the concept of the 'world' refers to the human environment, on a few occasions he also implied the natural world. Out of ninety times that he used the word 'nature' in his published works, only in eight occasions he referred to the natural world. Most other uses designated (i) a component of the human essence ('grace does not dispense with nature', 'Christ assumed our nature'), (ii) the essence of things ('by nature to all corresponds', 'Man is rational by nature') or (iii) the type of relationship between two things ('Of what nature is this influence?').

On the other hand, he never mentioned the word 'ecology' or its derivatives in his published works. Therefore, it seems clear that Escrivá did not understand 'loving the world' as referring to the natural world (landscapes, animals or plants), but rather as the realm of human existence. However, Escrivá's positive view of the world, seems logically connected to an optimistic position towards the natural world.

Certainly, Escrivá's few references to nature should be framed within the cultural sensitivity of society at his time, as environmental issues were very marginal to the Catholic doctrine until a few decades ago.[86] Nowadays, some of the expressions he used in relation to animals, may sound a bit harsh, but they were linked to the general mindset of the first half of the 20th century: for example, when referring to freedom, he wrote that it was 'an incalculable treasure, a wonderful pearl that would be sad to throw to the beasts' (FoG, n. 161), or when praising the task to be empathic with others, he indicated: 'I am not sentimental. It consoles me to think that only beasts do not cry: we men,

[85] (Aranda 2018a, 2020; Burkhart and López 2010 – 2013; Illanes 2017; Pasqua 2013).
[86] It should be recalled that Escrivá died in 1975, while environmental issues started to be more prominent in Catholic theology only in the last two decades of the 20th century (Allitt 1998; Ball 1992; John Paul II 1990).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

the children of God, cry' (FoG, n. 178). However, he also exemplified virtues with animal behaviour, with a particular affection for donkeys, which he considered an example of sobriety and perseverance in hard work (TW, n. 998; FoG, n. 137; Letter 9-1-1932, n. 85; Letter 15.10.1948, n. 11), or dogs, as an illustration of faithfulness (TF, n. 73). Although he primarily conceived the world as a human-construct, he also included occasionally the rest of Creation in his concept of loving and sanctifying the world:

> I don't like to speak of fear, for the Christian is moved by the charity of God, which has been shown to us in Christ and teaches us to love all men and the whole of creation (CPB, n. 59).[87]

It is worth noting that I have not found any explicit pro-environmental statements by Escrivá, but neither have I found any that support an anti-environmental position. In fact, he praised on several occasions the beauties of the natural world as part of the goodness of creation, while the favourable judgement of God over His creatures (Gen. 1:31), was for him the fundament of a positive view of the world and all material realities, including animals and plants.

> Holy Scripture teaches us that, once the wonderful work of Creation was completed, heaven and earth with their splendid procession of beings (Cfr. Gn 2,1), God contemplated everything he had made and saw that everything was very good (Gn 1,31) (Letter 11.03.1940, n.2).

He also occasionally used examples of the natural word to illustrate spiritual ideas: fishermen bringing their captures to the land helped by a little boy, as an image of spiritual childhood (FoG, n. 14), or compared the development of OD to that of a natural organism.[88] He also recalled events from his priestly ministry related to rural life or include acute comments on Jesus' parables bringing to spiritual life agrarian activities: fishing and audacity in apostolate

[87] The whole of creation obviously implies other creatures, in a similar line to his expressions in other texts. For instance, in his Letter of 29.12.1947, he wrote: 'If you question yourself what the world is, I will answer (...), all things that come along the lives of human beings, their relations with God and other creatures, their family, professional, political, and economic relationships'.
[88] For instance, illustrating the need of be discrete (avoiding unnecessary propaganda) in relation to OD, he wrote: 'All living beings need a certain period of protection, of varying length, before they appear in the light; they need particular conditions to make possible their first development, their maturation. Nature does this with plants and animals and men; it is therefore perfectly natural that we should take the same care with the Work, which is a living organism, which is just beginning its activity' (Letter 9.01.1932, n. 62).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

(CBP, n. 159; FoG, 260); transient shepherds building a sheep pen and calling their sheep by name, as a remembering of Christ the good shepherd (FoG, n. 1).

In the last years of his life, St Josemaría showed concern for conservation of landscapes that were familiar to him, showing a growing environmental sensitivity. For instance, he wrote a letter in 1971 to a friend from his native town of Barbastro, expressing his concern about the air and water pollution that could be produced by the establishment of new industries there.[89] Perhaps the most evident reference to his awareness of environmental problems, comes from a comparison he made in early 1970s between polluted water and worldly corruption, which should not prevent Christians to continue living in the world, but rather encourages them to be more faithful:

> Let us not want to leave the world. Let us not want to shorten the days, even when they are very long for us; even when we see that those who could be doing so are not purifying the waters, but contribute to polluting the rivers, to release pollutant substances into the midst of the immense seas, which cannot free themselves from all that evil . . . This, my children, is what I ask of the Lord many times in your name and mine. That this world that He has made, and that we men are defiling, may return to what it was when it came from his hands: beautiful, without corruption, an antechamber to Paradise.[90]

As regards to the spiritual value of matter itself, Escrivá rarely mentioned this aspect, since —as previously indicated— in most of his texts, matter refers to the material dimensions of reality (the ordinary circumstances), rather to a philosophical concept. However, it is worth emphasising that Escrivá provided insights on the potential expansion of this concept to the matter itself, for instance in the Navarre homily, when he indicated that we should give back 'to matter and to the most trivial occurrences and situations their noble and original meaning' (PLW, n. 114), implying that matter and human situations are two different realities, on one hand, and the need of restoring the creational value of matter, on the other.[91] In the next paragraph of the same homily he emphasised that authentic Christianity professes the resurrection of all flesh

[89] Quoted by Vázquez de Prada (1997-2003, vol. III, p. 619), and Albareda-Tiana (2023, p. 137).
[90] Quoted by Vazquez de Prada (2001-2005, vol. III, p. 434).
[91] This is the main topic of Hernández-Urigüen's essay (2003), where he develops the idea of restoring the role of matter through the universal application of Redemption. I will come back to this in 4.3.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

and it is opposed to the idea of 'dis-incarnation', therefore giving spiritual value to the bodily (material) dimension of reality (Cf. PLW, n. 115).

Finally, another dimension of Escrivá's ChM that I consider relevant for my research is the central role that he assigned to the sacraments in the sanctification of ordinary life, as all have a material component. In this regard, he considers the Eucharist as being the deepest manifestation of the links between Christ and matter ('What is this Eucharist which we are about to celebrate, if not the adorable Body and Blood of our Redeemer, which is offered to us through the lowly matter of this world…?' PLW, n. 115), agreeing with most Catholics and Orthodox ecotheologians,[92] who admit the real (bodily) presence of Christ in this sacrament, and find in the Eucharist the most excellence manifestation of God living into sacramental matter.

2.3 Critical assessments and alternatives to Escrivá's ChM.

I will present in this section a critical review of authors who have developed ideas related to the concept of ChM, regardless of whether they are related or not to Escrivá's. Firstly, I comment on those that directly mention his concept of ChM, to endorse it or criticise it, and then those that present other alternatives.[93]

As indicated earlier, the Navarre homily has been subjected to analysis in different theological essays, including those secondary scholars of Escrivá and those interested in lay theology. Among the latter, the homily was briefly reviewed by Gerard Philips,[94] and more comprehensively by Mgr. André-Joseph Léonard, then bishop of Namur and later bishop of Brussels. He praised the approach and the conclusions and considered that Escrivá's ideas on ChM exclude two extreme positions: on one hand, the 'disincarnation,' that is a spirituality closed to the world, and a materialism sealed to the spirit. Léonard considered that Escrivá's ChM properly balanced these extremes and that it was well grounded in Chalcedonian Christology, implying a strong defence of the

[92] Among others Edwards (2020), Chryssavgis (2019) and Daelemans (2016). The LS encyclical letter also explicitly mentions the same idea (n. 236). I will review this in 4.5.1.
[93] I will review here only those authors that have criticised Escrivá's concept of ChM. Later on in the dissertation I will cover those criticisms related to his theology of work (3.4.3). Other critics of his spiritual charism are commented by (Burkhart and López 2010 - 2013, vol. 1, pp. 106-118).
[94] (Philips 1968). He just indicates that is a 'recommended reading for professional theologians, so that they will deign to descend into the concrete life of the ordinary man' (p. 675).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

double nature, divine and human, of the single person of Christ. He also stressed the importance given by Escrivá to the sanctification of the world 'from within'.[95]

From the Spanish theologians directly influenced by Escrivá's thought, the most interesting studies of the Navarre homily were written by Antonio Aranda and Pedro Rodríguez. The former was published in 2018, extending a draft version from 1987.[96] On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the preaching of the Homily, Aranda reviewed the main studies published on the encyclical, highlighting those dedicated specifically to this text, as well as others in which it is cited in a leading role in commenting on the importance of sanctifying the daily realities of the Christian. In his opinion, the main theological contributions of Navarre's homily are: the relevance of material realities as a path to holiness, based on a profoundly optimistic vision of the world as God's creation and of the human condition redeemed by Christ; the spiritual value of ordinary circumstances, especially work and social and family relationships; the lay mentality and the priestly soul that overcomes the temptation of spiritualism (clericalism) and materialism (secularism) to lay the foundations of a true Christian materialism.

Pedro Rodríguez is an important reference in this question, as he was one of the collaborators of Escrivá in drafting the homily contents (see 2.2.2). He wrote several essays on ChM, most of them explicitly quoting the contents of the Navarre homily.[97] In his view the context of the text made it particularly relevant, as it was delivered soon after the SVC, with its universal call to holiness, but also within a growing secularist interpretation of its proposals, along with the seeds of the cultural revolution that May 1968 would bring. Within this panorama, Rodrigues considers that the core meaning of ChM would exceed the temporal limits of that context, as the document was proposing:

> ...a way of understanding man's relationship with God who, taking on material realities (the Word became *flesh*) and expressing Himself through the *matter* of this world, walks in the company of Jesus Christ and rises up to the One and Triune God. It could be said that, to an age that glorifies the material and the merely and professes

[95] (Leonard 2003).
[96] (Aranda 1987, 2018a).
[97] (Rodríguez 1992, 2012, 2017).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

> materialism and thus rejects God and Christianity, Josemaría Escrivá wants to propose, precisely from this perspective and in this key, the mystery of Christ and of Christian life in the world.[98]

Rodriguez considers that the novelty of Escrivá's interpretation of secularity was anchored in the spiritual horizon of matter, unlike secularist interpretations of materialism. This spiritual meaning would be obtained through the concept of unity of life, implying living coherently one's faith amidst the ordinary life. Similarly to Mgr. Léonard, Rodriguez considers that this attitude overcomes both false spiritualism (considering that only devotional rituals are spiritually worth) and materialistic interpretations of Christianity (common in that moment, where Communism was attracting Western intellectuals, being considered as the necessary path to attain social justice).

Other comments on the homily stressed specific dimensions of the text. For example, Josep I. Saranyana discusses the theological framework of this homily within the post-Conciliar debates on the theology of the world.[99] María Fernández-García finds the ground of ChM in the theology of creation (material realities are good, because God created the world and saw it was good), and the theology of work, which expresses the materiality of Christian life for most lay people, while evidencing the differences with other materialisms 'blind to the spirit', where work is just a mean to gain material goods emptied of spiritual significance.[100]

Finally, in the context of this dissertation, I find particularly interesting the essay of Hernández-Urigüen,[101] as it is the only comment on the Navarre Homily that links Escrivá's ideas with ecotheology. He focuses on St Josemaria's statement that 'our age needs to give back to matter and to the most trivial occurrences and situations their noble and original meaning' (PLW, n. 114), relating the text to theologies of creation and redemption, as the material world was restored by the sacrifice of Christ to their original meaning. The primary bounty of the world was deteriorated by human sin, transforming the material beings from making transparent the image of God to being opaque in the spirit,

[98] (Rodríguez 2017, p. 442)
[99] (Saranyana 2017).
[100] (Fernández-García 2004).
[101] (Hernández-Urigüen 2003),

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

as portrayed by different dualisms, which Escrivá suggests overcoming, by linking the value of matter to the Incarnation and the sanctifying action of the Holy Spirit (see 4.5.2).

With regards to the critics of Escrivá's ChM, I have already mentioned the brief article of Von Balthasar criticising OD as an institution and its spirituality, due to its alleged promotion of 'integralism', but I found his criticism poorly justified.[102] In any case, von Balthasar' critique only marginally touches the central issue of ChM, or rather confirms its misinterpretation, because Escrivá, based on the lay outlook of his spirituality, explicitly rejected in the Navarre homily the confusion between religion and politics, and therefore any potential integralism in the sense interpreted by von Balthasar.

Catherine Keller acknowledged Escriva's interest in the concept of ChM in her essay on contemporary answers to materialism, but she did not develop any further thoughts on Escrivá's understanding of this concept.[103] She provided an interesting review on the significance of material dimensions in Christianity, particularly associated to Creation narratives, Incarnation and Resurrection of bodies, cults to relics, icons and devotion to the saints. She finally links her proposal to the works of Alfred Whitehead and Karen Barad, but in my opinion with very vague practical implications.

[102] As I have indicated, some of von Balthasar's perceptions were based on incorrect quotations from TW and a partial knowledge of the Spanish political situation. Several authors pointed out the weaknesses of his critique (Coverdale 1964). A few years later, von Balthasar rectified his interpretation and considered OD as a positive institution in bringing together the secular mentality and apostolic initiative (interview in Herder Korrespondenz, published in 1976, and quoted by (Burkhart and López 2010 - 2013).

[103] (Keller 2017). She considers that Escrivá's proposal on ChM is quite innovative, but in her opinion contradict the reality of the institution he founded (OD), which she indicates that 'has from the start been criticized by mainstream Catholics for its alliance with authoritarian regimes, its misogyny, its secretive access to power' (p. 61). She takes for granted these accusations, as she does not provide any argument to support them. I found more interesting and related to ChM her criticisms of some practices of corporal mortification recommended by Escrivá, which in her view contradict the appreciation of matter that the expression ChM portrays. Even though, as I indicated in 2.2.1, those mortifications are not a fundamental component of OD spirituality — as they are only practiced by celibate members — they can be envisioned as a certain disdain for the body. However, I consider that these devotions do not necessarily imply a bodily rejection or much less masochism, but rather reflect the importance of personal struggle to overcome evil tendencies, reflecting the deterioration of human nature that was introduced by original sin. This is the theological framework of corporal mortifications in Christianity, practised by many Christians in many epochs, even by lay men and women (for example St Thomas More wore privately a hairshirt, now preserved in Buckfast Abbey, as a voluntary form of self-sacrifice).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Apart from Escrivá's interpretation, the ChM has been presented in the last century by various authors, in dialog with other cultural paradigms, but generally disconnected from its impact on overcoming spiritual dualism. For example, Hibbert presents ChM in dialogue with Marxism, emphasising the material dimensions derived from the Incarnation of Christ, and the compatibility of Christian message with a spiritualised version of matter.[104] Hibbert's paper was heavily criticised by Grave for reflecting a starkly materialistic view of Christianity, while considering the Church as a mere social institution.[105] Along similar lines of presenting ChM as an alternative to promote dialogue between Christianity and Marxism, Robert C. Zaehner contrasted the ideas of Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) on matter with those of Marx and Engels.[106] He tried to make these two visions converge through what he called a 'Christian revolution', stressing the idea of love to others as a way of escaping from ourselves, from our own limitations. He considered Communism an ideal system that was corrupted once it was implemented in a particular state, the Soviet Union. Finally, he emphasised the relevance of the Eucharist, as it indicates the full union between God and matter.

> The ultimate centre is already here: we do not need to look for it in the future. It is here in the sacrament of bread and wine, the body and blood of the Man-God Jesus, killed and negated as a single man on the cross and resurrected as our universal food and unfailing intoxication.[107]

Within a different perspective, a few Christian theologians, such as Peter van Inwagen or Kevin Corcoran, advocated for a ChM that defends the monism of human nature, which would have only one bodily dimension. For these authors body is spiritualized matter, implying that the soul is somehow present in the whole body.[108] Souls cannot live without bodies, therefore to accept the Christian dogma of the resurrection of bodies, they believe that after personal

[104] (Hibbert 1969).
[105] (Grave and Hibbert 1970).
[106] (Zaehner 1971), in the frame of the Riddell memorial lectures.
[107] (Zaehner 1971, p. 95)
[108] (Inwagen 1995) and (Corcoran 2006).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

death our bodies are preserved miraculously by God until the universal resurrection of matter occurs.[109] For these authors the traditional defenders of the two principles of human nature, body and soul, intrinsically united, should be considered dualists.

Within contemporary writers to Escrivá I would argue that the one most similar to his ideas, although proceeding from a very different worldview, is Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, one of the most suggestive Catholic thinkers of the 20th century.[110] He did not pretend to be a theologian; he just shared his own reflections with the hope that would help his readers to grasp a more authentic image of Christianity embracing all his noble human aspirations. His essays 'The heart of matter'[111] and 'Le milieu divin',[112] showed his main ideas on the spiritual value of material realities, some of them closely connected to Escrivá's, although they did not have mutual influence. In the former, Teilhard reflects on his spiritual and scientific trajectory, from the strong impressions of childhood on the solidity of matter to the conviction of its religious value at his maturity since it portrays the icon of its Creator. He thought that his education had been dualistic, inclining him to separate matter and spirit, body and soul, unconscious and conscious, but this dualism gradually vanished in parallel to his growing knowledge of the universe's evolution. Traditional mysticism, for Teilhard, had tried to dematerialize the spiritual life, while he proposes to consider matter as 'the matrix of conscienciousness'. Rather than materializing the spirit, as later monism philosophers defended, Teilhard proposed spiritualising the matter, identifying it with the divine presence in the world (suggesting 'to Christify Matter'). He considers the world as the place to find and love God, not by merging all material beings in the essence of God, as God needs to be differentiated from His creatures, but rather by being present to embrace us while letting us to remain ourselves. In 'Le milieu divin', written in 1927 but only published two years after his death, Teilhard stresses the religious value

[109] This type of ChM has created controversy about how to make it compatible the conservation of our particular bodies and the final resurrection. See for instance, Elliot Knuths (2018) for a criticism on Inwagen's position in relation to the resurrections included in the Bible, while Mikael Leidenhag (2017) criticises Corcoran's positions for its philosophical inconsistencies and its impact on theological anthropology (particularly the Christian concept of being 'imago Dei').
[110] A brief but comprehensive review of Teilhardian worldviews can be found in Wilders (1968).
[111] (Teilhard de Chardin 1976).
[112] (Teilhard de Chardin 1960).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

of worldly activities, particularly work, reflecting on the need of providing sound arguments to sanctify worldly activities, based on an intimate union of God. He thought that traditional Christianity had put a great emphasis on detachment from the world, disconnecting ordinary activities of most Christians from their faith, while alienating Christianity from the noblest goals and pursues of non-believers. God and the world might seem in this way as two different irreconcilable realities, creating 'a veritable spiritual dualism'. This conflict will greatly impact the perception and practice of faith, and the believer would be

> ...in danger of finding its solution in one of the three following ways: either the Christian will repress his taste for the tangible and force himself to confine his concern to purely religious objects, and he will try to live in a world that he has divinised by banishing the largest possible number of earthly objects; or else, harassed by that inward conflict which hampers him, he will dismiss the evangelical counsels and decide to lead what seems to him a complete and human life; or else, again, and this is the most usual case, he will give up any attempt to make sense of his situation; he will never belong wholly to God, nor ever wholly to things; incomplete in his own eyes, and insincere in the eyes of his fellows, he will gradually acquiesce in a double life.[113]

Teilhard finalises this summary paragraph indicating that he is speaking 'from experience', which implies that this dualist worldview of Christianity was well extended in the Church and needed to be overcome, the same feeling that Escrivá expounded (see 2.2.1). Teilhard considers that none of the above solutions to the spiritual dualism is proper of Christianity, and therefore finding an alternative that would reconcile and provide 'mutual nourishment for, the love of God and the healthy love of the world, a striving towards detachment and a striving towards the enrichment of our human lives' is greatly needed.[114] In other words, for Teilhard all human noble accomplishments are neither a distraction nor an obstacle to find God but can also be a means to collaborate with

[113] (Teilhard de Chardin 1960, p. 22)
[114] (Teilhard de Chardin 1960, p. 23)

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Him in Creation, overcoming the spiritual dualism that affects most ordinary Christians.[115]

Within those authors connected to ecotheology, it is worth quoting Alfred Whitehead's (1861–1947) process philosophy, later complemented by the theological insights of Charles Hartshorne (1897–2000), and the extension to ecotheology by John Cobb,[116] for whom the deep connection between God and the world entails that nature's degradation also affects God. Therefore, there is a theological support of environmental care in the participation of God within the material dimension of reality. He proposes to spread the sacred view of humanity to non-human creatures, extending Christian love to all beings, which would ground the theological approach to environmental commitment, in line to what I propose in section 4.5. Other authors relating appreciation of matter and ecotheology are Derrick, already quoted in 1.2; James Nash who considered that Creation is the basis for rejecting dualism, as all things come from the same Creator, being nature sacred for being an image of the Creator;[117] Sally McFague who proposes an organic model of the world as the body of God, what in her opinion would provide a more explicit allegory of the involvement of God with the world, even though she recognises the difficulty of aligning this theory with Christian tradition,[118] and Paul Collins who tried to develop an ecotheology based on a better appreciation of the material world, derived from the classical notion of mystery.[119] He recommends experiencing the transcendent by a mystical union with God through nature, as the mystics of all religions have shown, even amid the ordinary lives. In this regard, he includes the idea of appreciating the material value of ordinary life, in a similar sense as Escrivá, but without any reference to him:

[115] In a similar line, within orthodox theology Nicholas Apostola (1995) explicitly mentions the concept of ChM, in the framework of the appreciation of the 'basic goodness of the totality of creation, visible and invisible' (p. 191), which should overcome a certain spiritual disdain for material realities present in Western culture after the Renaissance.
[116] (Cobb 2021).
[117] (Nash 1991)
[118] 'While Christian sacramentalism derives from the incarnation, the sense of the extraordinary character of the ordinary or the sacredness of the mundane is scarcely a Christian insight' (McFague 1993, p. 183).
[119] He uses the significant subtitle of *Religion as if matter really mattered* (Collins 1995) echoing the classical book of Schumacher (1973). His reviews on the historical roots of alienation of Christianity from the material dimensions are quite comprehensive, but his actual proposals to build a new basis for grounding ecotheology are not, with little specific argumentation of what he means by mystical experiences or how to attain them.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

> So, my argument is that we find the divine in the midst of the world, and even, as Paul Tillich has said, in the midst of the secular. For there is a vector towards the sacred right at the core of ordinary life (when…) we pass beyond the human symbol and its psychological interpretation to perceive the transcendent reality that stands behind it.[120]

Finally, the spiritual dimension of matter is also included in recent documents from the Catholic Magisterium, particularly from St John Paull II. In a remarkable speech on this issue, he indicated that:

> Christianity does not reject matter. Rather, bodiliness is considered in all its value in the liturgical act, whereby the human body is disclosed in its inner nature as a temple of the Spirit and is united with the Lord Jesus, who himself took a body for the world's salvation.[121]

Pope Francis in LS also recalls that Jesus' life was never detached from material realities, explicitly stating that Jesus showed a clear appreciation for the material dimensions of reality:

> He was far removed from philosophies which despised the body, matter and the things of the world. Such unhealthy dualisms, nonetheless, left a mark on certain Christian thinkers in the course of history and disfigured the Gospel (LS, n. 98).

Therefore, in the same vein as Escrivá's ChM, Francis states that 'encountering God does not mean fleeing from this world or turning our back on' (LS, n. 235). Contemplating Jesus' life reinforces the value of matter, as He, being truly God and truly Man, sanctified all material realities, bringing them back to the original dignity of Creation, as they are somehow embedded in the material body of Christ. The bodily dimension also affects relationship to God with humanity, which is embedded in the material realities that are images of God through Creation, and memories of God, through Incarnation.

In short, contemporary Christian reflection shows a growing interest in giving matter a spiritual value. This tendency has come from different sources: i) ecotheological proposals that emphasise the relevance of overcoming anthropological dualisms (body-soul) by providing spiritual significance to matter (Nash, McFague, Collins); ii) pro-materialistic approaches that emphasise the dialogue between Christianity and Marxism (Hibbert, Zaehner); iii) varieties of

[120] (Collins 1995, p. 209).
[121] (John Paul II 1995, n. 11).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

monism, which envision a material soul embodied into a single substance (Corcoran, van Inwagen); and iv) ChM (Escrivá, and to some extent Thils, Philipps, Teilhard and John Paul II), who aim to transcend spiritual dualism by emphasising the spiritual appreciation of material realities.

As a general critical summary of this chapter, I consider that Escrivá's spirituality presents a coherent new lay outlook that encourages the sanctification of material realities where most lay Christians develop their lives. This implies a new conception of Christian vocation to holiness, embracing all faithful regardless their canonical status. The call to join contemplative and active life that Escrivá proposes through his concept of unity of life has been long missed in the Christian tradition: the Catholic favouring the former, and the Protestant the latter. Previous proposals of lay spirituality within the Catholic church were adaptations to religious spiritualities (third-orders within Dominicans, Franciscans or Carmelites, for instance), but do not really build upon a secular basis. A good example is the little relevance of work for personal sanctification in those spiritualities, being core for Escrivá's, as I will deal with in the next chapter. I can summarise the main criticism that Escrivá's understanding of ChM has raised in the following aspects:

a) Ascetism. Naturally, finding God in the midst of the world requires struggle, even more so than in the monastic life, since the distractions and temptations can be greater. For this reason, the spiritual commitment necessary to live Escrivá's spirituality, in particular his encouragement of demanding work, personal mortification, spiritual direction and apostolic zeal, has not been well understood, even within the Church. Some consider these proposals old-fashioned, extravagant or even harmful.[122] I argue that these critics lose sight of the spiritual tradition in which they are framed and above all of the spiritual meaning of these ascetical practices. If the traditional mentality has been to give a secondary role to the laity in the vocation to holiness, it seems that the demand to make the heroism of holiness compatible with ordinary life scandalises even those who should face it in their own spiritualities.[123]

[122] Among others (Ávila García 2022).
[123] In the specific field of work (Murphy 2012), whose comments I will review in 3.4.4.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Beyond human weaknesses and lack of coherency by members of OD, which certainly have occurred, this is in my opinion the main explanation of the controversial character of OD, provoking scandals from spiritual practices that have otherwise being quite traditional in different Catholic institutions.

b) Integralism. Coherence and unity of life could be interpreted as an endorsement of merging spirituality and secular affairs. This criticism has been particularly widespread, commonly grounded on a biased interpretation of the political influence that some members of OD had in Spain during the 1960s.[124] I have shown that Escrivá's approach to ChM implies that all secular activities can be impregnated by Christian values, including social, economic and political matters, but this does not mean that the Church should guide political or economic matters beyond minimum moral standards, neither that the position of Catholics in those matters is the position of the Church: this would be clericalism, mixing the respect to Caesar and God. I have indicated that Escrivá had a very clear position on this issue, explicitly stated in the Navarre homily, at the time and place where making this statement required special courage.

c) Personal freedom. A certain clerical mentality considers that all members of a certain religious institution should have the same opinions and should be guided by the superiors. This is not the case of Escrivá's approach, which strongly favoured personal freedom and responsibility, including actuations in public offices, but also the direction of one spiritual life. Blind obedience and spiritual control have been a common accusation of OD,[125] but considering that most OD members live their vocation in the midst of their professional and family circumstances — not living in the same house or sharing the same work —, this allegedly control can only be sustained when the members actually accept it, that is when they freely decide to be advised in spiritual direction, on the other hand following a long tradition in Christianity. Naturally, this direction

[124] Among others (von Balthasar 1963).
[125] Among others (Castillo 1978).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

is complemented by personal discernment, which Escrivá encouraged through personal prayer.

d) Theological basis. Following Buckhart and López,[126] I have commented here the main ends, fundamentals and means of Escrivá's spirituality. The ends imply pursuing primarily the glory of God, the promotion of the kingdom of Christ and the construction of the Church, the fundamentals are divine filiation, freedom and virtues, while the means are the sanctification of work and social activities, interior struggle (prayer and sacraments), and Christian formation activities. In this critical commentary to Buckhart and López's essay, Arnoud Join-Lambert indicates the challenges to move these theological bases beyond the historical context in which they were formulated.[127] He identifies three areas where such temporal adaptation may prove more difficult: vocabulary, revisiting those terms originally proposed in a post-war context (he explicitly cites the idea of 'heroism'); ecclesiology, with more emphasis now on social as opposed to personal dimensions; and the theology of the laity itself, now influenced by an increasing participation of the laity in ecclesiastical offices (including the role of permanent deacons). The challenges raised by Join-Lambert are certainly relevant, but I believe that there are several ways of overcoming them, mainly because the adaptation to the contemporary world of an institution made up mainly of lay people benefits from the very experience that these lay people have of a world that is not alien to them, since they carry out their daily activity in it, and are therefore protagonists of its evolution, along with the rest of their fellow citizens. In any case, I am particularly struck by the last aspect indicated by Join-Lambert, because of what he considers a positive evolution of the theology of the laity (their growing participation in the government of the Church) I see this as a clearly negative process, a regression in the valuing of the lay vocation, a recovery of the spiritual dualism that I have been criticizing throughout these pages. If ecclesiastical jobs had more spiritual value than ordinary professional or family

[126] (Burkhart and López 2010 - 2013).
[127] (Join-Lambert 2014).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

activities, then, instead of enhancing the value of the lay vocation, the Church would be clericalizing the laity, turning the secular perspective into a semi-monastic one, as if the only way to holiness were through some kind of religious consecration.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Section II: Escrivá's ChM and ecotheology: application to the theology of work

This second section of the dissertation extends St Josemaría Escrivá's concept of ChM to an appreciation of the natural world. I have selected the theology of work as the central idea of Escrivá's concept of ChM for several reasons. Firstly, work is the most direct ambit in which sanctification of material realities can take place, since most Christians devote a large part of their lives to work. Secondly, it clearly expresses our relationship to the material dimension of reality, since work is the usual way in which people transform matter (and thus nature) into goods to satisfy their needs. Thirdly, it is probably the most obvious topic in which the differences between 'materialisms which are blind to the spirit' (PLW, n. 115) and ChM can be observed.

In chapter 3, I develop the connections between ChM and the theology of work, identifying the main features of Escrivá's approach to work and the theological categories that underpin this approach. In Chapter 4, I will build on these categories a novel ecotheological framework that I hope will contribute to developing a caring attitude towards nature in and through the professional activities of ordinary Christians.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

3 Work and ChM in Escrivá's theology and spirituality.

It is important to start this chapter by noting that I will present here a critical analysis of Escrivá's theology of work, not of all other theologies of work, much less of other approaches to work (social, economic, political), which would well exceed the limits of my doctoral dissertation. I will certainly put Escrivá's ideas in the context of other theologians of work but keeping the focus on Escrivá's thought. To frame this properly, I should stress that Escrivá's theology is very practical: his main audience were ordinary lay Christians, not academics or professional theologians. Since its main emphasis was on personal sanctification, the social or political dimensions of work, which are prominent in other theologies of work (for example those of the Social Doctrine of the Church) were only covered marginally by St Josemaría. He did not intend to change social structures but people's hearts. One can argue whether the former is more important than the latter, even from a Christian worldview, but in my opinion the former should be based on the latter, or otherwise the outcome may lead to worse social conditions than those originally criticized. This is not to say that Escrivá's proposals do not have social implications: he considered holiness to be personal, but not individualistic, for anyone who follows Jesus Christ closely should be concerned for the welfare of others, especially when their vocation takes place in the midst of the world, and is therefore full of social implications.[1] In this case, what I am arguing is that the priority of Escrivá's approach to work was personal sanctification, not the change of social structures, which I agree with, because I am convinced that personal spiritual growth — based on freedom and responsibility — has deep social repercussions, but not necessarily the other way around. Political regimes in many countries, some of them Catholic, that invoked social changes as the primary goal to create a more just society have become in many cases, dictatorships. 'Animal farm' includes a brilliant parody of what social revolutions can produce

[1] I develop further this idea in the relational dimension of work (3.2.3).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

when improperly founded: Georges Orwell (1903-1950) knew well what those revolutions may lead to, as he experienced himself in the Spanish Civil War.[2]

Having said that, I consider that focusing on personal spirituality (instead of on social structures) is a sound way of developing a practical theology, and that this approach, without despising others, has indeed a significant impact in the life of ordinary Christians, who in turn have and will affect social structures. The experience of Escrivá's message seems to corroborate this, as it has been followed by thousands of lay people, who appreciate its potential to give a new spiritual meaning to their secular activities. Whether this spiritual perspective has social implications or not (in my case specifically in the pro-environmental behaviour of society) is not the main topic of my dissertation, but rather to build the arguments for personal conversion within an environmental perspective. In this regard, Escrivá's theology and spirituality of work may seem insufficient for some in the light of their own scopes, but I present arguments —particularly at the end of this chapter— showing that his proposal is theologically sound and consistent with its starting point, and moreover it provides sound arguments and motivations for fostering environmental concern and action, as I will show in chapter 4.

I will begin this chapter by presenting the scope and relevance of work in Escrivá's spirituality, as a manifestation of his positive vision of the world, and of his peculiar consideration of work as a constitutive vocation of humanity, even before the Fall. Then I will organise his ideas about spirituality of work around three dimensions: intrinsic, subjective and relational. The theological ground of his theology of work will be the main topic of section 3.3., selecting three categories that are still quite novel in relation with other authors. Finally, the chapter includes a critical analysis of the novelty and impact of Escrivá's ideas in the context of historical and recent approaches to work, particularly in the Catholic and Protestant traditions.[3] Although many of Escrivá's ideas have been incorporated into recent theological developments, I will show that his

[2] (Orwell 1960). His real name was Eric Arthur Blair. He fought in the Spanish Civil War, where he was profoundly deceived by the internal fights within the Republican army, particularly the hostility between communists and anarchists, which is well reflected in his best-known book.
[3] From the Catholic tradition is worth quoting (Goosen 1976; Illanes 2001; John Paul II 1981; Schlag 2021b) and from Protestant theologians (Cosden 2006; Nelson 2011; Sölle and with Cloyes 1984; Volf 1991). A good summary of recent trends in (Guitián and González 2022).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

comprehensive consideration of the spiritual value of work in sanctifying professional activities and striving to sanctify oneself and others in those activities remains unique and, except for a few theologians, mainly Spanish-speaking, largely unknown. I finalise the chapter by including an analysis of criticisms and potential limitations of Escrivá's theology and spirituality of work.

I have written this chapter largely from reading and interpreting Escrivá's original text (all in Spanish). I have used earlier interpretations of Escrivá's ideas on work to evaluate my own, but not as a guide to my text.[4] The main sources of Escrivá's ideas on work are his homilies, particularly 'In Joseph's Workshop' (included in CPB), ' Working for God' (included in FoG), an unpublished letter of 1954 (available in the AGP), and the Homily of Navarre (PLW), as well as some of his interviews with journalists in the 1960s (collected in CMEB). I will quote, where appropriate, other texts from both books and letters by Escrivá, some of them still unpublished.

3.1 Work in the core of the ChM.

3.1.1 Importance and purpose of work.

For St Josemaría, material realities are the proper setting for someone to encounter Christ. But for that encounter to be a reality they need to be filled with spiritual meaning. Since work plays a central role in the way humanity relates to the material world, it is congruent to consider work as the core of a spirituality derived from the concept of ChM, since it is the most evident sphere where the spiritual value of material realities is manifested.[5] This is the case of Escrivá approach to work, as he considered that all honest professional tasks are a nuclear component of the divine vocation to holiness: 'For lay Christians,

[4] The most complete analysis of Escrivá's spiritual proposal on work is that of José L. Illanes (2001). I have used the latest Spanish version; the English version was translated from an outdated edition (Illanes 1982). Also worth reading on this topic are Hahn (2006), and chapter 7 of Burkhart and López (2010 - 2013). Many other authors have published short articles or book chapters on summaries or specific aspects of the spirituality of Escrivá's work (Aranda 2018b; Belda et al. 1997; Fernández-García 2004; Fitte 2003; Hernández-Urigüen 2003; Sanz-Sánchez 2019; Schlatter 2017). All these authors connect, in one way or another, St Josemaría's ideas about work with his appreciation of material realities. My own critical review reinforces this connection, develops the theological categories in which he held these ideas, and presents their historical context, including Catholic and Protestant authors, the latter hardly cited in previous evaluations.

[5] Several authors have highlighted the connection between work and Escrivá's understanding of ChM (Aranda 2018b; Fernández-García 2004; Pia Chirinos 2012; Rodríguez 2017).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

the professional, family and social vocation is not opposed to their supernatural vocation. On the contrary, it is an integral part of it' (CMEB, n. 60). This vocational dimension of work was anchored by Escrivá in Sacred Scripture, mainly in Gen. 2:15, which indicates that God placed man 'in the garden of Eden, to cultivate/work and keep/care for it' (*'ut operaretur y custodire illud'*).[6] He complemented this biblical reference with other texts taken from both the Old and New Testaments, all of them referring to the relevance of work, defining it as an essential component of human life.[7] An interesting example is his quotation from Job 5:7 ('Man is born to work, and the bird is born to fly': (FoG, n. 57, and Letter 31.05.1954). This was the Vulgate Bible translation (the official version of the Catholic Church during Escrivá's lifetime) of Job's verse: *'homo ad laborem nascitur et avis ad volatum'*.[8]

Since work was the prelapsarian vocation of humanity (following Gen. 2:15), Escrivá conceived work as a positive reality, being a loving mandate of God to make us sharers in his Creation, developing it in some way through our intelligence. For Escrivá, work is not as a punishment, the result of human infidelity, as different theologies of work have indicated.[9]

> Work is man's original vocation. It is a blessing from God, and those who consider it a punishment are sadly mistaken. -The Lord, who is the best of fathers, placed the first man in Paradise *ut operaretur*, so that he would work (FU, n. 482).

Work can therefore be seen first and foremost as cooperation with God's work, transforming matter along the lines of God's original will. Only the effort involved in work is the fruit of sin, and not the work itself, and is therefore also

[6] I will analyse this in more detail in section 4.2.1.
[7] Other biblical texts that Escrivá quoted to express the vocational dimension of work are Gen. 1:28 ('fill the earth and subdue it') in CPB, n. 47 and Letter of 05/06/1945, n. 14; Gen. 31:42 ('God saw my affliction and the fruits of my labour, and last night he gave sentence'), included in Letter 15.10.1948, and Ps 104:23 ('People go out to their work, to their labour until evening falls') in Letter 31.05.1954.
[8] This verse has a different meaning in the Neovulgata translation (official in the Church after 1979 and then unknown to Escrivá). The current version reads: *'Sed homo generat laborem, et birds elevante volatum*'. However, what matters here is the vocational component of work of this verse detected by Escrivá in the Bible translation he used.
[9] The negative conception of work (as God's punishment) was present in the Creation mythic narratives of different Mesopotamian cultures (Bergsma 2018; Wilson 2013). Referring to early Christian debates about the spiritual relevance of work, Brown (2016) writes: 'A negative view of work as the most flagrant sign of all human slavery was central to the radical traditions of Syria as a whole: both to Christian ascetics and to members of the Manichean elect' (p. 50).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

linked to the restoration of matter that comes from Christ's redemptive sacrifice (cf. CPB, n. 47 and PLW, n. 114).[10]

Although the vocational dimension of work had been widely recognised by Protestant theologians,[11] St Josemaría gave it a new understanding, not as a divine call to carry out a specific task (whether manual or intellectual), unique and stable, but as a means by which the vocation to holiness is realised: the vocational is the call to work, rather than to work in a specific activity. Work is a fundamental element of the Christian vocation, independently of the specific activity being carried out at any given moment, and compatible with the changes that may be experienced throughout life because of personal decisions or the evolution of professional circumstances:

> A professional vocation is something that takes shape throughout life: not infrequently, someone who has started a certain degree course later discovers that he/she is more suited to other occupations (...) your life is subject to the same rules as those of others. And it is that life, with all the changes that the various circumstances in which you find yourself may bring, that you must sanctify (Letter 15.10.1948, n. 33-34).

In addition to its vocational character, Escrivá also considered the relevance of the working life of Jesus, who spent most of his life on earth working as an artisan before his public appearance, a period for which St Josemaría had a deep spiritual appreciation (see 3.3.2). Along with these spiritual motivations, Escrivá also added other material aims, among them financial sustenance to cover personal and family needs, the development of one's own personality, the contribution to social progress and to remedying the problems of our neediest brothers and sisters. A good summary of his view on these instrumental ends is included in the homily dedicated to St Joseph:

> Work, all work, bears witness to the dignity of man, to his dominion over creation. It is an opportunity to develop one's personality. It is a bond of union with others, the way to support one's family, a means of aiding in the improvement of the society in which we live and in the progress of all humanity (CPB, n. 47)

[10] I will go back to this idea in section 4.4.
[11] There are many references to this vocational conception of work, mainly in Luther. See, for example, Hanson (2022, chapter 5) or Volf (1991). See also 3.4.1 & 2.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Within the lay mentality proposed by St Josemaría, professional activity should also contribute to social progress, to remedying the problems of the society in which it is carried out, since the Christian, like any other citizen, must contribute to the construction of the 'city of men' while, at the same time, being convinced that this is a transitory world. A solid contribution to the development of contemporary society is compatible with an eschatological vision that affirms the transcendence of the world:

> There is no clash, no opposition, between serving God and serving men; between the exercise of our civic rights and duties and our religious ones; between the commitment to build up and improve the earthly city, and the conviction that we are passing through this world on our way to our heavenly homeland (FoG, n. 165).

Finally, a sound motivation to situate work as the core of the lay spirituality that Escrivá promoted was the evidence that professional environments are where ordinary Christians spend most of their active lives, where they can show their love to the world while striving to maintain a contemplative life of prayer and sacrifice in union with the Cross of Christ. Thus, work is the primary sphere where spiritual and material realities intersect, the most immediate place to live the 'unity of life' by encountering Christ in the midst of the world, as Escrivá emphasised in the homily of Navarre:

> God is calling you to serve Him in and from the ordinary, material and secular activities of human life (...) This leads you to do your work perfectly, to love God and mankind by putting love in the little things of everyday life, and discovering that divine something which is hidden in small details (PLW, n. 114 and 116).

Therefore, work for Escrivá is both the original vocation of humanity and the most evident manifestation of the spiritual value of material realities, the media where one's encounter with Christ takes place, but also the matter of sanctification, being the most evident example of ChM (Cfr. CMEB, n. 70). An obvious manifestation of the relevance of work in Escrivá's spirituality is the name of the institution he founded, '*Opus Dei*' (OD), in which he materialized

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

the new path of sanctification in ordinary life that is at the heart of his message.[12] For this reason, from the very first documents defining the spirit of OD, St Josemaría clearly indicated that sanctification of work and ordinary realities was the core of the charism he was spreading (see 3.1.2), while he considered professional activities to be the 'hinge of true spirituality for people who, like us, have decided to get closer to God while being fully involved in temporal affairs' (FoG, n. 61). The term hinge, referring to the central role of work in the spirituality of OD, the pivotal point around which all interior life and apostolate circles, is frequently used in Escrivá's writings.[13] If work is at the axis of the OD vocation in the world, labouring is conceived as a serious obligation for OD members –and in general for lay Christians who try to follow this spirituality— whether or not it may be necessary to satisfy their personal needs. In a meditation point mainly addressed to university students, he wrote in 1939:

> If you are to serve God with your mind, to study is a grave obligation for you (TW, n. 336).[14]

[12] The Spanish original name, *Obra de Dios*, translated as the Work of God, derives from a casual remark of Escrivá's spiritual director in 1930. '¿Como va esa obra de Dios?' ('How is this work of God going?') -He asked him. This simple comment was regarded by Escrivá as a further inspiration from God, as he noted in his spiritual diary: 'Already on the street, I began to think: 'Work of God'. *Opus Dei*! *Opus, operatio.* This is the name I was looking for! And from then on it was always called *Opus Dei*' (spiritual notes n. 1868 of July 1930: cited by Vázquez de Prada, (1997-2003, chapter 6.1). It is worth noting that in Spanish *obra* can be translated as work (*obrero* = worker), but also as the product of a certain activity: for example, *obra de arte* can be translated as 'masterpiece' or *obra de teatro* as 'theatrical play'. The comment of Escrivá's spiritual director was in the latter sense, since he was asking an informal question about the activity he was carrying out, while St Josemaría understood it more in the former sense, that is, referring to work as a core characteristic of the institution. He translated this expression into Latin with the same meaning, since *opus* means both work (*operatio*) and oeuvre (as in musical compositions). Méndiz (2019, p. 148-152) indicates that the name *Opus Dei* encountered a small controversy in the Vatican when its pontifical approval was being studied, since the same expression was used by the Benedictine rule to refer to the common prayer of the monks. This is another example of the use of the Latin term *Opus* to refer to any activity, and not just specifically to professional work. However, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith saw no problem of potential confusions with Escrivá's meaning.

[13] CPB, n. 45; FoG, n. 58, 61, 62, 81; CMEB, n. 34, 70; Letter 9.03.1932, n. 3, 6, 79, 91; Letter 11.03.1940, n. 13; Letter 15.10.1948 n. 5.

[14] In the critical edition of TW, Rodríguez (2004) indicates that this expression was written in a personal diary of St Josemaría in 1933. In the Instruction addressed to the members of the OD who were responsible of the formation of young students, written in 1935, Escrivá indicated that OD's aims with the students was 'to procure the perfection of their Christian life, making them aware of and practising their interior and professional life, convincing them that study is a serious obligation' (AGP Series A.3, 89-3-1, p. 25). In the same line are these words, taken from one of his first pastoral letters: 'For all those who are part of the Work, without exception, professional work is the only means of sanctification for oneself and for others' (Letter 9-I-1932, n. 79).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Finally, this holistic vision of work in St Josemaría goes far beyond the modern identification of work with salaried work. His conception of work encompasses all occupations that can be sanctified, including not only paid employment but also other activities that are generally not financially compensated, such as studying, housework or social volunteering, as well as those that do not form part of the labour market, such as retirement, medical incapacity or unemployment. Escrivá rejected any social hierarchy between professions, since he considered that 'the dignity of work is based on Love' (CPB, n. 48), and, therefore, the spiritual value of each work depends principally on the love of God that the worker puts into each task: 'Before God, no occupation is in itself great or small. Everything gains the value of the Love with which it is made' (FU, n. 487). In this sense, he considered that all honest professions, whether intellectual or manual, with higher or lower social reputation, can be sanctified, from being prime minister or plumber to teacher or domestic worker: all have the same importance, and, therefore, '...it makes no sense to classify men differently, according to their occupation, as if some jobs were more noble than others' (CPB, n. 47).[15]

3.1.2 Work on the legal trajectory of OD.

The importance of work as the charism promoted by Escrivá is also evident in the analysis of the legal documents he prepared to obtain the various ecclesiastical approvals for OD.[16] For example, the first proposal for the Regulations of OD, which was presented to the Bishop of Madrid on 19 March 1940 for approval as a Pious Union,[17] points out the sanctification of work as the primary purpose of the association, emphasising also its vocational sense:

[15] In several of the interviews collected in the CMEB, St Josemaría rejected the accusation that OD was aimed only at high-level professions, a frequent claim of its critics (Ávila García 2022). He indicated that the aim of the institution was to encourage all Christians to find God in their ordinary work, regardless of the social reputation of that work: 'For me, therefore, the witness given by a son of mine who is a miner among his colleagues is as influential, as important and necessary, as that of a university rector among the other members of the academic body' (CMEB, n. 18). See also letter of 15.10.1948, n. 5.

[16] The best research on the legal itinerary of OD can be found in Fuenmayor *et al.* (1989), from which I take the texts quoted in these paragraphs, with the exception of the 1940 Regulation, consulted in the AGP.

[17] AGP Series L.11, 1-3-4. The date did not appear on the document but was indicated by the director of the AGP. In any case, it must have been drawn up in 1940 since this Regulation was the basis for the first approval of OD by the Bishop of Madrid in 1941.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

> The Work of God — Opus Dei — is a Catholic Association of men and women who, living in the midst of the world, seek their Christian perfection through the sanctification of ordinary work. Persuaded that man has been created 'ut operaretur' (Gen. 2:15), the members of Opus Dei commit themselves not to give up their professional work or other equivalent activity, even if they have a great economic or social position (Art. 1, 1).[18]

The second approval of OD came directly from the Holy See in 1947, when the institution began its international expansion, and it became necessary to obtain universal recognition of its activities. The Decree '*Primum Institutum*', which approved OD as a Secular Institute — the first to obtain this status, a few months after Pius XII created this new canonical figure — indicates that the main spiritual charism of OD is the sanctification of professional activity:

> The Institute continually promotes the holiness of its members, through the sanctification of their ordinary work and the diligent and conscientious exercise of their professional, civil or public offices.[19]

This preliminary sanction was confirmed three years later by the D*ecree Primum Inter* of the Holy See, with the definitive approval of OD in June 1950. The document defined the juridical structure of the institution within the possibilities opened by the canon law of the time. The decree defined in the first paragraphs the main purpose of OD by stating that

> ...the members strive to attain and practise complete evangelical perfection in the world and dedicate themselves entirely to the apostolate (...) through the exercise of the moral and Christian virtues, and especially through the sanctification of their daily, ordinary and professional work.[20]

The decree also included a more elaborate version of the constitutions adopted in 1947, incorporating new developments related to the apostolic expansion of OD (e.g. full recognition of married members or those who do not live in houses of the institution). In these new constitutions, the sanctification

[18] OD was approved as a 'Pious Union' by Monsignor Eijo y Garay, then Archbishop of Madrid, in February 1941. Escrivá made this request to mitigate criticism from those who did not understand the lay vocation of OD members. Pious Union was a canonical figure entailing a simple association of faithful Catholics who came together to carry out a specific activity, which defined the aims of the association; in the case of OD that activity was precisely the sanctification of work.
[19] Decree *Primum Institutum* §6, 1947, quoted by Fuenmayor et al. (1989, p. 534). The original language of this and other Vatican documents related to the OD's legal itinerary is Latin.
[20] Decree *Primum Inter* §7, 1950, quoted by Fuenmayor *et al.* (1989, p. 545).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

of work was again defined as a key element of OD's lay spirituality, declaring that its main objective is the promotion of holiness in the world,

> ...through the sanctification of ordinary work and through the exercise of professional or equivalent work, which the members do not abandon, because they seek sanctification through that work.[21]

A few years after the new canonical status was granted to OD, Escrivá realised that it did not adequately reflect the lay spirituality of the Institution, which was an essential part of its charism. Although it was explicitly indicated in the '*Provida Mater Ecclesia*' that members of secular institutes were not canonically religious, these institutes were dependent to the congregation for religious and members were obliged to take private vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. In addition, a few years later, conflicts arose when restrictions were raised for members of secular institutes to run companies or own banks (which Escrivá considered as adequate as any other honest working environment for the sanctification of a lay Catholic), thus assimilating in practical terms secular institutes to religious congregations, who were not allowed to exercise these professions.[22] In essence, the secular character of the vocation to OD, the core of its ChM, which St Josemaría considered essential to define its charism, was being undermined. For this reason, when the new figure of the Personal Prelature was approved by the SVC, Escrivá decided to convene an extraordinary congress of OD in order to make a formal evaluation of the suitability of this new canonical path for the institution, mainly to analyse whether it reflected better its lay spirituality. As a result of this consultation process, the central government of OD decided to ask the Vatican authorities for a change in the juridical status of the institution.[23] After several years of study, this request was accepted by the Holy See in 1982. In the statutes that accompanied the erection of OD as a Personal Prelature, the sanctification of work is again explicitly considered as the central core of the charism of the institution. This is indicated in

[21] Constitutions of 1950, Chapter I, n. 4. § 1. AGP, Legal Section, V/15034.
[22] Perhaps this polemic may include this consideration by Escrivá published years later: 'You say that it helps you a lot to ask yourself how many businessmen have become saints since the time of the first Christians. And you want to show that it is also possible today. The Lord will not abandon you in this endeavour' (FU, n. 490).
[23]The full process of this canonical change, which finally took place in 1982, seven years after Escrivá's death, can be followed in Fuenmayor *et al.* (1989).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

number 3, in which it is pointed out as one of the means by which all the members achieve the ends of the institution:

> ...the imitation of the hidden life of Our Lord Jesus Christ in Nazareth, which includes the sanctification of their own ordinary professional work. By word and example, they seek to convert their work into an instrument of apostolate, each within their sphere of action, as the education and aptitude of each require, conscious that they ought to be like yeast hidden in the dough of human society. The faithful should sanctify themselves in the perfect fulfilment of their work, carried out in constant union with God, and by that work they should also sanctify others.[24]

The statutes also recall that work, being the original vocation of the human being, has a particular relevance for the members of the Prelature:

> The Lord created man in order that he might work (cf. Gen. 2:15), and thus this law of work belongs to the general human condition. However, the particular character and end of the Prelature leads its faithful not only to carry out but also to have a profound love for ordinary work; for in it they see not only a most eminent human value, which is necessary for maintaining the dignity of the human person and for the progress of society, but also, and primarily, a wonderful occasion and means of personal union with Christ, by imitating His hidden life of work and generous service to other men and women, and cooperating in this way with the loving work of the Creation and Redemption of the world.[25]

These legal texts attempted to capture the essence of the spiritual message promoted by Escrivá, particularly the relevance of the lay vocation that he clearly saw as essential for the new institution. The firm defence of the lay charism of OD was one of Escrivá's main concerns, as its novelty difficulted a full recognition of its secular character by Vatican authorities.

3.2 Dimensions in Escrivá's spirituality of work.

There have been many popular paths to holiness in the history of the Church, with the monastic life most often praised, at least in the Catholic tradition, but arguably also the most alienated from the world. If the striving for holiness were reduced to abandoning the world in monasteries or to religious

[24] https://opusdei.org/en-uk/article/statutes-of-opus-dei-eng/, n. 3. § 1.3, Last accessed in October, 6th, 2024.
[25] https://opusdei.org/en-uk/article/statutes-of-opus-dei-eng/, n. 86. § 1. Last accessed in October, 6th, 2024.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

occupations such as the priestly ministry, the lives of most Christians, living in the midst of the world, engaged in various professional and family activities, would be destined for a second-rate holiness, while the radical commitment to God which every Christian vocation entails ('So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect': Mt 5:48) would in practice be far from universal.

I have already analysed in 1.2.2 the historical roots of this discontinuity between spiritual and material realities. In the theology of work, this spiritual dualism has implied a significant disconnection between religious devotion and the ordinary life of many Christians, implying a theological and practical rupture between Sunday worship and Monday work, which several authors have identified as one of the key gaps of Christian spirituality.[26] This is especially so expressed by recent Protestant authors, perhaps because this tradition defended the spiritual meaning of everyday realities long before Catholicism.[27] However, by making this defence apart from, or even in opposition to, monastic life — as is significantly the case with Luther — these ordinary realities were emptied of spiritual life, especially work, which became, over the centuries, largely materialistic.[28] In the case of the Catholic Church, this spiritual dualism manifested itself in the opposite direction, minimising the value of work and material realities as means of sanctification. St Josemaría's message tries to overcome this rupture between spiritual and material life, underlining the relevance of material activities, especially work, but at the same time filling them with an intense spiritual content.

Within this context, St Josemaria conceived work as the axis around which the sanctification of the ordinary Christians develops. He developed this idea by defining three dimensions, which he also used to synthesise the charism of OD: 'to sanctify work, to sanctify oneself in work and to sanctify others through work' (CMEB, n. 10).[29] This implies the effort to make holy the output of work,

[26] (Cosden 2006; Dale 1991; Jensen 2006; Loftin and Dimsdale 2018b; Miller 2007; Nelson 2011; Sanz-Sánchez 2019; Sölle and with Cloyes 1984; Volf 1991).
[27] Chapter 13 of Taylor (1992) discusses this process in detail.
[28] This is the hypothesis of Dale (1991), who stresses the importance of recovering the contemplative attitude to work that prevailed in the Middle Ages. He suggests connecting work and art, and highlighting the relational aspect of work, but, in my opinion, the proposal lacks development in terms of practical implications.
[29] A similar expression is found in other writings (CPB, n. 122; FoG, n. 120; CMEB, n. 70; ILC, n. 37; Letter 31.5.1954, n. 15).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

the agent who performs that task and the persons being benefited from it, providing a holistic consideration of the professional activity.

These dimensions can be related to those suggested by other theologians of work: ontological, instrumental and relational, following Cosden,[30] or objective and subjective (for the first two), following John Paul II.[31] Here I will call these three dimensions intrinsic, subjective and relational, respectively. The intrinsic dimension of work concerns to its inner value, the output that work produces, and aims at making it a sanctified task, worthy of being offered to God, carried out with love and human perfection. The subjective value involves sanctifying the worker, encountering Christ in the midst of professional activities, gaining intimacy with Him through contemplation and practice of the virtues at work. The relational aspect involves actively seeking the good of others, particularly professional colleagues, through a spirit of service and friendship, also promoting their greater closeness to God. In what follows, I will discuss in more detail Escrivá's understanding of these three dimensions, which will also serve in chapter 4 to extend the concept of ChM to ecotheology.

3.2.1 Intrinsic dimension: Sanctified work.

Escrivá frequently indicated that all professions can be sanctified, regardless of their social relevance, adding, almost as an obvious premise, that he referred to honest tasks ('every job that is not opposed to the divine law', FoG, n. 60), because activities that are morally reprehensible cannot be sanctified. A good pickpocket cannot sanctify his profession, for stealing is intrinsically immoral, even if it is done with the utmost perfection, to the point of going completely unnoticed by the victim of the theft, or even — which is unlikely but perhaps possible in some consciences — if it is done for a good purpose (to distribute the fruits of the theft to needy people). I do not want to overdo the example, so as not to lose sight of the fundamental point: a work can only become holy if it pursues a morally good end, regardless of the intention of the agent or the quality of the output.[32]

[30] (Cosden 2006).
[31] (John Paul II 1981).
[32] Many other examples of jobs that cannot be sanctified are those that violate human dignity or involve the exploitation of people. I will reflect on the boundaries where Escrivá's ideas about work could be applicable in 3.4.4.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Once this premise is assumed, the first characteristic that St Josemaria demanded to sanctify a particular job is striving to do it with human perfection and for the glory of God.[33] This idea is quite innovative with respect to the theologies of work centred on its ascetic aspect, particularly in early monastic communities, where labour had mostly an instrumental value: as a means of avoiding laziness, practising certain virtues, such as obedience or humility, and the self-support of the community, especially for those monasteries situated in delicate environments.[34] For Escrivá, sanctifying work implies, above all, doing it conscientiously with the best effort and quality that our manual or intellectual capacities allow:

> If we really want to sanctify our work, we have inescapably to fulfil the first condition: that of working, and working well, with human and supernatural seriousness (TF, n. 698).

In the framework of ChM, the effort to perform a material task perfectly is substantial for its spiritual qualification, as a logical consequence of valuing not only the agent's intention (his-her religious motivation) but also the material component, both considering the means and the result of that task. A sanctified work involves 'to finish lovingly the work we have to do' (FoG, n. 41),[35] turning that ordinary task into 'heroic verse out of the prose of each day' (PLW, n. 116). Since love is shown in the small details, it is precisely by paying attention to these seeming trifles, which end up making the difference between a botched and a flawless work, where that 'divine something' (PLW, n. 116) hidden in ordinary tasks can be found. The material quality of any professional task was for Escrivá an indispensable characteristic of a sanctified work:

> What use is it telling me that so and so is a good son of mine — a good Christian — but a bad shoemaker? If he doesn't try to learn his

[33] As Ocáriz (2000) rightly points out the term sanctified can only be applied to work analogically, since strictly speaking only creatures who freely accept God's Grace can be holy. When any professional task is performed for the glory of God and for His love, it becomes a consecrated offering to God, and therefore holy, not because of the human effort involved.
[34] (Barsella 2014; Metteer 1999).
[35] In FoG, n. 55, Escrivá commented on his surprise at not finding in the Roman ritual any blessing for the last stone of a building, which indicates the achievement of the final goal of its design, while several blessings were available for the first stone, which indicates good intentions but no real result. Quoting Ecclesiastes (7,9: 'better is the end of a task than its beginning'), he underlined the importance of putting effort in working well up to the final details of each task.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

> trade well, or doesn't give his full attention to it, he won't be able to sanctify it or offer it to Our Lord (FoG, n. 61).

Escrivá's theological argument underlying this attitude is also quite new with respect to other theologies of work, for this search for perfection in every task is a consequence of considering it as a sacred offering to God, and precisely for this reason it should be carried out with the greatest humanly possible perfection, 'for we must not offer God badly-done jobs' (FU, n. 493). Escrivá gave as an example of good and bad offerings the sacrifices of Abel and Cain,[36] the former gave to the Lord the best of his flocks, while Cain only gave the leftover fruits of the earth. This second offering did not please God (Gen. 4:3-4), and its rejection eventually provoked Cain's anger against his brother. In a commentary on Leviticus, Escrivá linked the material perfection of work with its ultimate end, the glory of God:

> It is no good offering to God something that is less perfect than our poor human limitations permit. The work that we offer must be without blemish and it must be done as carefully as possible, even in its smallest details, for God will not accept shoddy workmanship. 'Thou shalt not offer anything that is faulty' — Holy Scripture warns us — 'because it would not be worthy of him' (Lev 22:20) (FoG, n. 55).

To consider work as an offering to God it must imply placing glory and love of God as primary motivations. He encouraged people to 'rectify their intention' in work, turning their initial motivations, if they started only from a human aim, into a divine purpose, doing any work for the love of God, in union with Him and pursuing only His glory: 'Right intention consists in seeking *only and in all things* the glory of God' (TF, n. 921).

When work is seen as an act of worship to God, every professional task becomes a bridge that links the material and spiritual dimensions of life. When the effort to do excellent work depends on the motivation of the worker, and not on external circumstances (salary, social prestige or fear of reprisals), which may or may not be present at any given time, work begins to form part of a new culture, which combines delight (enjoyment in what one does), quality (producing good outputs) and service (for the greater benefit of the recipient

[36] Letter 11.03.1940, n. 28; Letter 31.05.1943, n. 60.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

of one's task) in one's profession, while promoting personal development and social progress. This is true even for jobs that are socially less appreciated, including mechanical tasks:[37] all depends on personal motivation, which in Escrivá's charism is a strong spiritual one.

In the late 1930s, during his stay in Burgos because of religious persecution during the Spanish Civil War, Escrivá liked to walk with the students who visited him, taking them to the city's Cathedral (one of the most beautiful Gothic temples in the country). From one of the towers, they gazed at the cresting, a real lacework of stone. Escrivá pointed out that this laborious craftsmanship could not be seen from below. Those craftsmen were really working only for God, since no one on the street could appreciate their efforts.[38]

Working for love of God and aspiring to human perfection involves exercising various Christian virtues at work (FoG, n. 72), such as diligence in keeping to one's professional schedule (FoG, n. 62), finishing each task at the right time, avoiding unnecessary delays (TW, n. 15, 21, FU n. 488), making the best use of working time (TW, n. 340, n. 354); mindfulness, to focus on the task at hand (TW, n. 253, 815, 817),[39] and prudence, to understand the demands and priorities of a particular activity (CPB, n. 72).

Finally, it should be noted that Escrivá did not identify a well-done job with one that is successful. In a world increasingly focused on triumph and social recognition, where only highly productive tasks are considered valuable, where economic profitability or public praise is evident, St Josemaría proposed considering the spiritual value of work by the rightness of intention and love of God that the worker puts into his tasks, leading him to complete them with

[37] The same idea is expressed in these words of Martin Luther King: 'If it falls to your lot to be a street sweeper, sweep the streets like Michelangelo painted pictures, like Shakespeare wrote poetry, like Beethoven composed music; sweep streets so well that all the host of Heaven and earth will have to pause and say, 'Here lived a great street sweeper, who swept his job well'. (King 1965), quoted by (Miller 2007, p. 19). This love for one's profession is compatible with the desire of improving labour conditions, within Escrivá's conception of vocation, as indicated in 3.1.1.

[38] Escrivá recalls this event in the homily 'Working for God' (FoG, n. 55-72, specifically in n. 65). In the same homily, as an example of the opposite attitude, he comments on a passage included in one of the apocryphal Gospels, in which the child Jesus is said to have helped his stepfather, St Joseph, to undo a defective task. Escrivá rejected this account as unrealistic, believing that Joseph's work would be of high quality, finished with love and perfection.

[39] Related to this is one of St Josemaría's most quoted phrases: 'Do you really want to be a saint? Carry out the little duty of each moment: do what you ought and concentrate on what you are doing' (TW, n. 815). An extensive comment on the impact of this idea to gain a deeper understanding of the spiritual value of ordinary realities is given by Jorge Peña Vial (2002).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

perfection, not in the results that the task produces. For example, if a student dedicates the adequate effort and time into preparing for an exam, but ultimately fails, it can still be considered a job well done. While the two aspects usually coincide (studying hard means getting good grades), failing an exam due to external circumstances beyond one's control (such as sudden illness or memory loss) can even be spiritually helpful:

> You say you've failed! We never fail. You placed your confidence wholly in God. Nor did you neglect any human means. Convince yourself of this truth: your success —this time, in this— was to fail. Give thanks to our Lord... and try again! (TW, n. 404).

This attitude avoids excessive concern for human recognition of a particular job, which in many cases does not depend on the agent's will, and avoids the personal frustration so common in today's highly competitive professional world:

> You must be careful: don't let your professional success or failure — which will certainly come— make you forget, even for a moment, what the true aim of your work is: the glory of God! (TF, n. 704).

This is not to say that St Josemaría was indifferent to the results of work, for when a task is done with care and affection it usually produces good results as well, but he stressed that the means — love of God and attention to small details — were more important than the results, unlike other work ethics, where the quality of work is judged solely by its fruits.[40]

3.2.2 Subjective dimension: 'sanctifier' work.

For Escrivá, a 'sanctifier'[41] work is a work that sanctifies the worker, as a result of the convergence of God's grace and personal effort.[42] In his spirituality there is no contradiction between the subjective and objective value of work, since both the result of any professional activity and the improvement of the

[40] (Hanson 2022; Weber 2001).
[41] Even though this word is not common in English, I follow here the Oxford English Dictionary, which provides two meanings for this word: 'One who sanctifies or makes holy', specially referring to the Holy Spirit, and 'occasionally something that sanctifies'. I use the term in both senses, referring to the work that sanctifies, but also to that which is linked to the sanctifying action of the Paraclete in the soul.
[42] This expression follows the Catholic understanding of sanctification, which assumes the priority of God's grace, but also considers the importance of human effort to be faithful to that grace.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

person who carries it out should be intrinsically linked. A 'sanctifier' work entails encountering Christ in professional activities, which implies both spiritual and personal enrichment, since supernatural and natural planes are aligned in Escrivá's concept of ChM. Moved by the love of God, the worker finds a deeper motivation and meaning, which helps to overcome the daily difficulties that all tasks, especially the more routine or demanding ones, can bring with them over time:

> We must act like souls urged on by Love and never as people under punishment or a curse. 'Whatever you do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him' (Col 3, 17). Thus, we shall complete our tasks perfectly, using our time to the full, for we shall be instruments who are in love with God (...) In every one of your actions, because you are relying on God's strength, you must behave as one motivated solely by Love (FoG, n. 71).

If the aim of work is striving for holiness, the worker should not limit him/herself to fulfilling certain material objectives at work, but first and foremost aim at making work a real place of encounter with Christ. A contemplative attitude gives spiritual meaning to everyday professional and social activities. In this context, work is not reduced to an ascetic practice that fills the gap between times of prayer, but itself becomes prayer, maintaining union with God in the midst of professional tasks.

> Let us work. Let us work a lot and work well, without forgetting that prayer is our best weapon. That is why I will never tire of repeating that we have to be contemplative souls in the midst of the world, who try to convert their work into prayer (FU, n. 497).

In this vision, the traditional adage (*ora et labora)*, pray and work, attributed to the Benedictine rule, as two successive activities,[43] could become for St Josemaría *Ora est labora*, prayer is work and vice versa, precisely because professional activities can also be a place for building a loving relationship with

[43] This is how it is usually considered in the early monastic communities (work between periods of prayer), although it can also be conceived as simultaneous activities in the case of manual tasks, which can be made compatible with prayer because they do not require much mental attention. In Escrivá's case, sanctifying oneself in work does not so much consist in praying while working, but rather in turning work itself into a prayer to God, into something holy, by doing it perfectly and for His glory.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Christ.[44] This implies frequent conversation with Him, nourished by specific moments of mental prayer (before or after work) but also using short vocal prayers during work, if the tasks at hand allow it, since prayer should not distract from working attentively. Escrivá considered that contemplation was also feeling God's presence without the need for words, directing all professional activities towards Him, consciously working for the glory of God and the service of others. In this way, even intellectual professions can be considered prayer ('An hour of study, for a modern apostle, is an hour of prayer': TW, n. 335), because they are done with due concentration and out of love for God, overcoming tiredness or monotony. Escrivá recommended having a small crucifix near the workplace, to help keeping rectitude of intention when small distractions occur:

> You ask me: why that wooden Cross? — And I copy from a letter: 'As I look up from the microscope, my sight comes to rest on the cross — black and empty. That Cross without its Crucified is a symbol. It has a meaning which others cannot see. And though I am tired out and on the point of abandoning the job, I once again bring my eyes to the lens and continue: for the lonely Cross is calling for a pair of shoulders to bear it' (TW, n. 302).

Prayer is not only compatible with work, but also work itself can be the subject of prayer, since conversation with God can be 'fed even by the things that happen in your professional work' (TF, n. 745). In this context, prayer is not only something that sanctifies work, but also the instrument that sanctifies the worker, helping him/her to encounter God in the workplace through a contemplative attitude.

Along with a deep life of prayer, a work that sanctifies the worker also entails struggling to live Christian virtues in the professional sphere, making work the main setting for personal development. Escrivá had a great appreciation for the human virtues, which he considered the necessary ground on which the Christian virtues grow. Some of them are especially suited to the work environment: optimism, to have a positive mentality in the face of the ordinary difficulties involved in each task (TF, n. 103); fortitude, to finish each job well,

[44] Murphy (2012) compares the approaches to work of St Benedict and St Josemaría, concluding that the latter comes much closer to uniting work and prayer through the concept of 'unity of life' (see section 3.3.3).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

taking care of the small details and overcoming fatigue, even in the case of repetitive or tedious tasks (TW, n. 823; FU, n. 529); frugality, to use responsibly the instruments necessary for work, avoiding unnecessary expenses (TW, n. 631-632); and humility, to maintain a permanent interest in improving one's professional training (TW, n. 332, 336; FU, n. 538; CPB, n. 50).

Sanctifying oneself at work also involves setting limits to respect both the time and the hierarchy given to professional tasks, so that they do not conflict with the necessary attention to family and religious commitments. For example, St Josemaría often reminded married couples that their main 'business' was at home, and that they should therefore combine intensive work with care for their spouse and children, with an adequate dedication to domestic responsibilities, so that excessive interest in professional promotion or social recognition would not weaken other personal values: 'Parents must find time to be with their children, to talk to them. They are more important than business, work or rest' (CPB, n. 27).

Escrivá did not consider work as an end in itself, but as the matter of sanctification, and therefore whenever work was prioritised over religious or family commitments, seeking personal ends rather than the glory of God, he recommended a change of focus and rectification.[45] In the same line, although in his writings his main emphasis was on working hard, it is worth noting that Escrivá was also sensitive to the need for adequate rest, which should also be sanctified, changing activity towards more leisurely activities, but also making good use of time. This means sleeping the right number of hours, avoiding long, continuous working days, which can lead to professional burnout and maybe a manifestation of materialistic interpretations of professional duties.

Finally, St Josemaría rarely referred to work as an instrument of self-control or discipline, as if its primary purpose were to exercise certain virtues or to control certain temptations.[46] On some occasions, however, he indicated that

[45] Hahn (2006) stresses the importance of Escrivá's balanced approach in relation to current work trends, in particular the relevance of an inner motivation to work for the glory of God in helping to overcome the workaholic mentality, quite widespread in the USA, and often related to self-interested motivations (social recognition, higher salaries). It is understood that this qualification applies when it is the result of the worker's free choice and not imposed by the employer as a result of draconian working conditions.

[46] This consideration has been recurrent in monastic spiritualities, which saw work as a remedy for laziness or idleness, or as a training in patience or humility. See 3.4.1. on this regard.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

work could be seen as an argument for giving meaning to the inner struggle associated with certain virtues, such as chastity:

> ...we must strive to develop a regular and fruitful Christian apostolate, which will have holy purity both as a necessary foundation and also as one of its most characteristic fruits. We ought as well to fill all our time with intense and responsible work, in which we seek God's presence (FoG, n. 186).

3.2.3 Relational dimension: sanctifying others through work.

The third dimension of Escrivá's spirituality of work implies considering the benefits that one's work can bring to workmates and the whole of society. In this regard, a sanctifying job is one that seeks to satisfy both material and spiritual needs of people directly or indirectly related to that work. The relational dimension implies carrying out work in 'the spirit of service, the desire to contribute to the well-being of other people' (CPB, n. 51), with a selfless attitude which look after their needs with discreet charity:

> When you have finished your work, do your brother's, helping him, for Christ's sake, so tactfully and so naturally that no one — not even he — will realize that you are doing more than what in justice you ought. —This, indeed, is virtue befitting a son of God! (TW, n. 440).

Part of the relational dimension of work is the concern to improve working conditions, seeking the benefit of others and promoting social progress.[47] The lay vocation to sanctify all ordinary activities must be accompanied by a commitment to illuminate professional and social challenges with the light of faith (cf. CPB, n. 53; FoG, n. 63, 120, 210). Such a vision of work,

> ...contributes effectively towards both the building up of the earthly city – and therefore it must be done competently and in a spirit of service; and to the consecration of the world – and in this regard it must both sanctify and be sanctified (CMEB, n. 70).[48]

[47] 'We children of God ought not to remain aloof from earthly endeavours, for God has placed us here to sanctify them and make them fruitful with our blessed faith' (FoG, n. 210).

[48] Escrivá did not address the polemic between the more eschatologically oriented theologians and those who put more emphasis on earthly realities (see Fitte (2003) for details), but he certainly shared the latter's concern that Christians be active in building the 'city of men', as part of their lay vocation, with due consideration that this world is temporal, not our final destiny: 'Progress, in an orderly manner, is good, and God wants it to take place. But people seem to consider more another kind of progress, which is false and blinds many persons, who often fail to realize that, in some of its movements, the human race moves backwards and loses some of the ground it had conquered' (CPB, n. 123).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

In this sense, he considered that Christian charity should embrace not only the immediate sphere, our direct working environment, but also the whole of society, since 'A man or a society that does not react to suffering and injustice and makes no effort to alleviate them is still distant from the love of Christ's heart' (CPB, n. 167). He also warned against those who see religiosity as restricted to the personal sphere, believing that involvement in solving society's problems is also part of Christian commitment:

> We do not love justice if we do not wish to see it fulfilled in the lives of others. In the same way, it is wrong to shut oneself up in comfortable religiosity, forgetting the needs of others (...) because to be a Christian means to work at fulfilling all the noble yearnings of men (CPB, n. 52).

Seeking the good of others at work also implies concern for the spiritual growth of one's fellow workers. Quoting Ephesians 4:28 ('Anyone who was a thief must stop stealing; he should try to find some useful manual work instead and be able to do some good by helping others that are in need'.), Escrivá stressed that professional colleagues need not only material bread, but also spiritual bread:

> With your work, taking advantage of the opportunities it offers, in your conversations and your dealings with others, you can and should carry out this apostolic precept (CPB, n. 49).

Actually, St Josemaría considered that professional environments should be the natural place for lay Christians to spread the Gospel, to exercise a personal apostolate, since there is where they spend most of their active life. An important part of this exemplary Christian life is having a good reputation at work. Helping others to draw closer to Christ in work environments requires, first of all, being a good professional, with human perfection and uprightness of intention, as well as being a good co-worker, showing concern for the personal and family problems of colleagues, seeking their welfare, being a loyal friend. Facilitating the encounter of co-workers with Christ amid ordinary professional circumstances does not imply public preaching or an apology of faith in the workplace, but rather is done through personal witness, being a good worker, generous and joyful.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

> Whoever said that to speak about Christ and to spread his doctrine, you need to do anything unusual or remarkable? Just live your ordinary life; work at your job, trying to fulfil the duties of your state in life, doing your job, your professional work properly, improving, getting better each day. Be loyal; be understanding with others and demanding on yourself. Be mortified and cheerful. This will be your apostolate (FoG, n. 273).[49]

This implies striving to live certain Christian virtues, such as justice, fulfilling contractual duties towards one's company, respecting the rights of employees, paying them fairly or charging fair rates in liberal professions (CPB, n. 52); charity to serve others with one's work, also helping them to carry out their tasks and avoiding negative criticism or slander (TW, n. 443), being open to collaborate with others, even with people of different worldviews (TW, n. 963); joy, to give hope to others, especially in difficult situations (TF, n. 681 & 744); humility, to accept one's own limitations and to be open to help from other colleagues (FU, n. 701); and generosity, being available to help and comfort others, going beyond one's own interest (TW, n. 440). All this will make Christ attractive to those who may have a distorted image of Him.

The relational-apostolic dimension of work is also achieved by offering to God the work that certain tasks may entail, as a personal sacrifice which, united with the Cross of Christ, will send God's Grace to those in need, while helping to perform those tasks with greater perfection. The spiritual good of others then becomes an additional motivation for sanctifying work:

> Then, how valuable your hour of work becomes as you persevere with the same effort a little longer, a few minutes more, until the job is finished! In a simple and practical way you are converting contemplation into apostolate, seeing it as an imperative necessity of your heart, which beats in unison with the most sweet and merciful Heart of Jesus, Our Lord (FoG, n. 67).

Finally, for Escrivá, the personal apostolate at work was a responsibility, but also a right, derived from the Christian baptismal vocation, which confers on all Christians the right and the duty to spread the Gospel in the environment

[49] Although OD promotes corporate apostolic activities (such as universities, schools or hospitals), St Josemaría insisted that the main contribution of the institution to the expansion of the kingdom of God was through the personal apostolate of its members, mainly through friendship with those met with occasion or professional, social or family circumstances (FoG, n. 264; CMEB, n. 84).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

where they carry out their ordinary activity. The laity do not need to be sent by their bishop or by any other ecclesiastical authority to spread the Christian message in their professional environments, firstly because this mission is given to them by Baptism, and secondly because work is the natural environment where they are.

3.2.4 The multidimensional vision of Escrivá's work.

Following the analysis of Fernando Ocáriz,[50] it should be noted that the three dimensions of work proposed by Escrivá form a unitary phenomenon, because work only becomes an instrument of personal and social sanctification when it is, first and foremost, sanctified. Overcoming previous spiritualities, which at most favour devotional practices at work,[51] Escrivá stressed that the ultimate goal is to make the work holy, rather than doing holy things at work. This implies that an integral spirituality must simultaneously develop the intrinsic, subjective and relational dimensions of work, seeking to sanctify professional activities and to sanctify oneself and others through them, obviously counting on the Grace of God, which is indispensable for any holiness to be possible.

The accompanying figure attempts to express graphically where Escrivá's working approach fits into a three-dimensional space, along with the position of alternative approaches. Following the well-known saying '*In medio stat virtus*', I have identified on each of the three axes of figure 1 the ideal condition (located in the centre) and the two extremes, which imply unbalanced considerations of work, either by excess or by defect. The highest value would be at the apex of the tetrahedron, in which all three dimensions would have the most virtuous position

In the intrinsic dimension, the best situation is a sanctified work, done with human perfection and out of love for God, in order to present it as a consecrated offering. The lower extreme is a poor-quality task, which considers work as a curse or as something disconnected from any spiritual meaning, while the position of excess would imply being obsessed with work, considering it as a spiritual end, an idol where most human efforts should be sacrificed. Frequently,

[50] (Ocáriz 2000).
[51] For example (Nelson 2011; Wyszynski 1960).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

this implies that the main value is conceived as the perfection of the output, forgetting the human limitations, which can lead to frustration.[52].

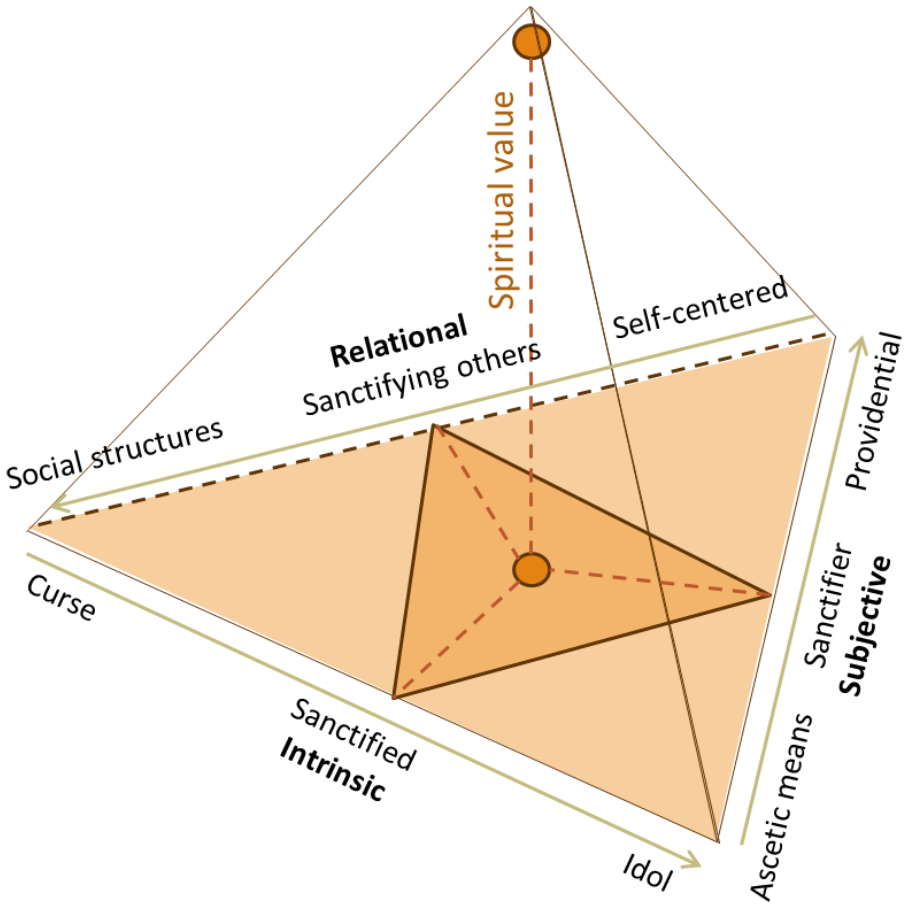


Figure 1: Graphic representation of my adaptation to Escrivá's spiritual dimensions of work.

The subjective axis ideally implies that work sanctifies the worker, who grows in union with God through the exercise of virtues and with a deep connection between work and contemplation. In this dimension, the lower extreme implies considering work as alien or marginal to sanctification, either because it is conceived as a punishment derived from sin,[53] or more commonly in the Christian tradition as an ascetic means to avoid idleness or to strengthen character, but marginal to personal sanctification. The Protestant approach to work also inclines to this vertex, because personal sanctification is only caused by

[52] Hahn (2006) presents Escrivá's proposals as a source for overcoming these two extremes, precisely because spiritual motivation (the love and glory of God) implies a strong argument for working well, while simultaneously avoiding unfocused interest in performance, commonly driven by self-interest.
[53] Brown (2016) presents the contrast between the conceptions of work in Syrian and Egyptian monasticism, being negative in the former (work as an obstacle to spiritual perfection) and pragmatic in the latter (the need to support the monastery and help the poor). . See 3.4.1.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

the Grace of God, not by personal deeds. The opposite extreme would be to consider that work distracts from contemplation and, since only union with God sanctifies, prayer should be prioritised even during working hours, assuming that God will do that work for us (providential vision).[54]

Finally, the relational component ideally implies that one's work may sanctify others, including both their spiritual and material needs, being an instrument of apostolate and contributing to the good of society. The sub-relational type of work would be that which considers only the worker's own self-interest (whether spiritual or material: salary, social recognition, promotion, etc.), without concern for the spiritual betterment of colleagues, while the over-relational position would imply so much concern for colleagues to the extent of neglecting personal tasks and responsibilities or prioritising the reform of social structures over personal conversion, thus losing the spiritual meaning of work.[55]

Figure 2 includes an ethical version of the previous scheme. I have converted the theological categories into concepts closer to moral philosophy, in an attempt to make my interpretation of Escrivá's categories more generalizable to people of other religions or to non-believers. Obviously, in this adaptation, the most substantial part of Escrivá's theological proposal is faded. In the philosophical version of the figure the ideal intrinsic value would be a job well done, while the lower end would be a sloppy job and the upper end a perfectionist, who misses the substantial end of work by getting lost in the details. The subjective dimension would aim to personal development of the worker in its ideal version, the default being that work does not entail any personal improvement and the overvalued one being when work becomes obsessive, above other vital dimensions, such as the adequate care of the family. The ethical version of the relational dimension implies orienting work towards the service to others, with individualism on the default position and excessive concern for social recognition on the other at the extremes.

[54] This aspect is dealt with in section 3.4.1, in particular the polemic with the Carthaginian monks which motivated Augustine's essay (2002): original from 401-403) on the work of monks.
[55] This has been one of the main criticisms of Chenu's labour theology (1965) or of certain branches of liberation theology (Castillo 2019).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

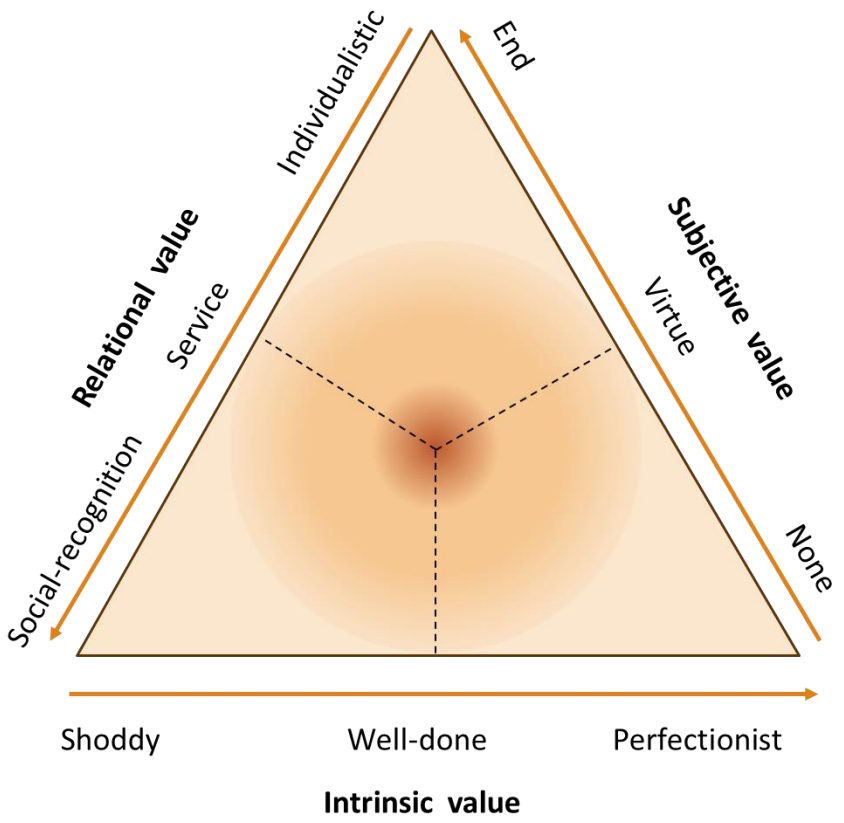


Figure 2: Graphical representation of ethical dimensions of work.

3.3 Theological foundations.

The spiritual value of work and of material realities was based for St Josemaría on four theological principles that also underlie his proposal of ChM: the goodness of Creation ('The world is not evil, because it has come from God's hands', PLW, n. 114), the materiality of the Incarnation of Jesus ('do you not see that the Word was made flesh, became man, and dwelt amongst us', FoG, n. 74); the eschatological destiny of our bodies, which will share the judgment of the soul ('Authentic Christianity, which professes the resurrection of all flesh has always quite logically opposed *dis-incarnation*': PLW, n. 115), and the sacramental value of the matter (the sacraments are 'footprints of the Incarnate Word': PLW, n. 115).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

These categories, which appear in many of Escrivá's writings,[56] are also quite common to most ecotheologians.[57] For this reason, I will focus on some of Escrivá's more original theological arguments, used not only in the Navarre homily, but also in his oral and written preaching since the early 1930s. I have selected three theological categories that strongly support the concept of 'loving the world', underpinning the spiritual value of material realities: the link between work and the exaltation of Christ on the Cross, which encourages us to consider professional work as a 'pulley' that helps to lift the Cross of Christ, placing Him at the pinnacle of human activities; the imitation of the 'hidden life' of Jesus, who spent his youth and early adulthood working as a craftsman in Nazareth; and the notion of 'unity of life', referring to the vital coherence that embraces all material and spiritual realities, through contemplative prayer and the rightness of intention that seeks to orient all human activity to God. These three categories are intimately linked to Escrivá's vision of work and can therefore be considered a theological underpinning of why it can be sanctified and sanctifying matter for a Christian living in the midst of the world.

3.3.1 Christ at the summit of all human activities.

One of the main inspirations that St Josemaría received in the first years after the foundation of OD occurred on August 7th, 1931, while he was celebrating Mass in the chapel of a charitable activity that he was spiritually looking after in those years. This is how he recounted it in his spiritual diary:

> The time of the Consecration came: at the point of raising the Sacred Host, without losing the proper recollection, —I had just mentally made the offering to Merciful Love—, there came to my mind, with exceptional force and clarity, those words from Scripture: '*et ego si*

[56] For example, this paragraph on the relevance of the Incarnation as a foundation for truly loving the world is quite significant, as it provides a solid basis for rejecting spiritual dualism: 'There is a certain type of secularist outlook that one comes across, and also another approach which one might call 'pietistic', both of which share the view that Christians somehow are not fully and entirely human. According to the former, the demands of the Gospel are such as to stifle our human qualities; whereas for the latter, human nature is so fallen that it threatens and endangers the purity of the faith. The result, either way, is the same. They both fail to grasp the full significance of Christ's Incarnation, they do not see that *the Word was made flesh*, became man, *and dwelt amongst us*' (FoG, n. 74).

[57] For example, for arguments about Creation, see: Steven Bouma-Prediger (2010) or Norman Wirzba (2003c); for those related to the Incarnation see Paul Collins (1995), Denis Edwards (2019) or Sally McFague (1993), and for sacramental value see Elizabeth Theokritoff (2009) or Jame Schaefer (2009), particularly chapter 3.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

> *exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia traham ad meipsum'* (Jn. 12:32). Ordinarily, in the presence of something supernatural, I feel afraid. Then comes the '*ne timeas*!', it is I. And I realised that it will be the men and women of God, who will raise the Cross by means of Christ's teachings on the pinnacle of all human activity... And I saw the Lord victorious, attracting all things to Himself.[58]

This quotation from John's Gospel has a profound theological significance. The words of Jesus which Escrivá heard in the intimacy of his soul, and which led him to a new understanding of the relationship between human work and the redemptive work of Christ, were spoken to the crowd at the end of his public life. The full excerpt is:

> Now is the time of judgment on this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everything to myself (Jn, 12: 31-32).

This verse has generally been interpreted as a self-prophecy about the inner meaning of Jesus' Passion. This is how the Evangelist himself puts it, stating in the following verse: 'He said this indicating the kind of death he was about to suffer' (Jn 12:33). Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross is the culmination of his redemptive mission, the highest manifestation of His love for human beings, but it is also a sign of his exaltation, the supreme recognition of His Lordship. This is also revealed in another verse of the same evangelist, in which Jesus indicates to the Pharisees how they would paradoxically recognise His divinity on the Cross: 'When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realise that I am' (Jn 8:28), an allusion to the name of God revealed in the Old Testament ('I am who I am': Ex 3:14). The third Gospel reference to the elevation on the Cross also comes from John, in this case from Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. Here Jesus anticipates that the Cross will be the sign of universal salvation: 'And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert (cf. Num 21:9), so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life' (Jn 3:14-15). These three passages offer in common Jesus' self-prophecy about how He would give His life for the salvation of the world.

[58] Taken from Escrivá's diary, quoted by Alvaro del Portillo (1997, p. 291-92). The original text by Bishop Del Portillo (in Spanish) is from 1993, as he died in 1994. He was St Josemaría's closest collaborator for 40 years and his first successor as President of OD and, after 1982, OD's first Prelate.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

However, this was not how Saint Josemaría understood the words of Jesus in the inspiration he received in 1931. In his spiritual diary and in later texts he indicated that a new understanding of those words had been engraved on his heart, one that added to the traditional interpretation of St. John's verses a nuance that was fundamental to the message Escrivá was preaching. This new meaning implies that Christ's exaltation somehow requires the participation of His disciples, that He will draw all things to Himself when Christians help Him to lift up the Cross by their efforts to turn their ordinary work into a means of sanctification. Through their daily activities, even the most trivial, when done out of love to God and with human perfection, Christians can place the Cross of Christ at the summit of all human activities, finding a deep spiritual meaning in their ordinary occupations. This is the interpretation that Escrivá himself gives in one of his first letters to the members of OD, written a few months after he received that inspiration:

> Now we will understand the emotion of that poor priest, who long ago felt within his soul this divine locution: 'et ego, si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia traham ad meipsum' (Jn 12:32); when I am lifted up above the earth, I will draw all things to myself. At the same time, he clearly saw the meaning that the Lord, at that moment, wanted to give to these words of Scripture: Christ must be placed at the summit of all human activities (Letter 9.01.1932, n. 2).[59]

This paragraph constitutes a compelling argument for loving the world and loving God through the world, making work and ordinary circumstances a matter of sanctification. The primary purpose of work, in this context, is to place Christ at the pinnacle of all professional occupations, returning to God the original meaning of Creation.

A third version of this inspiration was commented on by Escrivá some years later:

> On that day of the Transfiguration, celebrating Holy Mass in the Patronage of the Sick, on a side altar, while elevating the Host, there was another moment without sound of words. A voice, as always, perfectly clear: 'et ego, si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia traham ad meipsum' (Jn 12:32). And the precise concept: it is not in the sense of what Scripture says: I tell you in the sense that you put me above

[59] Escrivá uses a literary form here to avoid referring to this episode in the first person. A similar idea appears in CPB, n. 59.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

> all human activities; that, in every part of the world, there are Christians, with a personal and free dedication, who are other Christs (Letter 29.12.1947, n. 89).

Here, what stands out is the presence of Christians in all honest occupations, so fully committed to living an intimate relationship with Christ that they can be said to be 'other Christs',[60] the same Christ, who passes through the ordinary paths of life, subject to the same circumstances in which most of His followers are immersed.

Several authors agree that the inspiration of August 1931 was a fundamental element in Escrivá's spiritual journey.[61] For Pedro Rodríguez, the main novelty of Escrivá's interpretation of the Johannine expression lies in stressing the spiritual value of the ordinary activity carried out by Christians, who by sanctifying their work and their daily tasks elevate the Cross of Christ, attracting all things to Him.[62] In this way, secular activities, carried out in close union with Christ, manifest the salvific love that his Cross entails, being an instrument of attraction and reconciliation of all men and all things (*omnes* and *omnia)* to God.

The practical impact of this inspiration was summed up by St Josemaria in aiming to: 'put Christ at the summit of all human activities'.[63] Placing Christ at the pinnacle through work implies to carry it out with love and attention to do the best possible, for the glory of God and the better service of society.

> May we give our lives fully to the Lord our God, working with perfection, each one in his professional task and in his state, without forgetting that we must have but one aspiration in all our tasks: to place Christ at the pinnacle of all human activities (Letter 15.10.1948, n. 41).

Putting Christ at the summit realises the three dimensions of work proposed by St Josemaría: it sanctifies work because it is united to the offering of Christ

[60] This expression, which may sound pretentious, was habitually used by Escrivá (up to thirteen times in his published texts) to encourage his readers to imitate the life of Christ, echoing St Paul's confidence to the Galatians: 'yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me' (Gal 2:20).
[61] This has been emphasised by many of his commentators: Aranda (2020), Burkhart and López (2010 – 2013) in vol. I, and Rodríguez (1991/2). It is worth noting that this verse of St John was chosen to accompany the statue of Escrivá that was installed outside the Vatican Basilica a few years after his canonisation.
[62] (Rodríguez 1991/2).
[63] This expression appears on numerous occasions in his writings (TF, n. 678 and 685; CPB, n. 183; FoG, n. 58; CMEB, n. 45, 59; Letter 11.03.1940, n. 12; Instruction 8.12.1941, p. 70-71) and in his oral preaching.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

on the Cross; sanctifies the worker by making him or her a sharer in Christ's sacrifice; and it is sanctifying because in raising up the Cross of Christ everything created is drawn to Him, every human enterprise becomes a means for the salvation of souls because it manifests the redeeming love of Christ.[64] This triple attachment of work to the Cross of Christ is brilliantly expressed by Escrivá in one of his commentaries of the stations of the Cross:

> How beautiful are those crosses on the summits of high mountains, and crowning great monuments, and on the pinnacles of cathedrals...! But the Cross must also be inserted in the very heart of the world. —Jesus wants to be raised on high, there: in the noise of the factories and workshops, in the silence of libraries, in the loud clamour of the streets, in the stillness of the fields, in the intimacy of the family, in crowded gatherings, in stadiums... Wherever there is a Christian striving to lead an honourable life, he should, with his love, set up the Cross of Christ, who attracts all things to Himself (TWC, n. 11.3).

My interpretation of this concept of putting Christ at the summit following Escrivá's texts entails two conditions: being at the top and being with Christ. The first one may be interpreted as an elitist consideration of work, as if only works of social or political relevance could be sanctified, but I have already indicated that this is not Escrivá's appreciation of work. Therefore, one can understand that the 'summit' is not a single place, the same for all people. Each profession has its own pinnacle, regardless of whether that profession has social importance: what matters is the love of God and the human perfection that the worker puts into it, rather than for its social recognition or financial remuneration. Therefore, all honest works can aim to put the Cross at the pinnacle, providing the worker does it with perfection and for the love of God and others. To be at the summit for a plumber is to be the best plumber, not to become researcher or other more 'socially esteemed' work, while for a researcher the summit will be to unravel the mysteries of the science that he-she cultivates. Whatever the profession, the summit is attainable, since it only depends on the human effort that each one puts in place and on the supernatural graces that God grants in abundance.

[64] Cf. Letter 11.03.1940, n. 12.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Then, the second condition applies: for 'putting Christ at the summit' one has to be in close union with Christ at that summit, working for the glory of God and the service of others, in a contemplative spirit. Human pride, selfishness, and the desire for social recognition can also be motivations to be at the summit of a professional activity, but such attitudes would blur the image of Christ that needs to be raised up in each professional activity, thus losing the sanctifying character that the Cross of Christ brings to that activity.

Relating work and the Cross of Christ also facilitates a new insight into the meaning of suffering and effort that are often intertwined with daily work. All work activities, even the most engaging, can have moments of fatigue, monotony or tedium. A recourse to the redemptive dimension of Jesus' suffering would offer new inspirations to continue that activity, linking that work to the same sacrifice of the Cross:

> Before you start working, place a crucifix on your desk or beside the tools you work with. From time to time glance at it... When tiredness creeps in, your eyes will go towards Jesus, and you will find new strength to continue with your task.
>
> For that crucifix is more than a picture of someone you love -parents, children, wife, sweetheart... He is everything: your Father, your Brother, your Friend, your God, the very Love of your loves (TWC, n. 11.5).

3.3.2 The Hidden Life of Jesus: The World as Home.

Considering the world as our home, the territory in which our life takes place, was for Escrivá a solid argument for loving it.[65] The world is also the place where we can meet God, making everyday situations '...a means and an occasion for a continuous meeting with Jesus Christ' (PLW, n. 114). Moreover, the world is not only the home of humanity, but also the home of the Logos incarnate. After God the Son became man and lived an ordinary life, with the material circumstances that other human beings have experienced, except for sin, the earth has become, even more profoundly, the appropriate place to encounter God, because God himself 'became flesh and dwelt among us' (Jn 1:14).

[65] 'We have to love the world, because it is the sphere of our life, because it is our place of work, because it is the battlefield - a beautiful battle of love and peace - because it is where we have to sanctify ourselves and where we have to sanctify others' (Letter 19.03.1954, n. 5).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Both in his oral preaching and in his writings, St Josemaría stressed the importance that Jesus wanted to live an ordinary life, from the first steps of his human existence until his burial. He spent nine months in his mother's womb and was born like any other baby, he had the same needs for food and care, the same joys and cries, the same need to learn how to speak, walk and be protected. He was a normal teenager, learning to read and pray probably from his mother's lips.[66] He would play with his teenage peers, help with domestic needs and study with the local rabbi in Nazareth. For most of those years Jesus worked with Joseph, from whom he learned the trade for which he was known among his countrymen, who years later still called him 'the carpenter, son of Mary' (Mk. 6:3) or 'the carpenter's son' (Mt. 13:55).

The Gospels are largely silent about these thirty years of Jesus' ordinary life. Only the first chapters of Matthew and Luke mention a few episodes of his childhood: the annunciations and nativities of John and Jesus, the exodus to Egypt and the return to Nazareth (Mt 1-2; Lk 1-2), with a single extraordinary episode during one of his parents' annual visits to the Temple in Jerusalem, when he stayed there for three days without their knowledge (cf Lk 2:41-52). Of this long parenthesis between the infancy and the public appearance of Jesus, when 'he was about thirty years old' (Lk 2:23), we have no scriptural testimony, hence this period is commonly known as 'the hidden life' of Christ. At the beginning of his public preaching, the Gospel tells us that his countrymen show a remarkable surprise that Jesus was not as ordinary as they thought. They had seen him growing up in their own village, acting and working like any other neighbour, living such a simple existence that it is easy to understand their astonishment at seeing him later perform extraordinary wonders, preach with authority and enthuse the crowds with his words.

Gilbert K. Chesterton referring to those silent years of Christ wrote in 1925: 'It is of all silences the most immense and imaginatively impressive. But (...) nobody so far as I know has ever tried to prove anything in particular from it'.[67] Those words were written a few years before Escrivá began to preach and write

[66] Although we have no biblical evidence that Mary, the mother of Jesus, could read, an ancient tradition of the Eastern Church indicates that she was taught by St Anne. Ancient icons depict this scene. What is documented is her knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, particularly in her hymn Magnificat (Lk 1:46-56).
[67] (Chesterton 1925, p. 229).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

about the exemplary role of these 'hidden' years in the life of Jesus, which was one of the pillars of his theology of work. Escrivá's emphasis on these hidden years would surely have served to find an exception in the intuition of the great English writer, because this ordinary life of Jesus was crucial to understanding the spiritual message that St. Josemaría was preaching. The first reference we have about the exemplary character of Christ's working life dates from 1939:

> I don't understand how you can call yourself a Christian and lead such an idle, useless life. Have you forgotten Christ's life of work? (TW, n. 356).

Unlike many other authors who have barely noticed those 30 years of Jesus' hidden life, for St Josemaría they were of extraordinary value, precisely because they were absolutely ordinary. The 'hidden' life of Jesus is the model for those who try to sanctify their work, turning it into an occasion for an encounter with Christ, because they are imitating him precisely in his years as a worker.

> Our Lord's whole life fills me with love for him, but I have a special weakness for his thirty hidden years spent in Bethlehem, Egypt and Nazareth. That period, so long in comparison with his public life and which the Gospels hardly mention, might seem empty of any special meaning to a person who views it superficially. And yet, I have always maintained that this silence about Our Lord's early life speaks eloquently for itself and contains a wonderful lesson for us Christians. They were years of intense work and prayer, years during which Jesus led an ordinary life, a life like ours, we might say, which was both divine and human at the same time. In his simple workshop, unnoticed, he did everything to perfection, just as he was later to do before the multitudes (FoG, n. 56).[68]

The ordinary life of Christ, working and living in a common family whilst maintaining social relationships in Nazareth, offers a paradigm for understanding the lay vocation that Escrivá was promoting. An ordinary life amid concerns that characterise a daily existence, full of things that seem unimportant, but which can be impregnated with the transcendence of God. If Christ lived a holy life as a common citizen of Nazareth, Christians can (and should)

[68] Other references to this idea can be found in TF, n. 708; CPB, n. 20, 81. FoG, n. 81, 121; CMEB, n. 10, 24.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

imitate Him in their being in social and professional activities, as those circumstances were also carried out by Christ.[69] In short, Christ's artisan occupation is the best basis for any Christian to appreciate the spiritual value of work:

> I ask God that you may take as your model Jesus as an adolescent and as a young man, both when he disputed with the doctors in the Temple and when he worked in Joseph's workshop (FU, n. 484).

The working life of Jesus served St Josemaría to underline the three dimensions of work. It is holy when producing things that please God, imitating Christ's work in Joseph's workshop; it sanctifies the worker by following the example of Jesus' working years, and it sanctifies others because those hidden years were also part of Christ's redemptive mission that culminated in the sacrifice of the Cross:

> No matter how much we may have reflected on all this, we should always be surprised when we think of the thirty years of obscurity which made up the greater part of Jesus' life among men. He lived in obscurity, but, for us, that period is full of light. It illuminates our days and fills them with meaning, for we are ordinary Christians who lead an ordinary life, just like millions of other people all over the world. (...) And he was God; he was achieving the redemption of mankind and drawing all things to himself (CPB, n. 14).[70]

The simplicity of these years of Jesus' life in Nazareth confirms that there is 'something divine, hidden in the most ordinary situations' (PLW, n. 114) that everyone can discover. Those small details do indeed hide something divine when they resemble what Jesus did in the early years of His life. The Incarnation highlights not only the spiritual value of matter,[71] but also all the normal circumstances that life brings with it, for all of these also formed Jesus' earthly existence.

---

[69] 'He worked as a craftsman among the other people in his village. This human and divine activity of his shows us clearly that our ordinary activities are not an insignificant matter. Rather they are the very hinge on which our sanctity turns, and they offer us constant opportunities of meeting God, and of praising him and glorifying him through our intellectual or manual work' (FoG, n. 81).

[70] Here Escrivá emphasises the Redemptive character of Jesus' hidden life, associated it to the mystery of the Cross.

[71] Different authors have substantiated the theological value of matter in the Incarnation of Jesus, since God became flesh, all matter is transcended in some form of divine meaning, as indicated by (Edwards 2020; Gergersen 2001; Krause 1982; McFague 1993), among others. Anthony Kelly (2016) develops a section of his analysis of LS's encyclical letter on the impacts of the Incarnation on the spiritual value of nature.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Alongside the ordinary life of Jesus, Escrivá also highly valued the example of the early Christians, who lived their commitment to the Faith as normal citizens, just like their contemporaries, working alongside them in the midst of a society that was still little permeated by Gospel values. Responding to a *Time* journalist in 1967 about the aims and mission of OD, Escrivá indicated that the life of the early Christians was the best example of the charism he promoted:

> ... the easiest way to understand OD is to consider the life of the early Christians. They lived their Christian vocation seriously, seeking earnestly the holiness to which they had been called by their Baptism. Externally they did nothing to distinguish themselves from their fellow citizens. The members of OD are ordinary people. They work like everyone else and live in the midst of the world just as they did before they joined. There is nothing false or artificial about their behaviour. They live like any other Christian citizen who wants to respond fully to the demands of his faith, because that is what they are (CMEB, n. 24).

This comparison is quite frequent in Escrivá's writings: he used it up to 20 times in his published texts. He cited the life of early Christians as a way of underlining that his spiritual path linked to core values of Christianity, as practised by those first disciples of Christ. Among other manifestations of their exemplary life is the wide variety of professional activities they carried out, as attested to in the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline letters.[72] In those allusions, it is shown how they worked as ordinary citizens in all kinds of honest activities, exercised outstanding charity towards all, and promoted the spread of the Gospel in the harsh conditions of the pagan society in which they lived. St Josemaría illustrated his affection for the early Christians with frequent quotations from ancient apologetic texts (Letter to Diognetus, St Justin, Tertullian...) in his oral preaching and in his writings.[73]

Among the early Christians, the greatest example of an ordinary life lived completely for the glory of God was that of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Coinciding with the exceptional importance that the Christian tradition gives to Mary in the history of salvation, Escrivá emphasised that she is also an example of

[72] The encyclical LE makes explicit mention of these various professions, in the framework of what John Paul II calls the 'Gospel of Work'.
[73] Letter 2.10.1939, n. 2; Letter 11.03.1940, n. 36; FoG, n. 255, CPB, n. 111.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

holiness in ordinary life, since most of her existence took place in normal circumstances:

> We can't forget that Mary spent nearly every day of her life just like millions of other women who look after their family, bring up their children and take care of the house. Mary sanctifies the ordinary everyday things —what some people wrongly regard as unimportant and insignificant: everyday work, looking after those closest to you, visits to friends and relatives. What a blessed ordinariness, that can be so full of love of God! For that's what explains Mary's life — her love (...) Mary, our mother, is for us both an example and a way. We must try to be like her, in the ordinary circumstances in which God wants us to live (CPB n. 148).

Along with Mary, Escrivá greatly appreciated the role of his nurturing father, Joseph, an admirable example of holiness at work. In fact, many of the texts describing Escrivá's theology of work were written in connection with St Joseph,[74] who had the privilege of teaching Jesus his own trade in his craftsman's workshop. No one better than he worked in the presence of God, having the Incarnate Word as his apprentice, no one like him would work with love and attention, with human perfection and a spirit of service:

> Joseph was one of the few craftsmen in Nazareth, if not the only one -a carpenter perhaps. But, as normally happens in villages, he must have felt called upon to turn his attention to other things: fixing a mill that was not working or, with the coming of winter, repairing the tiles of a roof. I am sure Joseph knew how to lend a hand in many difficulties, with work well done. His skilled work was in the service of others, to brighten the lives of other families in the town; and with a smile, a friendly word, a passing quip, he would restore confidence and happiness to those in danger of losing them (CPB, n. 51).

To summarise this section, a strong argument for loving the world is the recognition that it is the right place to encounter God, not only because it is where most Christians live, but, even more importantly, because God himself, incarnate in Jesus Christ, lived in this world, in circumstances similar to ours, working a good part of his life, in his case manual labour, sharing the ordinary circumstances (tiredness, fatigue, uncertainty...) that accompany the working life of most human beings. The example of the early Christians, notably that of

[74] For example, the homily *In Joseph's Workshop*, given on 19 March 1963, feast of St Joseph, and included in CPB, n. 39-56, and *St Joseph, Our Father and Lord*, preached on 19 March 1971 and included in IDL.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Mary, the mother of Jesus, confirms that seeking holiness does not mean rejecting the world, but finding spiritual meaning in the ordinary circumstances of life.

3.3.3 The unity of life.

This concept is quite unique to St Josemaría and perhaps the most evidently connected to his understanding of ChM, as it aims to overcome the theoretical and practical dualisms that separate the spiritual and material dimensions of daily life.[75] Escrivá sees 'unity of life' as the intimate connection between the different facets that make up an ordinary existence. It implies coherence of life, in such a way that dealing with God and attention to daily activities become a continuum, avoiding watertight compartments, moments dedicated to God and moments dedicated to purely 'secular' activities. For Escrivá, both must be permeated by a continuous relationship with God, encompassing day and night, work and leisure, family relationships and friendships.

The novelty of this approach to Christian spirituality can be illustrated by an account in Janet M. Soskice's essay on 'Love and Attention'.[76] She describes the difficulties of balancing an intense Christian life and family commitments, praising the high regard for virginity in the early Church as mainly motivated for having a deeper intimacy with God. She comments on the case of a devout young mother who, after giving birth to her first child, was distressed by so many new tasks that she found 'her devotional life in ruins'. She sought advice from three priests, one of whom recommended that she get up before the baby (at 5 am) for an hour of prayer; another advised her to ask her husband to come home earlier at least three times a week so that she could go to Mass; while the third suggested her to calm down, as the Church was praying on her behalf to 'compensate' her difficulties with devotional practices. Neither of the three priests consulted, nor Soskice herself, considered a fourth alternative to make maternal commitments compatible with a deep Christian life: recommending that the devoted mother pray *while* caring for her baby, feeding or cleaning him-her with love and care, remembering that each creature is a gift from God,

[75] Belda (2003) offers a theological analysis of the 'Unity of Life' formulated by Escrivá and includes references to this concept in SVC documents. For the development of this concept by Escrivá, see also Cattaneo (2002a, 2002b) and Aranda (2020).
[76] (Soskice 1992).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

who manifests His divine providence through the mother's delicate affection, an affection which serves in some way to incarnate, to materialise, God's love for her baby. This would be the concrete application of the 'unity of life' that Escrivá proposed to overcome this apparent dilemma, since it also connects perfectly with the matrimonial vocation of this mother, who receives the grace of the sacrament precisely in order to live her faith to the full by carrying out the tasks that looking after her family entails. In short, for Escrivá, 'unity of life' implies that prayer is not only compatible with work or with social or family circumstances, but in some way merges them through a continuous presence of God, so one can '...discover the invisible God in the most visible and material things' (PLW, n. 114).

'Unity of life' implies, on the one hand, finding spiritual meaning in the materiality of everyday existence (spiritualising material realities) and, on the other, fostering an encounter with God in these ordinary circumstances (materialising the spiritual life). For Escrivá, both involve being contemplative in the world, linking all these activities with a continuous dialogue with God, which is compatible with a proper attention to work, carried out with human perfection and for love of God, in the little details of everyday life:

> We acquire the style of contemplative souls, in the midst of our daily work! Because we become certain that he is watching us, while he asks us to conquer ourselves anew: a little sacrifice here, a smile there for someone who bothers us, beginning the least pleasant but most urgent job first, carefulness in little details of order, perseverance in the fulfilment of our duty when it would be so easy to abandon it, not leaving for tomorrow what should be finished today: and all this, to please him, Our Father God (FoG, n. 67).

Burkhart and López[77] present a detailed analysis of the concept of 'unity of life' in Escrivá's spirituality, distinguishing three dimensions: unity of ends, unity of the person, and unity of means. The first aims at directing all things to the glory of God, which implies doing all activities with purity of intention: 'You will have it always if, always and in everything, you seek only to please God' (TW, n. 287). The unity of the person implies that all own potentialities (intelligence, will, affection) are oriented towards the same ends. Seeking this divine meaning implies being contemplative, maintaining a continuous dialogue with

[77] (Burkhart and López 2010 - 2013, vol. 3, epilogue).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

God amid professional and family circumstances. Unity in the means implies that all external activities are consistent with the faith one professes.

The 'unity of life' at work entails linking labour and prayer, so that professional activities are not an obstacle to finding God, but the right environment to find 'the divine something' hidden in those activities. 'Unity of life' here implies merging the three dimensions of work (intrinsic, subjective and relational), making it the matter to sanctify, the means to sanctify oneself and others:

> Fulfilling the will of God at work, contemplating God at work, working for the love of God and neighbour, converting work into a means of apostolate, giving the human divine value: this is the unity of life, simple and strong, which we must have and teach (Letter 11.03.1940, n. 14).

A widespread mentality in the Church has advocated a sharp contrast between the contemplative and the active life, corresponding to monks, nuns and laity respectively. A common example of this division is the interpretation of the passage in Luke referring to Martha and Mary, the two sisters whom Jesus visited in Bethany (Lk. 10:40-42). Martha would be the image of an active life (spending her time preparing food for Jesus), while Mary would be the contemplative one (sitting at His feet). Escrivá, recognising that both vocations, the active and the contemplative, are essential for the Church, considered that they were not necessarily incompatible, since active work and contemplation can merge, provided that the person has a solid interior life, with frequent recourse to prayer and the sacraments.[78] He considered that 'being contemplative in the world' is manifested primarily at work, which involves the effort to turn it into prayer and apostolate, prayer into work and apostolate, and apostolate into work and prayer:

> We are always doing the same thing, for everything can be prayer, all activity can and should lead us to God, nourish our intimate dealings with him, from morning to night. Any honourable work can be

[78] In a letter written in 1965 to women members of OD, Escrivá encouraged them carry out 'in intimate union, the part of Martha and that of Mary, because so necessary is one like the other, being Marta's condition and means for Mary's' (Letter 29.07.1965, n. 23). The symbolism of the active and contemplative life, as two separate realities, has a long tradition in the Church, rooted in the early monastic movements, when the proper role of manual work in the contemplative life was discussed. For an interesting reflection on this controversy see Charles Metteer (1999).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

> prayer and all prayerful work is apostolate. In this way the soul develops a unity of life, which is both simple and strong (CPB, n. 10).

This contemplative attitude will facilitate a peaceful acceptance of the successes and failures that may occur at work, the former to give thanks and rectify the intention, seeking only the glory of God and service to others, and the latter to gain humility and better understand the limitations of others (Cf. CPB, n. 49).

'Unity of life' also implies being consistent in the public sphere with Christian values when addressing social or political problems, illuminating one's civic activities with the light of faith while respecting other people's views. A lack of interest in solving collective problems would also contradict the vocation of the laity to sanctify ordinary activities, as the last Council pointed out,[79] in the same vein as Escrivá often indicated:

> It is not true that there is opposition between being a good Catholic and serving civil society faithfully. In the same way there is no reason why the Church and the State should clash when they proceed with the lawful exercise of their respective authorities, in fulfilment of the mission God has entrusted to them (FU, n. 301).

Coherency between spiritual life and political and cultural values does not mean defending single political decisions based on religious grounds, which would again be a manifestation of clericalism that Escrivá clearly rejected (see 2.2.1), but the desire to benefit society with values that would benefit all (promoting peace, solidarity, justice, etc.).

The concept of 'unity of life' in Escrivá can also be linked to another original proposal of his spirituality, which he defined in two concepts that were always united in his preaching: 'priestly soul and lay mentality'.[80] The union between the two implies combining the desire to sanctify all ordinary activities, with the vision of doing so in a professional way, following one's own responsibility. Lay outlook is a critical point in Escrivá's charism, which aimed to develop a lay spirituality rather than a spirituality for lay people by adapting religious spir-

[79] GeS (n. 36 and 43) refers in detail to what the Council understood by autonomy with regard to material realities and the role of lay Christians in leading them to God (Second Vatican Council 1965, n. 36 and 43)
[80] See among others: (Aranda 2020; Burkhart and López 2010 - 2013; Cattaneo 2002a).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

itualities to lay collaborators. This concept permeates all aspects of the institution founded by Escrivá and has often been the cause of misunderstandings when it has been judged with a religious-order's mentality. For example, members do not wear religious dress, nor do they have unique economic, political or cultural positions, and all apostolic activities of OD (residences, schools, universities, hospitals), use the same legal and financial framework as other civic associations in the countries where they are established: they are never official Catholic centres, but just civil institutions, as any other promoted by secular organizations.[81]

Another manifestation of lay mentality is to avoid confusion between religious and secular objectives, with the risk of using the Church for personal benefits. Escrivá stressed that the sacred function of priests should never be used for profane goals, for example to obtain political or social advantages, or that priests carry out functions that are proper to lay people.[82] For the same reason, Escrivá considered that the lay vocation should be developed in those environments that are proper to the laity, above all in ordinary work, not by carrying out ecclesiastical tasks as if these had more spiritual importance than secular activities. Such attitude would be another form of practical dualism, as if living one's Christian vocation more faithfully required dedicating oneself to a certain 'spiritual' work instead of to the material tasks which are the natural place to exercise one's professional vocation. In short, the laity do not live their vocation better when they participate in the government of the Church or its institutions, but when they live their ordinary lives in a holy manner.

St Josemaría complemented the concept of 'lay mentality' with that of 'priestly soul', which he understood as the consequence of the common priesthood that all faithful received through Baptism. Priestly soul implies a deep desire to bring work and all ordinary realities closer to Christ, together with the people who participate in them, fostering the relational dimension of work (see 3.2.3).

[81] This secular mentality has also been the cause of misunderstandings in the history of OD, confusing the lack of external customs or corporate behaviour with an alleged secret character. An example of those attitudes is presented by Aurell-Cardona (2012) who analysed the belligerent attitude of some religious clergy who propagated biased interpretations of its message in the 1940s.
[82] Cattáneo (2002a) presents a practical analysis of this clerical mentality.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

The priestly soul and lay mentality provide an adequate balance to avoid those practical dualisms in Christianity rejected by Escrivá. Either through spiritualised versions that disregard material realities (where the lay mentality would be lost), or in materialistic approaches that blur the spiritual dimension of matter (where the priestly soul would be diluted), or through clericalism, which promotes a confusion between both spheres (where the union between both concepts vanishes).[83]

3.4 Novelty of Escrivá's theology of work.

This last section of the analysis of St Josemaría's vision of work will be devoted to presenting his ideas in the context of the Christian tradition, including both Catholic and Protestant authors, pointing out the characteristics that converge with Escrivá's ideas or where his contributions could be more relevant.

I have already indicated in chapter 2 that his message was quite innovative when it was initially presented. To what extent his ideas were also novel among theologians then or even today requires a critical assessment of how work has been approached throughout the history of Christian spirituality, which is obviously a very ambitious task. However, it is worth at least presenting some critical insights at the historical evolution of Christian theology of work.[84] I will divide my review into two periods, selecting the SVC as the temporal boundary between the two, because of its relevance in the topic at hand. The historical precedents serve to situate Escrivá's ideas on work in the context in which they were developed, whether or not they influenced his thought, while those of the second period will facilitate a critical review on recent advances of theology of

[83] 'The priestly soul tends to establish a unity between earthly and supernatural realities, overcoming the rupture that could result from a disincarnated spiritualism or a materialism closed to the spirit; the lay mentality, avoiding any undue interference with clericalism, ensures that the unity between earthly and supernatural realities does not end in a confusion between the two dimensions' (Cattaneo 2002a, n.5).

[84] A good summary of the (scarce) Catholic developments on the practical theology of work until the first quarter of the twentieth century, when Escrivá began his preaching on the subject, is given by Illanes (2001). Edwin G. Kaiser (1966) also presents an overview of historical approaches to the theology of work (chapters 4 to 14).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

work and Escrivá's possible contributions to those developments.[85] I will complete this section by presenting my own critical assessment of the relationships between Escrivá's theology and spirituality of work and the trends developed in both the Catholic and Protestant traditions, with a synthetic assessment of the relevance of his message to contemporary understandings of the spiritual value of work and material realities, concluding with a summary of my understanding of strengths and limitations of Escrivá's proposals in dialogue with different worldviews.

3.4.1 Theologies of work in the Christian tradition.

Attitudes towards the work of early Christian literature were, in general, quite positive. Work was seen as part of God's original plan, to collaborate with Him in the development of the world, while the Pauline tradition encouraged the responsible work of Christians to be in the service of God and the community of believers.[86] These attitudes contrasted with the earlier conception of work, both in Plato and Aristotle, and later on Gnostics and Manichaeans, which tended to despise manual work, especially non-creative work, as a servile activity.[87]

The Christian appreciation of work was influenced by the expansion of monastic religiosity, especially in the East, between the 4th and 6th centuries.[88] Both anchorite (St Anthony the Great) and coenobite (St Pachomius) communities saw work as an ascetic means to avoid laziness and distraction in their contemplative life and to grow in virtue, but also as a necessary means to maintain

[85] It is difficult to find the sources of Escrivá's ideas, since he did not publish systematic theology, but spiritual texts. Of his writings that referred to work, there are no quotations from contemporary authors, nor from recent saints. He cited the Holy Scriptures, in particular the Gospels and the letters of St Paul, and, much less frequently, the Fathers of the Church or early Christian texts (see 2.1.2 for a more detailed analysis of his theological background).
[86] St Paul's view of work has been extensively commented upon (Fee 2019; Kaiser 1966; Volf 1991). Paul occasionally developed a manual trade (tentmaker: Acts. 18:1-3) and included clear exhortations on the value of manual work in his letters (1 Cor. 4:12; 2 Cor. 11:12; Eph. 4:28; 1 Thess. 4:11; 2 Thess. 3:8-10)
[87]Jose Gomez (2006) reflects on the low appreciation of Greek scholars for manual work, while María Pía-Chirinos (2012) considers that the Aristotelian division between contemplative work (citizens) and manual work (slaves, women) implies a dualistic consideration of labour that was rejected by early Christians, due to the positive consideration of manual labour in Judaism.
[88] (Hanson 2022, chapters 3-4).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

the monasteries and attend to the needs of the surrounding poor.[89] In these communities, labour was identified with manual tasks, a complement to daily prayer and contemplation. Simple or even monotonous activities were prescribed because they facilitated concentration on devotional practices, implying that 'work was not a spiritual activity, but a means to better perform their prayers and meditations' and 'help focus the mind and the heart to God'.[90] Therefore, monks tried to find a balance between work and contemplative life, as two distinct or even opposed realities, which have traditionally been illustrated, as I noted earlier, by the Gospel figures of Martha and Mary, respectively.[91] The ascetic dimension of work was intended to prevent vices, such as idleness, apathy, murmuring, disorder, gluttony or impurity, and as a form of penance. However, manual labour was not considered a spiritual activity in itself, but a profane task, aside of spiritual practices:

> In review, the early Egyptian monks viewed hard labor as an essential part of their disciplined lifestyles. Although they occasionally linked work with the salvation of their souls, they generally saw it as a means of acquiring the virtues of obedience, charity, and humility. Consequently, they were not as interested in what they did—as if their occupations and successes defined who they were—as in how their ordinary labour could facilitate their spiritual development and relationship with God.[92]

One of the biblical texts most often quoted by these early monastic communities is Paul's rebuke to Thessalonians, condemning those who lived in idleness after a misunderstanding about the imminent approach of the 'Parousia': 'In fact, when we were with you, we instructed you that if anyone was unwilling to work, neither should that one eat' (2 Thess. 3:10).

---

[89] The self-maintenance of the monastery was considered the main purpose of manual labour, especially in Egypt, where monasteries were established in very hostile environments (Metteer 1999). The charitable aspect of work was considered indispensable for monastic life, particularly for cenobitic communities. See Metteer (1999) and Kaiser (1966).

[90] (Metteer 1999, p. 168 and p. 183).

[91] 'The Sayings of the Desert Fathers' includes the story of a young monk who visited Abba Silvanus and reproached him for doing manual labour instead of reading pious books. At mealtime he was not called for, and when asked why, Abba Silvanus told him that since he was so spiritual he surely did not need material food. After the young monk repented, Silvanus said: 'Mary needs Martha. It is truly thanks to Martha that Mary is praised' (quoted by Metteer, (1999, p. 172).

[92] (Metteer 1999, p. 204).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

The testimonies of these early manifestations of monastic life provide a framework for understanding the spiritual consideration of work in late antiquity and the early medieval period. A complement to this view is offered by the theological reflections on work of the Church Fathers. Following the biblical account of Creation, the Greek Fathers conceived work as a continuation of God's creative activity, as a means of self-realisation and the building up of the Christian community.[93] For example, Basil's monastic rule contains the precept of daily manual labour, in order to foster humility and chastity and to meet the needs of the community, both within and outside the monastery walls, while John Chrysostom takes up the idea of being the image of God the Creator, to encompass three dimensions of work, as imitation of the act of Creation, imitation of the redemptive work of Christ and imitation of Paul, as a faithful disciple of Christ.

The consideration of work was ambiguous among the Latin Fathers: on the one hand, a positive reality linked to the goodness of Creation, and on the other, a manifestation of punishment and work linked to original sin.[94] St Ambrose was especially concerned with the social aspects of work, in response to the grave injustices affecting the Milanese region of the late fourth century. His disciple St Augustine wrote the first Christian treatise on work, where he provided a balance between two contrasted interpretations of the New Testament.[95] As a complementary argument on the importance of manual work in

[93] (Barsella 2014). She also identifies another trend in that period, linked to the Greek and Roman tradition of considering the ethical and legal aspects of work.
[94] Hanson (2022) revies in detail this issue in chapter 3, particularly on Agustine's approach to work (pp. 86-103). The negative aspect or work predominates in the opinion of Le Goff (1980, p. 100-111), who considered that both manual and intellectual work were conceived as sort of penance in the Benedictine rule.
[95] (Augustine 2002). Some monks in Carthage interpreted literally Jesus' call to detach themselves from material needs ('So do not worry and say, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' All these things the heathen seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all, Mt 6:32-33), and they refused to do any manual labour. This verse seemed to contradict Paul's strict recommendation in 2 Thess. 3:10, linking work and nourishment. Augustine resolved the apparent paradox by pointing out that Matthew frequently used parables to explain the message of Jesus, while Paul hardly ever did so, thus it is more appropriate to understand the Apostle's text literally. Augustine also highlights the great consideration that Paul expresses for work, particularly manual work, and his own example, showing a balanced attitude between manual and intellectual activity.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Christianity, Augustine adds to this argument that St Joseph, the person closest to Jesus and Mary, was a manual worker, a carpenter.[96]

On the other hand, Western monasticism, like Eastern, considered work as part of the ascetic life but separated it from spiritual practices. St Benedict's Rule, for example, prescribed manual labour for five hours a day, considering work alongside prayer and spiritual reading, as part of the monk's ordinary schedule, but without a central spiritual value.[97] Benedict focused more on the material results of work, which was to serve the needs of the monastery and poor neighbours, while striving to make the monastery self-sufficient in basic goods, such as land, water and mill.

The late medieval period brought sudden changes in the organisation of work. New techniques improved agricultural and farming conditions, as well as the use of machines (windmills and watermills) to facilitate hard labour. More trade developed with the Middle and Far East, which encouraged labour specialisation . On the other hand, guilds of different craftsmen were instrumental in creating a new work culture, with the distribution of tasks and apprenticeship cycles, but their influence on the spirituality of work remains to be further analysed.[98]

These late medieval centuries (mainly 11th to 13th) saw the relaxation of traditional monastic communities and the creation of new ones with the aim of recovering the primitive spirit of monastic asceticism (Cistercians, Carthusians). In this context, St Bernard (1090–1153) tried to recover the idea of work as a complement to the spiritual life, with a relevant role in the lifestyle of the Cistercian monks, promoting the compatibility between active and contemplative life. This again recalls the spiritual dualism present in the story of Martha

[96] Augustine is the first one offering the example of the stepfather of Jesus to value manual work: 'that just man, chosen with the testimony of a conjugal and imperishable virginity, to whom the Virgin Mary who gave birth to Christ was betrothed, was a carpenter' (Augustine 2002, n. 13:14). As I have indicated, the connection of St Joseph devotion and work is very clear in St Josemaría (see 3.3.2).

[97] Murphy (2012) points out that the motto 'ora et labora' was not part of the original Benedictine rule, which only devoted a few sentences to work. Much less certain is the interpretation of some authors who consider 'Ora est labora' to be part of the rule, which - in Murphy's opinion - clearly separates manual work from prayer (the divine office) and biblical study (*lectio divina)*. In the same paper, he compares Benedictine's contemplation at work, with St Josemaría's, indicating that the latter is closer to consider work properly as prayer. See 3.4.3.

[98] Illanes (2001) includes some references in his historical analysis of theology of work.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

and Mary. The controversy between manual and intellectual work was also observed in other monastic communities: Cluniac and Cistercian monks, for example, disputed about the priority of intellectual, as being closer to the higher capacities of human beings, or manual, as being more compatible with prayer, types of work.[99] New religious orders, particularly the Dominicans, enhanced the value of intellectual work, which was growingly considered the most appropriate for monks, as it addressed the most noble human potentialities.[100] This idea spread during the Renaissance in an attempt to recover classical values, since the Greek conception of work considered manual labour only suitable for those incapables of higher intellectual activities.[101]

A key period in the Christian perception of work occurred during the Protestant Reformation, which brought about a change in the consideration of its spiritual value.[102] In Luther's extensive writings, the term work implied two meanings. Firstly, work as a professional activity (labour, task) and secondly, as the object of a particular action (oeuvre). Luther firmly defended that only by faith do we receive justification. The practical implication of this was that works, in the latter sense, are not relevant for the salvation of the soul: only the continuous exercise and strengthening of faith are valid for salvation: 'Works are dead things, which can neither honour nor praise God, no matter how they are done or even if they are intended to honour and praise God'.[103] However, he considers that Christians should work well, out of love for God and desire to do his will, and that ascetic practices are important, not for gaining God's grace, but for self-control and mastery of the body. Luther thinks that work has no capacity to sanctify *per se* but it must be done well so as to please

[99] (Hanson 2022, pp. 109-113).
[100] This is the position of St Thomas Aquinas. Following the earlier monastic tradition, he assigns it four purposes: self-sustenance, the elimination of idleness, the repression of excessive sensitive desire (concupiscence) and the practice of works of mercy. He does not offer many resources for constructing a spirituality of work. In fact, it is striking, as Illanes (2001) pointed it out, that in his commentary on the life of Christ (section III of the ST), he does not mention the years of Jesus' work in Nazareth, jumping from the circumcision of Christ to the baptism of John, as if the hidden life of Christ had no relevance for the Redemption. This, I believe, the reason why Escrivá did not quote Aquinas in his work-related texts, although he did quote him frequently in other writings.
[101] Hanson (2022) analyses Petrarch's ideas as an example of the new approach to work within early modernity, in line with this growing appreciation of intellectual labour.
[102] I have already mentioned this aspect in 2.3.2.
[103] Martin Luther, *The Treatise of Good Works*, quoted by Hanson (2022, p. 240).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

God. He stresses that the biblical account of Adam's work before the Fall implies that work played no salvific role, only being an instrument to avoid idleness. In his interpretation of Jesus' words about recognising trees by the fruit they bear (cf. Mt 7), Luther confronts Aristotelian (and Thomistic) ethics, concluding that virtue does not come from the repetition of good deeds, but that good deeds are consequences of God's freely received Grace, following his vocational approach to work. For example, in his view a carpenter makes good tables because he has received the grace of God to be a good carpenter, rather than considering that he become a good carpenter by his personal striving to make good tables; in other words, the exercise does not achieve virtue but only God's grace. For Luther, both manual and intellectual work have equal dignity, including the office of preaching, in contrast to other reformers who valued only manual work. He recommends persevering in the work assigned to each by God's providence, linking professional and Christian vocation (which he calls external and internal, respectively).[104] Consequently, the aim of work is not the self-development of the worker, but the good of others. Similarly, it is the faith of the agent that gives value to a particular work, rather than the kind of work that is done.[105] Regarding the relationship between effort and reward in work, Luther is inconsistent, sometimes rejecting the connection (since performance is always a free blessing from God), while in other passages of his works he implies a direct relationship. This apparent contradiction is intended to avoid the over-dependence of human effort on the success of work, which leads to both pride and anxiety.[106]

The Protestant theology of work in the following centuries remained generally faithful to Luther's general principles. Work is the theatre of human and social progress and therefore has a religious significance, but not a salvific

[104] Luther is one of the first Christian authors to speak of vocation in work, expressing the relevance of work in Protestant theology.
[105] Luther made an explicit comparison between the work of monks, hitherto held in the highest esteem in Christian thought, and that of maids, who in the performance of their ordinary work follow a call from God, concluding that the latter are more worthy, because they serve God and others better. This implies, following Hanson (2022, p. 155), a remarkable shift in Western theology of work.
[106] In his commentary on Ecclesiastes Luther wrote: 'I cannot determine the outcome or the success, regardless of how much I may labour. You simply do what is your duty and the Lord will find His appointed time to make use of your labour. We cannot make any judgements about these matters, we ought to labour, but not to prescribe the end and the outcome of our work'. Quoted by Hanson (Hanson 2022, p. 148).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

value, as only faith can justify.[107] Work is a vehicle for personal transformation, but not for the transformation of the world, which remains corrupted by sin.[108] Professional vocation is linked to Christian vocation in the sense of fulfilling God's will for all, and success is not pursued for its own sake, but is a manifestation of being blessed by God, especially in the Calvinist tradition.[109]

The progress of the theology and spirituality of work in the Catholic Church, especially in the 20th century, runs parallel to the evolution of the theology of the laity (see 2.3). Since work was generally unrelated to personal sanctification, the spirituality of work had very little presence in Catholic devotional books. For example, one of the most widespread books on spirituality of the early 15th century, 'The Imitation of Christ', offers a contemptuous view of work and material realities:

> The more a man to be spiritual, the more bitter doth the present life become to him; because he the better understandeth and seeth the defects of human corruption. For to eat, to drink, to watch, to sleep, to rest, to labour, and to be subject to the other necessities of nature, is truly a great wretchedness and affliction to a devout man, who would fain be released and free from all sin.[110]

The oral and written activity of some of the most influential saints of the 17th to 19th centuries, such as Francis de Sales (1567-1622), Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787), John Bosco (1815-1888) or John Henry Newman (1801-1890) contributed to provide a more positive view of ordinary realities, although they did

---

[107] This position is summed up by a recent Protestant theologian: 'The wisdom of Reformation teaching in an age that hoards work is this: work does not set us free. We are justified by grace through faith, not because of the work we do. The measure of our personhood is not the labor we undertake, however lofty or mundane. Rather, our measure is that God has already adopted us as children. We are not what we do; we are whose we are' (Jensen 2006, p. 66).

[108] 'What is redeemed is not the world, but only the individual who, ultimately, separates himself from the world. The inner relationship between work and Redemption is missed' (Rhonheimer 2006, p. 67).

[109] This would explain the material value of work and the religious valuation of professional success, following Weber's (2001) main hypothesis. Karl Barth, according to John Hughes (2007, pp. 12-15), was critical of this hypothesis, as he considered that it placed too much emphasis on the secular value of work, minimising the relevance of other manifestations of the *vita activa, such as* worship and service to others. Taylor disagrees with this thesis, although he believes that the reformers' consideration of work was a key driver of social transformation: 'A spiritual outlook which stressed the necessity of continuous disciplined work, work which should be of benefit to people and hence ought to be efficacious, and which encouraged sobriety and restraint in the enjoyment of its fruits surely must be recognized as one of the formative influences of the work ethic of modern capitalist culture, at least in the Anglo-Saxon world' (Taylor 1992, p. 226).

[110] Chapter XXII, n. 2: Taken from Project Gutenberg translation: https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1653/pg1653-images.html#chap01, last access October 25th, 2023.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

not develop a theology or spirituality of work. Already in the 20th century, two theological currents developed in relation to the spiritual value of ordinary life: on the one hand, the so-called 'eschatologists', who give greater emphasis to the transcendent value of work and culture (vertical dimension), and the 'incarnationists', who consider earthly realities to be the proper sphere of Christian sanctification (horizontal dimension).[111] Among the latter are the most active in the development of a new theological evaluation of work, such as Marie-Dominique Chenu (1895-1990), Gustave Thils and Gerard Philips.[112]

The first theological reflection devoted exclusively to work was published by Chenu in 1955.[113] He set out to overcome the moralising scope of previous texts and conceived of work as an activity of self-development, enabling human beings to master the world, highlighting their co-creative role within the dominion given by God in Gen. 1:28. He held a positive view of the transformation of society and nature through labour as part of an inevitable process, similar to Teilhard's cultural evolutionism.[114] This worldly perspective, and his emphasis on the objective versus subjective value of work, as well as his involvement in the French initiative of the worker-priests, made this book controversial to the Vatican authorities as being too close to Marxism. After the Council, Chenu provided a more nuanced interpretation of his ideas, distinguishing between subjective (intention) and objective (facts) dimensions, which was later used by John Paul II in *Laborem Exercens* (LE). Chenu provided also some insights on the spirituality of work, linking it to the cosmic role of humanity in the Creation story.[115] It is surprising that he did not refer in his book to the work of Christ or of the early Christians.

In his essay on the mission of the laity in the Church, written in 1956, Gerard Philips recognised the importance of work as a proper sphere for the development of the lay vocation, and the role of the human in developing what he called an 'Endless Creation'. However, he did not specifically reflect on the role

[111] Luis Quesada-Béjar (2015) presents in this framework his interpretation of the theology of work in the 20th century. The same scheme is used by Hernán Fitte (2003). Gideon Goosen (1976) reviews the impact of these two-viewpoints on work's theology.
[112] The latter two were cited in section 2.3.2.
[113] I have read the Spanish translation (Chenu 1965).
[114] (Hughes 2007, pp. 15-18).
[115] (Chenu 1965, p. 32).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

of work within lay spirituality. In fact, he does not even include a subsection on work in his text.[116] After the Council, he wrote another book on the laity, where he included a chapter entitled 'profane values', among which he reflected on work.[117] He compared the work of a Christian worker and an agnostic, implying that the former would find new meaning by assigning a spiritual value to his work, which he considers 'spiritualised matter', by offering that work to God, in union with the sacrifice of the Cross. Grace transforms the lives of workers, making them temples of the Holy Spirit, which gives deep meaning and a source of transformation to all tasks.[118] On the other hand, Philips considered that all work has a personal and social dimension, not only from an ethical point of view, since untimely leisure also harms others (since unfinished tasks have to be done by others), but also from an apostolic orientation, since all work contributes to the expansion of the Kingdom. Finally, he stressed that the promise of eternal happiness should not prevent Christian workers from contributing to the material progress of their fellow workers, by exercising generosity and detachment of self, and working with human perfection, to serve others better.

Gustave Thils thought that all earthly realities have a profound impact on the universal call to holiness: work, marriage and social life. He reminded that work is not a consequence of original sin, but a manifestation of God's free will, which makes us sharers in his plan for creation. Work is also the human activity that transmits to the world the Redemption brought by Christ, and therefore has a co-redeeming role to play,[119] as well as being the ordinary means through which the Christian layperson collaborates in the development of the society in which he or she lives.[120]

---

[116] It indicates that 'creation is not finished; advances and humans have a role in making it develop' (Philips 1956, p. 90). This idea was later included in the Council's fundamental documents, as I will indicate in the next section.
[117] I have used the Spanish version (Philips 1966).
[118] 'In the hands of the Spirit our human values are not violated, but sublimated. They see themselves surrounded by new guarantees of seriousness and respect'. (Philips 1966, p. 147).
[119] (Thils 1947, pp. 91-120).
[120] This is clearly aligned to Escrivá's thought, even though both authors never met directly. A close collaborator of Escrivá, Julian Herranz (1931-...), later appointed cardinal of the Church in 2003, refers to a conversation he had with Thils in 1964, in which he found close affinity between Thils and Escrivá's lay spirituality (Cf. (Herranz-Casado 2011).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

A similar viewpoint on the spiritual value of work can be derived from Teilhard de Chardin's essays (see 2.3.2). Teilhard did not live in a conventual environment but instead in a professional one, strongly connected to science, which led him to reflect on the spiritual value of secular work. In his view, its spiritual value should be judged only by whether that work is performed for the glory of God, regardless the excellence or professional competence it entails. Acknowledging the relevance of the intention, Teilhard considers that this approach is limited, because it does not give proper importance to the material dimensions of our existence, while rejecting the spiritual value of the results. By the power of Incarnation, our souls are centred in Christ, and therefore we are called to bring to perfection the present world through work, which both enriches our souls and external environment where we live. Work is not only a means to gain our living, but also, and most importantly, is a way of uniting our intentions and aspirations with God:

> Hence whatever our role as men may be, whether we are artists, working-men or scholars, we can, if we are Christians, speed towards the object of our work as though towards an opening on to the supreme fulfilment of our beings. (...) God is inexhaustibly attainable in the totality of our action.[121]

It is interesting to note the parallelism between Teilhard and Escrivá, although both coming from a very different cultural and spiritual background. Both stressed the need to overcome spiritual dualism, through recapturing the spiritual value of work (which perfectionates both the worker and the world), rooted in a close union with Christ in all our activities.[122] Teilhard does not specify how this mystical union is possible, neither how it can be achievable by an ordinary Christian, in this regard the principles of his proposal are aligned with Escrivá's, but arriving at different practical implications. Teilhard's were more theoretical than Escrivá's, in the line of the mystical character of the Jesuit thinker.

I add to this list of labour-related Catholic theologians an essay on spirituality of work by Blessed Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski (1901-1981), Archbishop of

[121] (Teilhard de Chardin 1960, p. 36)
[122] This resembles the concept of 'union of life' in Escrivá's terminology, although Teilhard approach to this concept is vaguer, perhaps because he is not addressing specific Christian communities.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Warsaw and Primate of Poland and a key character in the Catholic moral resistance to communism in that country.[123] The book is a collection of personal reflections, covering aspects of the work not addressed by Chenu or Thils, and written some years before them. Precisely because he lived at that time in a communist country, his thinking on work is quite different from that of Western theologians, putting more emphasis on its spiritual aspects (prayer, virtues) than on its social and ethical dimensions. For example, Wyszynski includes chapters on the relevance of specific virtues at work (patience, conscientiousness, perseverance, diligence), while stressing the importance of personal meditation, since 'prayer internally transforms our work, sanctifies it; and work extends the boundaries of prayer'.[124] Wyszynski introduces his book commenting on the working life of Jesus in Nazareth, and his disciples, all of whom were workers (fishermen, tax collectors). Following this example, he suggests that work is much more than a source of income: it helps to perfect matter by giving it a new value, while acquiring the means necessary for human subsistence and growth. Moreover, work 'is one of the means of our spiritual progress', inasmuch as it is 'performed in such a way that man becomes better not only in the sense of physical efficiency but in the moral sense also'[125], although he does not suggest that it could be a pathway of sanctification. He considers that the value of work does not depend on the type of activity, but on the attitude of the worker. With a significant similarity to St Josemaría, for Wyszynski love of God is the metric of the work's relevance, underlining its co-creating, but also its co-redeeming role.

Another driver to foster the relevance of working affairs within the Church lies in her response to the social problems created by industrial revolution. In this regard, the impulse of Leo XIII's '*Rerum Novarum*' (1891) was important to develop Catholic Social Doctrine and promote the first Catholic labour movements. One of them was the Working Christian Youth ('*Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne*', JOC) founded in Belgium in 1925 by Joseph Cardijn (1882-1967), which

[123] I have read the English edition (Wyszynski 1960). The Polish original was published in 1946.
[124] (Wyszynski 1960, p. 79). This thought is clearly linked to the contemplation at work suggested by Escrivá.
[125] Wyszynski (1960, p. 34). Together with other theologians, and later with John Paul II, he linked human labour to the divine mandate of 'subduing the earth', but not so much for human benefit per se, but rather to fulfil the original will of God.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

promoted a new spirituality of work to extend the presence of Christians in labour atmospheres. A similar line had the movement to encourage the cultural and social influence of lay Catholics by Jacques Maritain (1882-1973),[126] Gilbert K. Chesterton (1874-1936)[127] and other intellectuals who had recently converted to Catholicism. Maritain was in favour of a more dynamic participation of lay Catholics in social and political matters, extending their influence through parties that brought Christian values to the parliament. This idea was controversial, as some spiritual advisors of 'Catholic action' disagreed on to what extent the Christian influence should be direct (through official Catholic parties, for instance) or indirect (influencing on the values defended by different political perspectives). Work was however included in textbooks on the social doctrine of the Church, although mostly considering its ethical and legal dimensions.[128]

Finally, theological and social aspects of work within the Catholic tradition should be complemented by the coverage of this topic within textbooks of spiritual theology. One of them was published in 1923 by Adolphe Tanquerey, which includes a short section on the 'Sanctification of Professional Relationships'.[129] Since the 1920s, sanctifying work has also been present in the spirituality of the JOC and the 'Catholic Action'. In fact, the first use of this expression in a Vatican document was in an address of Pius XI precisely to JOC workers.[130]

In the first half of the 20th century, it is worth also noting the creation of new Catholic institutions that were aiming to promote the sanctification of ordinary realities, although with a narrower perspective than Escrivá. One of them is the Teresian Association, founded by St. Pedro Poveda (1874-1936), with the aim of strengthening the formation of women by training female

[126] (Maritain 2012).
[127] (Morris 2007).
[128] Fitte (2003) discusses this aspect.
[129] Quoted by Burkhart and López (2010 - 2013, vol. 3, chapter 7). The same authors cite a speech of Pius XI to the workers of 'Catholic Action' delivered a few years later, in January 1927, which includes a couple of paragraphs on the sanctification of work. However, most manuals of Catholic spirituality of the time do not even mention work, as it is the case of Garrigou-Lagrange's and Guibert's textbooks (Illanes 2001).
[130] Both in the JOC formation manuals and in this speech of Pius XI, the concept of 'sanctification of work' indicates two aspects: the recourse to prayer while doing work, restricting this devout practice to manual work, and the creation of better professional conditions to dignify the working environment. Both of these aspects were different from Escrivá's approach to the sanctification of work, as he applied them to all kinds of work (not only manual work), and focused primarily on the agent of work, and less on the social conditions in which work was performed, which would be a consequence, not a component of the sanctification of work. (Burkhart and López 2010 - 2013, section 7.2.1).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

teachers who would then teach the Gospel through education and the testimony of life, promoting sanctification through study and intellectual work. The institution was founded in 1919 and approved as Pia Union in 1924. Poveda, a good friend of Escrivá, died as a martyr in 1936 during the Spanish Civil War.[131]

In the Protestant sphere, in the 1940s it is worth mentioning the ideas on work of Dorothy Sayers (1893-1957), an English novelist and essayist. In an article published in 1940, during World War II that so profoundly altered the ultimate meaning of work and economics, Sayers considered that the time had come to recover the deeper values of professional tasks, distorted by the materialistic economic vision that prevailed in Western society. In his view, work was not just a way of earning a living, but a way of life, of developing as a person and of finding God:

> The first, stated quite briefly, is that work is not, primarily, a thing one does to live, but the thing one lives to do. It is, or it should be, the full expression of the worker's faculties, the thing in which he finds spiritual, mental and bodily satisfaction, and the medium in which he offers himself to God.[132]

Recovering these dimensions implies needing to develop a spirituality of work, the sphere where most Christians spend most of their ordinary lives, helping them to find a religious meaning in what they do on a regular basis. This implies that work is conceived as an activity that goes beyond its economic compensation, to become a task that enhances the creative capacity of human beings, enriches their personal abilities and their relationship with God. For work to have Christian meaning, the first condition, and here his approach is similar to Escrivá's, is that it is well done, in honour of God, because 'work must be good work before it can be called the work of God', work of quality, which allows the worker to feel proud of the product obtained.

> (Work should) be thought of as a creative activity undertaken for the love of the work itself; and that man, made in God's image, should

[131] He was arrested and shot at the beginning of the war just for being a Catholic priest. He was canonised in 2003 by John Paul II. For a more detailed analysis of his ideas on work see Liu (2021, pp. 113-130). For the friendship between Poveda and Escrivá, see Rodríguez (2004).
[132] (Sayers 1940, n. 16/33).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

> do things, as God makes them, for the sake of doing well a thing that is well worth doing.[133]

Therefore, the Church must focus its message on encouraging workers to do well what they usually do, finding a spiritual meaning in their ordinary activity.[134] For this revolution in work to be possible, it is necessary, says Sayers, for the Church to develop a Christian vision of work, where it becomes, 'a means of divine creation' (converging here with Escriva's spirituality). In Sayers' opinion, the lack of a religious consideration of work is responsible for its materialistic conception, and for the fact that a good part of the workers feel religion as something alien to their lives.

Finally, it is worth mentioning also Simone Weil, a well-known French intellectual who devoted a significant part of her reflection to the problems of work. After she worked in a large factory, she discovered the profound alienation that a worker may feel for his/her activity, particularly in those plants where the sense of belonging and satisfaction for the produced goods was barely present. She assigned this alienation to missing the link between thought and matter, which should be present in all work. Thought should guide the transformation of matter into specific goods. Working in large factories implies losing the contact between aims and means, soul and matter, because the worker does not know the meaning, neither the output of what he/she does. She indicated that the only solution is bringing spiritual meaning to work, for instance by recuperating the cosmological dimension of liturgy, well present in pre-industrial Christianity, when agricultural seasons were attached to certain religious feasts.[135] She suggested that the Eucharist, with its intimate union between matter and soul, should be the centre of the working life. It is worth noting, that Weil having such a great social sensitivity, considered that the greater revolution at work would be to fill it with spiritual meaning, flooding

---

[133] (Sayers 1940, p. 2/33). This would be the secular equivalent of Escriva's concept of what a 'sanctified work' should be, but the Protestant view of sanctification prevents Sayer from attributing a sanctifying role to work.
[134] Referring to what the Church should say to a carpenter, she indicated that the message should not so much be about what he does in his leisure time (avoiding drunkenness and going to the temple on Sundays), but rather about what he does in the place where he spends most of his life, that is, in his case, to make good tables, since a Christian carpenter who makes bad tables somehow insults Christ, who made quality tables in the workshop of Nazareth (Sayers 1940).
[135] (Hanson 2022. Ch. 8). I will come back to this idea in section 4.4.1.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

every day's activities with poetry and beauty. Emphasising the subjective dimension of work, Weil indicates that only through a higher-spiritual meaning, work can be really fulfilling, as it would connect body and soul dimensions, imbuing routine activities of a deep sense:

> It is a question of transforming, as far as possible, daily life itself into a metaphor with divine meaning, into a parable.[136]

3.4.2 Recent developments in the theology of work.

The SVC devoted considerable effort to reflecting on the universal vocation to holiness and thus on the spiritual relevance of work and other earthly realities, with the ultimate goal of improving the Church's dialogue with society. After the official convocation of the Council by John XXIII in 1959, the Vatican asked all the bishops to give suggestions on the topics to be discussed. Among those received, several were directly related to the theology or spirituality of work, including those sent by Cardinals Montini, later Paul VI, and Wojtyla, later John Paul II.[137] Particularly relevant is the suggestion of Monsignor Blecharczyk, Bishop of Jos (Poland), who recommended:

> Let the Council solemnly and authoritatively proclaim the doctrine on the moral value of work, which certainly makes man God's co-operator in the work of creation, provides him with the means of sanctification and salvation, and provides the necessary means for the individual and the family.[138]

Once all the recommendations had been received, the Holy See set up ten commissions to prepare draft documents to be discussed during the SVC sessions. Four of them dealt with themes relating to work, the relevance of the lay vocation and the mission of the laity in the world and in the Church: they were the basis of the pastoral constitution 'Gaudium et spes' (GeS).[139] The final version of this document conceived work to be the vehicle for the transformation

---

[136] (Weil 1962, p. 21) quoted by Hanson (2022, p. 190). It is remarkable the similitude with this paragraph from Escrivá's Navarre homily: 'the Christian vocation consists of making heroic verse out of the prose of each day' (CMEB, n. 116).

[137] For the Council's preparatory activities linked to work, I have followed Quesada-Béjar's dissertation (2015).

[138] '*Acta et Documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II apparando Serie I (antepraeparatoria)*,' vol. II, paragraphs II, 727-28, cited by Quesada-Béjar (2015) who collected the different versions of the conciliar documents related to labour.

[139] (Second Vatican Council 1965). In this section, I will only quote document numbers to avoid multiple citations.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

of society and nature, of human development, in accordance with 'God's design manifested at the beginning of time, that he should subdue the earth, perfect creation and develop. At the same time, it obeys Christ's command to be at the service of his brethren' (n. 57). According to GeS, work not only has a social and economic dimension, satisfying human needs, but is also a fundamental factor of personal development:

> For when a man works he not only alters things and society, he develops himself as well. He learns much, he cultivates his resources, he goes outside of himself and beyond himself. Rightly understood this kind of growth is of greater value than any external riches which can be garnered. A man is more precious for what he is than for what he has (GES, n. 35).[140]

The document recalls the general principles of the Church's social doctrine in relation to work, including a just distribution of wealth, the rejection of any discrimination and working conditions that are contrary to human dignity and the health of the worker. GeS ends recalling the spiritual value of work. It called to mind that that work 'offered to God man is associated with the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, Who conferred an eminent dignity on labour when at Nazareth He worked with His own hands' (n. 67). Besides GeS, other documents of the SVC dealt with the issue of work, but in a more indirect way.[141]

After the Council, the theology of work and earthly realities has been growingly embraced by both the Catholic and Protestant traditions.[142] Within the former, the main ideas of the SVC on the contribution of work to the sanctification of earthly realities were incorporated into more recent theologies of work.[143] However, the most relevant document on this topic is St John Paul II's

[140] The idea of work as a means for human development is also taken up in '*Lumen Gentium*', n. 41. In both cases it is more a matter of character development, rather than the sanctification of the worker, which is the meaning given to it by Escrivá.
[141] Fitte (2003) analyses the impact of other SVC documents on the theology of work, in particular *Lumen Gentium* n. 31, 41 and *Apostolican actuasitaten* n. 4.
[142] Guitián and González (2022) present a summary of the advances in the theology of work in the last 40 years. They distinguish three main lines of development: texts related to systematic theology, to the biblical interpretation of work and to a more practical (spiritual) theology.
[143] For example, Gideon Goosen (1976) presents a brief review of different theologies of work in the Catholic tradition, distinguishing three approaches to work: as punishment, stressing the fatigue and effort that accompany many tasks; as co-creation, addressing the innovative role of the worker who contributes to perfecting nature; and as an instrument to prepare for the second coming of Christ, adopting an eschatological perspective. Kaiser (1966) gives a historical overview of the Christian tradition on work, and then presents the virtues which in his opinion characterise a Christian view of work.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

encyclical LE, published just three years into his pontificate, which provides theological and spiritual foundations of work in the light of the Catholic tradition and the Pope's personalist background.[144] The first message of the encyclical is the consideration of work as 'the fundamental dimension of human existence on earth' (LE, n. 4). For John Paul II, the ultimate meaning of work is accounted for in the Genesis narrative, emphasising that human creation in the image of God entails the task to subdue the earth through work (Gen. 1:28).[145] The document underlines the dual dimension of labour, which perfects both society (through the goods generated) and the individuals who carry out that activity (the worker). The first aspect is the output of a given task (objective value), while the second refers to the development of the agent of that task (subjective value). John Paul II defended the pre-eminence of subjective value (the person) over the outputs and the means to obtain them (capital), since the latter is instrumental, while the former is essential to preserve human dignity. In this sense, work should be considered a means, and not an end, since the human being is not only an instrument of production, but it has an intrinsic dignity that is not related to the goods he/she generates. Consequently, work should serve the benefit of people and not the other way around, as is often advocated by modern economics.

> The value of human work is not primarily the kind of work being done but the fact that the one who is doing it is a person. The sources of the dignity of work are to be sought primarily in the subjective dimension, not in the objective one (LE, n. 6).

However, the encyclical never mentions that this subjective value of work could also have a sanctifying role, as Escrivá suggested, nor does it acknowledge his contribution to this debate. The encyclical reflects on the spirituality of work, highlighting the exemplary value of the working life of Christ (called 'The Gospel of Work'), as an example of the subjective value of work, and quotes many professions that appear in the Gospels to illustrate Christ's teachings (shepherd, doctor, farmer, householder, builder, etc.) (cf. LE, n. 26).

---

[144] (John Paul II 1981). Several studies have been published on the LE extending and commenting its ideas. Among them Schlag (2021b) and Traffas (1983).
[145] The expression 'to subdue the earth' is used 15 times in LE (n. 4-6; n. 9-10, 12, 21). It is surprising to note that John Paul II, who had a great sensitivity for nature, never quotes Gen. 2:15 in this encyclical.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

John Paul II bases the value of work on being co-creators, helping God in some way to perfect Creation 'within the limits of human capacities' (LE, n. 25). Creation is presented as God's work, followed by His rest (the Sabbath), which is also part of the overall plan of Creation. The document also connects work and Redemption through the association with the Cross of Christ, giving a new meaning to the fatigue that can occur in any professional work:

> By enduring the toil of work in union with Christ crucified for us, man in a way collaborates with the Son of God for the redemption of humanity. He shows himself a true disciple of Christ by carrying the cross in his turn every day (Cf. Lk 9:23) in the activity that he is called upon to perform (LE, n. 27).

Therefore, Creation and Redemption must be central components of the spirituality of work, both giving a new sense to the inner meaning of work for Christians, rooted in a close spiritual relationship with Christ, beyond the ethical and social considerations involved. Unlike Escrivá, for John Paul II the contemplative attitude at work does not imply seeking union with God in professional activity, but perceiving work problems with a Christian outlook, adopting a prophetic role in denouncing injustices.[146]

In line with these magisterial documents, the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales published a booklet on the spirituality of work in 2001.[147] This short text deals with a review of biblical texts related to work (Gen. 1-3 and the epistles of Paul), highlighting the exemplary value of the hidden life of Jesus. It recalls the importance of working according to the original divine intention, as work expresses the human transformative power of Creation. The document includes explicit mention of the sanctification of work, without quoting Escrivá, to be achieved 'by applying the teachings of Jesus Christ in the workplace and the offering of human labour to the glory of God and the good of all people'.[148] The document presents the guiding principles of the Church's social

[146] Martin Schlag (2021a) compares LE's view with Escrivá's contemplative conception of work. In his opinion, John Paul II emphasised the social results of contemplation, while Escrivá emphasised the spiritual ones. In my view, although LE did not prioritise activism over contemplation — since John Paul II assumed that this prophetic function of Christian workers should be based on a deep spiritual life—, the document is still limited in exploring the full spiritual potential of work, particularly in its intrinsic value as a sanctifier activity.
[147] (CBCEW 2001).
[148] (CBCEW 2001).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

teaching on work, including the pursuit of the common good, the right to decent working conditions, the relevance of trade unions and active involvement of Christians in the pursuit of social justice. It contains examples of Catholic leaders who played an inspiring role in addressing labour injustices, such as George Woodcock, Lech Walesa, Chico Mendes or César Chávez.

Protestant theology of work has grown significantly in recent decades, with several seminal books, including both theological reflections and more practical approaches.[149] From a biblical perspective, texts published in the last two decades emphasise the relationship between human and divine work, seen as a continuation of creation, as well as the links between work and worship, implying a link between Sunday and Monday.[150]

Miroslav Volf's essay is probably the most elaborate theology of labour.[151] He first reviews the main socio-economic issues in relation to modern work, suggesting three normative principles for judging the adequacy of existing economic systems: the freedom of individuals, the satisfaction of the basic needs of all people, and the protection of nature from irreparable damage. All three principles are derived from the notion of 'new creation', which underpins Volf's proposal. In this line, he shows the limitations of Luther's vocational approach, as it entails a static consideration of professional vocation, which is hardly compatible with the volatility and dynamism of today's labour market, and its potential negative impact in promoting social transformation, as it would lead to accept as divine will negative situations that could otherwise be challenged.[152] In the face of these shortcomings, Volf suggests an alternative approach based on the idea of charism, defined as a gift of the Holy Spirit. Since charisms are dynamic, non-exclusive and result from personal cooperation with God's grace and are oriented towards the ultimate destiny of the new creation, Volf considers that conceiving work as a charism is better adapted to

[149] Guitián and González (2022) and Loftin and Dimsdale (2018a) provide a good introduction to recent trends in the Protestant tradition on this issue. In addition to academic activity, it is worth mentioning the emergence of social phenomena linked to a new spiritual vision of work, such as the so-called *Faith at Work* movement (Miller 2007).
[150] (Nelson 2011). For a Catholic perspective, see also Sanz (2019).
[151] (Volf 1991).
[152] As I indicated in section 3.1.1 the conception of vocation to work in Escrivá and Luther are quite different, being ontological in the former (vocation to work, in any type of work one chooses) and specific in the later (vocation to work in a particular activity).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

contemporary working conditions and brings new ideas for finding spiritual meaning in work and promoting social transformation.

A few years after Volf, and acknowledging his contributions, Darrell Cosden presented his personal proposal for an integrated theology of work, based on eschatology.[153] He identifies three dimensions of work that should be theologically valued: the ontological, which refers to the inherent value of its content; the instrumental, which considers the benefits it brings, such as economic self-sustenance and personal development; and the relational, which associates the interpersonal dimension of work, as an engine of social development.[154] Cosden considers that these three dimensions are closely linked and that none should prevail over the other, although prudence must judge in each case which one should be prioritised, without prejudicing the others whenever possible. His teleological approach is based on reconnecting 'ought' and 'is',[155] the latter being the natural meaning of a given being, it is not so much the real (inherent or instrumental) utility or value. Cosden confronts his ideas with those of MacIntyre and O'Donovan. The former brings the teleological sense of Aristotle's ethics to the rationality of virtue, while the latter conveys his eschatological vision of the whole of Creation directed towards the final destiny of the new creation in Christ. Cosden also writes in dialogue with the theological anthropology of Jürgen Moltman: work has an intrinsic value because it is an act of worship, of praise to God, and consequently it must be ethically judged as valuable in itself and in accordance with the final destiny of creation, beyond the utilitarian returns it produces. This implies joining God's ultimate intention by imitating his work, for example by participating in his vision of the Sabbath, in the sense that the transformative function of work must also respect the original divine plan.

---

[153] (Cosden 2006, 2018). Before presenting his ideas on work, Cosden reviews recent developments in Catholic social teaching, with a particular focus on LE, which he appreciates but also criticises for presenting, in his opinion, a dualistic view of work, separating objective and subjective values, and establishing a hierarchy between the ontological and relational dimensions of work, which he considers complementary.

[154] This tri-dimensional perspective of work nicely adjusts to Escrivá's, although the contents of each dimension are quite different, particularly because of the concept of sanctification prevalent in the Protestant tradition.

[155] Although Cosden does not cite it, he seeks to overcome the naturalistic fallacy, which is so widespread in contemporary ethics.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

With a more practical theological approach, Nelson's essay stresses the importance of linking work and worship of God, reaffirming the unity between the two in the divine plan of Creation. He considers that work should be an appropriate place to praise God, connecting Sunday and Monday. [156] As a Protestant pastor, he does not endorse the sanctifying value of work, but stresses the importance of working well to present a perfect offering to God and as a means of spiritual growth. He also comments on the relevance of Jesus' labour in Nazareth. In line with Luther, he sees work as a divine secondary vocation (the first is the one redeemed by God's grace), to perform a specific activity, which in some way defines the relevance of one's occupation. This second vocation must be closely linked to the first, to avoid ruptures in the Christian life. All occupations, in this sense, have the same importance in the eyes of God, and all can serve to bring Him glory.

Dorothee Sölle's essay reflects on the relationship between creation and liberation, love and work.[157] Rejecting the influence of anthropological or spiritual dualisms, she stresses the importance of the bodily aspects within the various dimensions of human life, including love and work, and considers that the creatural dimension of human life must be reflected in our attitude of linking all social concerns with justice, in particular with the most vulnerable (women and the poor). She proposes a spirituality of creation based on the capacity to wonder, so as to appreciate beauty and to enjoy our ordinary activities. The capitalist approach, in her opinion derived from the Protestant work ethic, has emphasised the objective over the subjective value of work, transforming work into a commodity, which can be bought and sold, losing the deep meaning of self-realisation and self-giving and eventually its Christian roots, as recognising a gift leads us to recognise a Giver.[158]

For his part, Dale presents a spirituality of work that overcomes three gaps that, in his opinion, mark Western culture: the separation between work and

[156] (Nelson 2011).
[157] (Sölle and with Cloyes 1984).
[158] She also criticised the static meaning of professional vocation originating in the Protestant tradition as given religious support for the alienation of the worker, since any work, 'due to divine will, was considered good regardless of its substance,' and, therefore, the religion 'served to accommodate people to meaningless work' (Sölle and with Cloyes 1984, p. 65-66).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

contemplation, between sacred and secular, and between spirit and matter.[159] Quoting Simone Weil, he points out that the great revolution of labour is not so much social as spiritual, for which we need a new relationship between work and religiosity. In his view, the break between work and worship, between ordinary life and contemplation, came with the Protestant Reformation: Luther underlined the importance of the professional vocation, stressing the spiritual value of ordinary life, but at the price of separating it from contemplation, in his desire to end the dominance of monastic spirituality, without providing a sound alternative. For the Reformers,

> the secluded monastery was not the only place where God was found or where a person could seek God. Men and women of all walks of life could seek and find spiritual fulfilment in the home, the field, the shop, the factory. Lost, however, in this (re)discovery were the means by which to accomplish the task.[160]

To overcome this void, Dale proposes to recover this connection between work and contemplation, considering work as art, something that is done for pleasure, with true quality and out of love for God and others. This would give a new spiritual meaning to work, which has now become a mere mechanical activity.

3.4.3 A critical appraisal of Escrivá's theology and spirituality of work.

In order to organize my personal assessment of the relevance and originality of St Josemaría's approach to the spiritual value of work in dialogue with other theologies of work, I have selected some core concepts which, according to my own understanding, define his main contributions. In each case I present the background and subsequent developments related to his ideas:

a. *Work as a vocation.* In Escrivá's worldview, work is the original vocation of the human being, not a postlapsarian punishment, and therefore it should play a central role in the spiritual life.[161] Escrivá's concept of work extends to different activities, beyond paid work, such as caring for the

[159] The 'pernicious assumption of a sacred-secular divide' (Loftin and Dimsdale 2018a, p. 2) is the key explanation for the marginal consideration of work in Christian theology.
[160] (Dale 1991, p. 84).
[161] Work is the core of Escrivá's spiritual charism, as the documents he prepared for the various canonical approvals of OD indicate. See Fuenmayor et al. (1989) and chapter 3.1.2.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

sick, domestic work or voluntary work. His spiritual proposal is pioneering, both in the Catholic and Protestant spheres, in presenting professional environments as the natural space where the encounter with Christ occurs, the realm where the lay Christian vocation to holiness is developed, the pathway of sanctification in the midst of the world. The vocational character of work is well defined in the Protestant tradition,[162] but with a quite different meaning. In Escrivá it implied a call for personal sanctification in those professional activities that one chooses, which may change over the course of life, whereas in Luther and other reformers it is a divine call to perform a particular activity (and no other), and therefore perseverance in that task implies being faithful to God's will for each person. This concept suggests a certain static consideration of work, which does not fit well with the current dynamism of today's labour market, and for this reason, has been criticised by recent Protestant theologies of work, which have proposed the idea of charism of the Holy Spirit, that is work as a dynamic grace, received to respond to concrete professional circumstances.[163] Finally, the Biblical foundation of the professional vocation is clear in St Josemaría, frequently citing Gen. 2:15,[164] which implies a divine design that constitutes him essentially as a worker. For GeS and LE, on the other hand, the most common Biblical quotation is Gen. 1:28, grounding the human vocation to work in our unique dignity, created in the image and likeness of God, and therefore with the capacity to continue his creative work by dominating the earth.

[162] See, for example, Hanson (2022), Nelson (2011) or Quinn (2016). Carroll (2020) argues that it comes mainly from Calvin, following Weber's thesis (2001). According to Therrien (2020) the idea of professional vocation was somehow present in the Augustinian idea of manual work as *munus* (permanent quality).
[163] This charismatic approach was first proposed by Volf (1991, pp. 107-114) and supported by Cosden (2006), who stresses the relevance of Sabbath rest, as it underlines the ontological character of work, following God's creative purposes. For a sociological analysis of the continuity of the concept of vocation in popular culture (TV series, sport, politics) see Carroll's essay (2020). He considers that the popular perception of vocation in work still implies a meaningful and permanent activity, which serves society and enhances personal character.
[164] See also 4.2.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

b. *Work as a matter to be sanctified.* Although most Christian authors have considered work as an ascetical means of personal sanctification,[165] none before Escrivá considered that work could be sanctified (that the task itself could be holy), when done for the glory of God and, as an offering pleasing to Him, performed with human perfection. Gerard Philips is perhaps the closest to Escrivá in valuing work from a spiritual perspective, although he does not consider that it should be the main matter of sanctification.[166] Sayers, a contemporary of Escrivá, emphasised the importance of working well for the glory of God, as only well-done work is worthy of God.[167] Among the three dimensions of work proposed by Cosden,[168] the ontological one fits well with this concept, although for Cosden it has an eschatological sense, linked to the future consummation. Comparatively, for Escrivá, sanctified work imbues the present material reality with spiritual value.

   The relevance of results in judging the spiritual value of work is not much disputed by Catholic theologians,[169] and is a source of controversy among Protestants: Luther seemed indifferent to results, since they depend on a gift of God, while Calvin considered success a sign of divine predestination.[170] For Escrivá the value of a particular task depends on the agent's love for God and the human effort and care invested in that task, even if the results are fruitless.

c. *Work as sanctifying matter.* The ascetical dimension of work has a long tradition in the Church, both in the practice of monastic communities and in the proposals of Christian thinkers.[171] In this conception, work was

[165] For a history of theological approaches to labour, see, for example, Kaiser (1966), Brown (2016) or Barsella (2014), the latter two within the early Church.
[166] To a certain extent, Philips was still manifesting a certain spiritual dualism when he wrote: 'The layman is not a profane person: he is rather the Christian engaged with the profane world. If he responds to his vocation, he will be master and not slave of matter'. (Philips 1966, p. 153). A more detailed discussion of spiritual dualisms is included in section 2.3.2.
[167] (Jensen 2006; Nelson 2011).
[168] (Cosden 2006).
[169] Thils (1952) had a similar view to Escriva on this point, but considered the progress made by any work is a critical component in sanctifying it (objective value), whereas for Escriva it was instead the intention (love of God) and the human effort of the agent.
[170] This is the hypothesis of Weber (2001), that share Goosen (1976) and Hughes (2007) among others. Hahn (2006) also considers that the Protestant work-ethic emphasises the importance of results rather than the intention of the agent.
[171] (Hanson 2022; Meyer 1997; Therrien 2020). The exception would be Protestant authors, beginning with Luther, for whom sanctification cannot be obtained by works, but only by faith.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

seen as a means of avoiding idleness and promoting obedience and frugality. Escrivá also considers this aspect, but in a marginal way, giving much more importance to work as a matter of sanctification, the means to attain sanctity in the midst of the world, obviously with the support of God's grace, through a contemplative attitude and the effort to live the Christian virtues in the professional spheres. GeS, LE and various Catholic theologians consider that work can be an occasion for spiritual growth of workers, but do not speak properly of the sanctification at-work.[172] LE and other recent essays have underlined the relevance of the subjective dimension of work (the well-being and personal development of the worker), which should take precedence over the objective (the goods obtained).[173] In Escrivá's conception, this dimension of work is even more accentuated, since it encompasses not only human but also spiritual perfection (holiness). On the other hand, for the Protestant Reformers, work is not a means of salvation, since salvation comes only from God through faith. Nevertheless, some recent authors do mention the concept of 'sanctification' at work, meaning an effort to acquire certain virtues through personal effort, but not in the Catholic conception of achieving personal holiness.[174] Sayers stands out in this regard, conceiving work as a means by which the worker 'offers himself to God', an idea that has been echoed by other Protestant authors, although never accepting that work had a sanctifying role.[175]

d. *Work as matter to sanctify others.* Charitable action has been fundamental to Christianity since the first centuries. Early monastic communities, for example, conceived work as an instrument for meeting the needs of the community and those living nearby.[176] Recent theologians have extended

[172] Perhaps the exception is CBCEW (2001). Among the pre-CCS theologians it is worth mentioning: (Philips 1966; Thils 1947; Wyszynski 1960).
[173] This is the main thesis of LE (John Paul II 1981).
[174] An example is Rae's essay (2018) entitled: 'Work and Sanctification', in which the term is applied to the process of acquiring virtues through professional practice, rather than as a path to sanctification, diverting here from Escrivá's meaning.
[175] Sayers (1940, p. 16/33). Among others Dale (1991) and Nelson (2011). Following the protestant tradition, Cosden indicates that valuing the spiritual dimension of work '...does not remotely suggest that our work and working in any way save us. Rather it is that we are saved not by, but with our work' (2018, p. 177).
[176] (Metteer 1999).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

this idea to the denunciation of unjust social structures. This is the case of Chenu, Thils or those close to the JOC.[177] This social aspect is also highlighted in recent magisterial documents: GeS, LE, *Centessimus annus, Solicitudo Rei Socialis* (John Paul II), *Caritas in Veritate* (Benedict XVI) and *Fratelli Tutti* (Pope Francis), as well as by many Protestant theologians.[178] Although Escrivá also appreciated the contribution of work to the solution of social injustices within its relational dimension, he placed more emphasis on the apostolic facet, considering work as the main theatre where lay Christians may disseminate the Gospel among their colleagues. In recent Catholic Magisterium (particularly GeS and LE), this apostolic orientation of work is barely considered, limiting its role to be a vehicle of Christian testimony in secular realities. Philips highlights the relevance of giving an evangelical witness at work, which was also part of the spiritualities of JOC and Catholic Action,[179] but, unlike these movements, Escrivá insisted that the missionary activity of Christian workers should be done in their professional environment, based on the common priesthood that all Christians receive in Baptism, and not as part of an external mandate from the hierarchy.

e. *Equal value to all kinds of work.* Escrivá values every job for the love of God that the worker puts into it, rather than for its social reputation, since all honest professions can be sanctified. This was to some extent the idea of Luther, who criticised earlier hierarchies based on the human faculties for which a given work was intended. Following Greek and Roman conceptions of work, early Christian authors debated the different value of manual and intellectual labour, in particular through their interpretation of Paul's advices.[180] Both the Catholic and Protestant traditions have recently moved beyond this traditional debate by considering all honest professions as having spiritual significance, emphasising the

[177] For a historical analysis (Burkhart and López 2010 – 2013, section 7.2.1). Recent examples are (Beckett 2021; Cloutier 2021; Cruz 2021).
[178] Sölle (1984), for example, advocates connecting creation and liberation within a new work-ethic, while Volf (1991) links 'the preferential option for the poor' with the concept of New Creation.
[179] See section 2.3.2 in this respect.
[180] Further discussions on this topic can be found in Han (2006), Kaiser (1966) and Schlatter (2018).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

subjective value of work, which is independent of the relevance of the task performed, although some authors, such as Chenu or Weil,[181] have debated whether certain types of work (line work in large factories) can be considered worthy of human dignity.

f. *Theological foundations of the spirituality of work.* Alongside the most common arguments related to the Creation account (work was the original vocation of humans, even before the Fall), Escrivá based his spirituality of work on three theological arguments that are quite novel (placing Christ at the summit of all human activities, imitating the hidden life of Jesus, and 'unity of life'). They are unusually cited by other authors. For example, the redemptive character of work in relation to the Cross of Christ was addressed by several authors contemporary to Escrivá (Thils, Wyszynski), and has been reinforced by recent Catholic documents, which encourages linking the Cross of Christ with work and the contradictions that accompany many tasks.[182] The connection of Christ's sacrifice with human suffering has also been highlighted recently by Niels Gregersen and Dennis Edwards, who understand the Cross as God's redemptive presence to all creatures in their suffering and death.[183] However, neither in the earlier nor in the recent documents is there any reference to Escrivá's suggestion that every Christian, by his-her sanctified work, contributes to raising up the Cross of Christ, placing it at the summit of human activities.

Regarding the exemplary value of Christ's life of work is not even mentioned by medieval (Aquinas) or recent theologians (Chenu, Thils), and is only marginally cited by St Augustine.[184] Only in recent Magisterial documents, such as GeS and LE, Jesus' artisan activity at Nazareth is explicit mentioned, which is considered a key argument for promoting a Christian spirituality of work, as Escrivá had been preaching since the

[181] Simone Weil was especially critical of the working conditions in large factories, which she considered alienated labour (Hanson 2022, chapter 8).
[182] John Paul II explicitly presents this co-redeeming dimension of work in LE, although in the ascetic tradition of work, the suffering it entails has more often been considered a consequence of Sin (Kaiser (1966) , rather than a contribution to Redemption.
[183] (Edwards 2019, 2020; Gergersen 2001).
[184] As indicated earlier (3.3.2) he argues for the nobility of manual work with the example of St Joseph's labour (Augustine 2002, p. 354).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

1930s. Protestant authors often fail to find biblical grounds to support the relevance of Jesus' years of work. [185]

Finally, the concept of 'unity of life', as formulated by Escrivá, fusing work and prayer, is also quite original compared to other theologies of work. GeS limits itself to showing the importance of Christians living their secular activities in coherence with their faith. In the first centuries of Christianity, the relationship between active and contemplative life,[186] and the role of work as a complement to prayer (the Rule of Benedict, for example) were widely discussed, but none considered that work could be equivalent to prayer and vice versa. Dale's proposal to join contemplative and working life goes in this direction,[187] but he does not provide clear guidance how to do it, neither it has a core role as in Escrivá's understanding.

g. *Positive view of Work.* Although pessimistic worldviews (Gnostics, Manichaeans) are outside the orthodoxy of the Church, the consideration of work as a postlapsarian punishment was also present in some Christian theologians.[188] Later spiritualist approaches within the Church, which Escrivá criticised in the Navarre homily, included a negative consideration of work as being a consequence of the Fall. St Josemaría stressed that work was the original human vocation and that only the effort and fatigue involved in work were consequences of original sin, not work itself. Other Catholic theologians, who also had a positive view of earthly realities, such as Thils, Philips or Teilhard de Chardin,[189] as well as more recent documents of the Magisterium (GeS and LE) agree with this idea. Protestant traditions generally have a positive view of work as a manifestation of God-given professional vocation to transform the world according to His will, but have a negative view of the human condition, corrupted by sin, unless God directly justifies each person.[190] Both Christian traditions recognise that the toil and fatigue associated with work a

[185] Although Nelson (2011) does cite it in his essay.
[186] See, for example, Metteer (1999).
[187] (Dale 1991). See also Miller (2007) with a more sociological scope.
[188] This is the opinion of Le Goff (1980), Brown (Brown 2016) and Kaiser (1966).
[189] (Teilhard de Chardin 1960).
[190] This is the hypothesis of Rhonheimer (2006)

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

postlapsarian manifestation of sin present in the world, with all the social injustices that go with it.

In summary, I consider that Escrivá's theology of work remains novel and relevant in comparison with other proposals, as he developed an integrated and holistic consideration of the spiritual and material components of professional activities. My historical synopsis indicates that his approach was original when he presented it, as no previous author had dealt with the spiritual meaning of work and its importance for the sanctification of earthly realities in such breadth and depth as Escrivá.[191] An analysis of the main texts published in the last five decades (after the appearance of Escrivá's posthumous writings) shows that most of his ideas on work are not yet widely known, although some have been incorporated into recent theological developments, such as the importance of the hidden life of Jesus or the relational dimension of work, as part of a novel understanding of the importance of work for Christian theology, but, with the exception of those secondary scholars of his message, without explicit reference to Escrivá.[192]

Unlike previous Catholic theologies, in which work was neglected or marginalised, Escrivá's conception greatly expanded its spiritual relevance. Far from being an obstacle to holiness, he saw work as the hinge of the Christian vocation, a path to sanctification. Regardless of their social status, St Josemaría acknowledged that all honest professions can be sanctified when they are done well, in union with God, out of His love and in service to others. The pursuit of holiness at work is certainly an extraordinary motivation to improve the quality of the tasks performed, and it has enormous potential in social life. I argue that Escrivá's spirituality establishes solid foundations to bridge the gap between work and contemplation, which several Protestant authors consider a critical deficiency of current theologies of work. Escrivá's approach to work conceives it not only as a means of self-sustenance and personal development, but, more

[191] Jose Gomez, then archbishop of Texas and now of Los Angeles, wrote in 2006 that 'St Josemaría was the first saint to articulate a spirituality of ordinary work, and his teachings anticipate the official church teaching of the Second Vatican Council' (Gomez 2006, p. 807).
[192] Benedict XVI mentioned St Josemaría in the Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, among other saints, for 'his preaching of the universal call to holiness' (n. 48). Apart from this, there are no references to Escriva's writings in any major Vatican document.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

than that, as a primary matter of sanctification, having a central value particularly, but not only, for lay Christians who want to live deeply their faith amid their secular occupations. On the other hand, his spirituality of work goes beyond the social and ethical aspects commonly treated in philosophies of labour, where religious motivations are absent.

Escrivá proposed three great spiritual dimensions of work that I have termed as intrinsic, subjective and relational, indicating that work is the matter to be sanctified, the way of personal sanctification and the means to sanctify others, respectively. A sanctified work aims at offering it to God, along with the effort involved in performing a perfect task, within human limits. Sanctifying oneself at work implies that professional tasks are converted into a personal encounter with Christ through contemplative life and the practice of Christian virtues. Sanctifying others through work involves seeking the good of colleagues and clients, overcoming selfishness and personal exaltation, aiming to bring others closer to Christ through personal witness and friendship.

As for the biblical foundations of work, Escrivá generally used Gen. 2 rather than Gen. 1, unlike other Catholic documents on work, stressing the vocational character of work as a path to holiness, rather than its transforming power. In addition to the theological categories employed by other authors (Creation, Redemption, Moral Theology), he used some peculiar ones to substantiate the value of work and the material dimension of life, which are still quite innovative, in particular the idea of linking work with the exaltation of Christ in the Cross, the unity of life and the appreciation of the hidden life of Jesus, the first two of which have not been addressed by other authors.

Finally, it should be stressed that Escrivá's ideas are not only theological proposals, which can be discussed as more or less relevant or novel in academic circles, but that they have a practical, and very substantial, impact on the lives of many thousands of ordinary lay people who try to live the charism he brought to the Church.[193]

[193] At least those directly associated with OD (93,510 members in 90 countries, according to the 2021 Pontifical Yearbook of the Catholic Church) and cooperators and friends (some not even Catholic), estimated by González Gullón and Coverdale (González Gullón and Coverdale 2021) at 175,000 in the same year.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

3.4.4 Boundaries of Escrivá's theology of work.

I have presented a critical review of the approach of St Josemaria to work, within his framework of ChM. Having many original insights, his theology of work also aligns with many aspects of the Christian tradition. He explicitly acknowledges the resemblance of the charism he was promoting with the life of early Christians, particularly because they were ordinary citizens, illuminating their daily activities with the light of Christ and the desire to spread His kingdom. This high consideration of ordinary life has resemblances to the Protestant Reformation, extending the concept of vocation to all lay Christians. Finally, even though he always considered that monastic vocations were far from OD lay spirituality, he promoted the importance of learning from the contemplative life of religious communities, applying a similar spirit to secular activities. While for monks, work was one of the core activities of daily life, for Escrivá it is the hinge of sanctification for a lay Christian. For earlier monastic rules work and prayer were considered 'sequentially' (as the day was divided into three main activities: work, divine office and Biblical reading), whereas for Escrivá's spirituality work and prayer are 'simultaneous' (integrated through the concept of 'unity of life').

In this line, James Murphy has compared St Benedict and St Josemaria's spiritualities of work.[194] He considers that the traditionally assigned motto of the Benedict rule, 'ora et labora' (which is not formally included in the original writing of the rule), implies a separation of work and prayer, the former being a means to avoid laziness or distractions, not really a means of personal sanctification. In his view, Escrivá's better merges pray and work, and therefore OD spirituality could be summarised in 'ora est labora', as Escrivá recommended converting work (and all other daily activities) into prayer. However, Murphy finds this 'unity of life' unrealistic, since praying constantly requires an enormous personal effort to maintain attention. Even though he acknowledges that Escrivá also understood by prayer the feeling of being in presence of God, and therefore not requiring constant dialogue with God, I think he fails to mention the relevance of God's grace and divine filiation in St Josemaría's spirituality, and therefore the compatibility of aiming to be contemplative with the actual

[194] (Murphy 2012).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

weaknesses of human condition. Joining interior struggle and divine filiation is a critical component of Escrivá's spirituality, which makes this struggle gentle and hopeful. Linked similarly is St Josemaría's recommendation of living of he called 'spiritual childhood', that is the feeling of consider oneself as a little child in front of our Father God:

> Before God, who is eternal, you are much more a child than, before you, the tiniest toddler. And besides being a child, you are a child of God. — Don't forget it (TW, n. 890).[195]

A similar answer can be posed to Murphy's criticism of Escrivá's approach to work in regard to the need of striving for excellence in professional activities, which he considers linked to Calvinist and Pelagian positions and potentially leading to considering work as an end in itself.[196] Certainly, St Josemaría indicated that sanctifying work implies aiming to produce a perfect output and that he encouraged his followers to work long and hard, but he also emphasised that this should be done with rectitude of intention, for the glory of God and service to others, not for personal exaltation. In this regard, he coined the term 'professionalitis' to designate an excessive dependence on work, manifested in loss of spiritual meaning and right intention in work, relegating its intrinsic and relational dimension in favour of the subjective one:

> You really do need to make an effort and put your shoulder to the wheel. For all that, you should put your professional interests in their place: they are only means to an end; they can never be regarded — in any way— as if they were the basic thing (FU, n. 502).

Murphy's consideration of a possible Pelagian bias in Escriva leading to extreme work ethics and parallel risk of 'burning out' his followers, is real and needs to be acknowledged, but according to the testimonies of many OD members it is quite unusual, most showing a vital happiness and meaning in their professional activities.[197] In addition, Murphy fails to consider several texts

[195] TW includes a whole section dedicated to 'Spiritual childhood' (nn. 852-874), but this term is also used in many other of his writings: FU, n. 79; TF, n. 347,348, 353, 430; CPB, n. 10, 135; FoG, n. 8, among others. He acknowledged the influence of St Therese of Lisieux in this aspect of his spirituality (cf. (Rodríguez 2004, n. 852).
[196] In a different context, Josef Pieper (quoted by (Hughes 2007, pp. 163-170) does a similar criticism of modern conceptions of work which overemphasise its value over other pleasant activities (leisure, contemplation), and which he considers out of the main Catholic tradition, rejecting the Sabath dimension of God's creative work.
[197] Additional information on this issue can be obtained from Allen (Allen 2007).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

where Escrivá praises rest-leisure as compatible, and even necessary, with an intense life of work:

> Strive never to lose this supernatural outlook, not even at times of rest or recreation, which are as important in our daily lives as is work itself (FoG, n. 10).[198]

Finally, Murphy's criticism of Escrivá's recommendation to gain professional prestige as a 'bait' to gain souls for Christ (Cfr. TW, n. 372), as if the main apostolic attraction of a Christian worker would be imitating his/her professional success, can be answered in what I indicated at length in the relational dimension of work (3.2.3). It is true that Escrivá suggested to obtain a good work reputation, but as a result of striving to sanctify it, not as an end in itself, while he always emphasised that the root of apostolic efficacy was prayer, for only the grace of God is able to bring souls closer to Christ: 'First, prayer; then, atonement; in the third place, very much 'in the third place', action' (TW, n. 82).

Moving from Catholic oriented criticisms to other possible limitations of St Josemaría's approach to work I should recall that his scope is fundamentally spiritual, not philosophical or political. Therefore, his ideas would benefit those who aim to find a spiritual meaning in professional activities, rather than to those searching for their social or economic implications. However, I have two nuances to this statement. On one hand, finding spiritual meaning at work also has social impacts, in the broader sense, because the worker can realise at work his vital expectations,[199] even if that particular work does not fully comply with them. At the end of the day, work is an important facet of our lives but not the only one, and happiness may be found in many other realms, even in those that in principle one does not expect.[200]

---

[198] See also TF, n. 679; FU, n. 302, 470; FoG, n. 6 2, 110; CMEB n. 111, and Letter 15.10.1948, n. 15. However, it is certainly true that Escrivá more commonly encourages hard work than rest, perhaps because the Spanish culture about work — the one he knew the best — was much less close to workaholism that the Northern European. It is interesting to note that there are not references in his published works about the rest of God after the Creation (Gen. 2:2-3), neither to the theological implications of Sabbath that are covered by other theologians (Cosden 2006; John Paul II 1981; Volf 1991).

[199] This is the main proposal of Simone Weil (see 3.4.2).

[200] Otherwise, one can fall in what Escrivá called 'wishful thinking', based on aiming to unlikely prospects that commonly imply personal frustration. should be balanced with realistic expectations of improvement.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

My second nuance to the marginal consideration of Escrivá on the social dimension of work refers to the moral implications of justice. He certainly did not deal in depth with aspects that are covered by the Social Doctrine of the Church, such as workers' rights, the relationship between labour and capital, the implications of different labour policies, the impacts of technology, or the social role of the disabled, the retired or the unemployed. However, in various passages of his texts, Escrivá encourages his readers to be involved in the solution of injustices, precisely as a consequence of their love for the world, evidencing the impact of ChM to collaborate with fellow citizens to overcome social problems:

> Following Christ does not mean taking refuge in the temple, shrugging one's shoulders at social development, ignoring the achievements and aberrations alike of men or nations. On the contrary, Christian faith makes us see the world as God's creation and appreciate all its nobility and beauty, recognizing the dignity of each person made in the image of God (...). You would belittle the faith if you reduced it to a human ideology, if you raised a political-religious standard to condemn — on who knows what divine authority — those who think differently from you in matters which by their very nature can be solved in a wide variety of ways (CPB, n. 99).

Certainly, Escrivá's ideas on work would not agree with those ChM that are 'blind to spirit', which have been quite active in proposing social or political remedies to labour problems. Escrivá repeated in several documents that Marxism was incompatible with Christianity, following the common doctrine of the Catholic Church, insisting that to practice justice, a Christian does not need Marxism whatsoever.[201] I have reviewed some alternative approaches to ChM in 2.3, including some attempts to engage in the dialogue between Christianity and Marxism.[202] In the specific field of ethics of work, it is worth recalling the attempts of Chenu to establish this dialogue, but also the limitations of this approach,[203] which were clearly emphasised by Stefan Wyszynski and John Paul II,[204] both well experimented with the impacts of the political implementation

[201] (Cfr. FoG, n. 171). In the same number: 'Can there be anything more opposed to the faith than a system which is based on eliminating the loving presence of God from the soul?' See also ILC, n. 11; IDL 'From the family of Joseph', n. 3; Letter 31.05.1943, n. 44-45.
[202] (Grave and Hibbert 1970; Hibbert 1969; Zaehner 1971).
[203] For a detail analysis of the dialogue between Marxism and Christianity within Chenu's theology of work see Keller (1993).
[204] (John Paul II 1981; Wyszynski 1960).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

of Marxism. For Marx, work is a means of self-realization and dominion of nature, lacking all spiritual dimension. The materialist view of labour puts more emphasis on production per se than on the development of the worker (objective value versus subjective value), joining here the capitalist reductionism of the human being to labour power. This priority is criticised by LE, as overtaking the true value of work, overvaluing the means over the ends.[205] Along similar lines, Escrivá stressed the subjective value by considering work as the vehicle of personal sanctification, therefore converting professional atmospheres in pathways for human perfection which go well beyond the output of work:

> This is why man ought not to limit himself to material production. Work is born of love; it is a manifestation of love and is directed toward love. We see the hand of God, not only in the wonders of nature, but also in our experience of work and effort. Work thus becomes prayer and thanksgiving, because we know we are placed on earth by God, that we are loved by him and made heirs to his promises (CPB, n. 48).

Another potential criticism of Escrivá's theology of work is derived from the vocational dimension that he established as the base point to value it, particularly from Gen. 2:15 and confirmed by the working life of Jesus. Since he did not establish clear criteria to consider a particular kind of work as 'sanctifiable', all professional activities would comply with his vision of work, as something to sanctify and a means to seek sanctity. The only limit would be practicing an honest profession, as immoral activities cannot be offered to God. He never detailed what he meant by dishonest, but from other texts it can be assumed that he was referring to the common criteria applied to define intrinsically immoral activities (slave trade, prostitution, arms trafficking, drug trafficking, for example). Other professions that a lay Catholic might morally undertake would be 'sanctifiable', extending the range of jobs traditionally restricted to a consecrated religious person, such as banking or politics, which do not apply to OD members, as they are not consecrated persons. In fact, OD members work in all kinds of activities, including intellectual and manual work, business, politics, cultural and social institutions, NGOs, and many others. Escrivá listed these possibilities in his homily in Navarre:

[205] Other authors join into a similar criticism (Hughes 2007; Sölle and with Cloyes 1984).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

> God is calling you to serve Him in and from the ordinary, material and secular activities of human life. He waits for us every day, in the laboratory, in the operating theatre, in the army barracks, in the university chair, in the factory, in the workshop, in the fields, in the home and in all the immense panorama of work. Understand this well: there is something holy, something divine, hidden in the most ordinary situations, and it is up to each one of you to discover it (PLW, n. 114).

We must next consider the jobs which alienate human dignity due to their poor working condition. Could someone working routinely in a depersonalised and alienating factory be contemplative in his/her work? Would working in a mine under poor security and low wages be 'sanctifiable'? Would not be more Christian to denounce those injustices rather than accepting for the sake of being united to the sacrifice of Christ? Recent theologians have criticised this potential interpretation of the vocational approach to work,[206] in the Lutheran sense of this term, meaning a commitment to stay in a particular job, because it is considered the will of God, which entails that 'religion has served to accommodate people to meaningless work'.[207] I agree that this is a risk that could be applicable to the Escrivá's spirituality, in the sense of accepting sacrifices at work for a spiritual benefit instead of overcoming them, although I have clarified that his consideration of vocation is not Lutheran, and therefore not static, but linked to a gradual maturation following external circumstances or personal choices. Therefore, according to Escrivá one is called to work, but not to work in a particular activity. Changing that activity is therefore perfectly compatible with living the vocational dimension of work. In other words, Escrivá would not favour to keep an unjust or undignified work for the sake of sanctifying it, but would recommend trying to improve those working conditions, while requiring from the responsible of those labour conditions to change them. For example, a migrant worker who has abusive working conditions may continue to sanctify his or her work, but certainly not the person responsible for those conditions, as he or she would be violating justice.

As for the impact of his ideas on academic theology, an important practical limitation is that he never wrote a systematic treatise on work. His theological

[206] (Hughes 2007; Sölle and with Cloyes 1984; Volf 1991).
[207] (Sölle and with Cloyes 1984, p. 66).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

concepts are scattered in different writings and oral preaching, some of which were only accessible years after his death. Consequently, professional theologians have not had enough familiarity with Escrivá's spirituality and theology of work, as to base a systematic analysis that would benefit the field. I hope my research will prove to be a sound contribution in this direction.

Finally, an obvious limitation of Escrivá's approach to the work is that it is based entirely in a spiritual, more specifically Catholic, framework, which makes its application more appropriate for those who profess that faith. The application of his theological arguments to non-Catholic Christians, to believers of other religions or even to non-believers, needs to be explored further, although I consider that human values underlying his proposals could be welcomed by many people who esteem the importance of work and the need to overcome the purely materialistic appreciation of professional activities.[208]

In spite of those limitations, I think the approach to theology of work proposed by Escrivá has enormous potential for providing a deep spiritual sense of work in current socio-economic conditions. Regardless the objective or subjective circumstances that may stress the unpleasant or toil aspects of work, St Josemaria framework provides a holistic consideration of its intrinsic, subjective and relational value, which help to overcome both the reductionist views that only sustain material (or rather materialistic) benefits of work or empty professional activities from any meaningful spiritual purpose.

[208] In this sense, I elaborated the ethical version of the figure included in 3.2.4. As for the possible impact of Escrivá's spirituality among people of other religious traditions, it is worth remembering that the OD admits as co-operators non-Catholics, including non-Christians and non-believers, who appreciate the values that, following Escrivá's proposals, this institution of the Catholic Church promotes.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

4 Theology of work and ecotheology in Escrivá's ChM.

After my critical review and systematic analysis of Escrivá's theology and spirituality of work, in dialogue with other authors, I am in a better position to develop a framework that connects theology of work and ecotheology, which will be the main contribution of my research. I intend to develop the three axes of work previously identified (section 3.2): intrinsic (sanctifying work), subjective (sanctifying the worker) and relational (sanctifying others through work), approaching them from an ecotheological perspective.[1] I have organised this chapter accordingly, by first presenting the general framework and then diving into the three dimensions. In between, I will introduce a critical analysis of the biblical fundamentals of Escrivá's theology of work, particularly attentive to their implications in relation to the natural world.

It is worth pointing out that connecting any theology of work and ecotheology is quite novel. Several authors have reflected on the impacts of the modern conception of work on attitudes towards the natural world, but mostly from a philosophical or anthropological perspective, not from a theological point of view.[2] Volf and Cosden mentioned the importance of connecting work and concern for nature, but this aspect is not a core component of their theologies of work.[3] In ecotheological textbooks and essays, work is mentioned as a tool for nature transformation, but reflection on common theological concepts of work and nature have not yet been developed.[4]

---

[1] As in the previous chapter, in this chapter I understand work in Escrivá's broad perspective, including not only salaried activities, but all kinds of tasks that involve extensive dedication, including homework, voluntary work, caring for the sick, being retired or unemployed in search of work.

[2] A good example of anthropological analysis on work and nature perception of modern people is the essay of Sam Keen (1969), who criticises the gnostic vision of nature by *homo faber*, as if nature were an enemy to control, resulting in using technology to domesticate the natural world, and detaching humanity from human nature. In a similar way, Philip Sherrad (1992) envisions modernity as holding to a dualistic position that inevitably alienates humanity and nature.

[3] (Cosden 2006; Volf 1991).

[4] For example, the extensive compilation of ecotheological literature by Conradie (2006) does not even mention theology of work. Ecotheology textbooks also fail to mention the potential links with theology of work. This is the case, to name but a few, of Collins (1995), Deane-Drummond (2008), Sanz Giménez-Rico (2016), Moo&Moo (2018) or McFague (1993), not even Berry's (2007b) edited book, despite its focus on the environmental stewardship model.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

4.1 Framework for a systematic analysis.

I present in this chapter a systematic analysis of how the three dimensions of Escriva's theology of work can be connected to ecotheology. In order to do that, I will follow two different lines: on the one hand, by considering the natural world as theologically analogous to work and, therefore, reflecting on what reasons support the possibility of sanctifying the natural world, sanctifying oneself in the natural world and sanctifying others in nature, including non-human beings. On the other hand, I will analyse what kind of work, in our eagerness to sanctify it, brings us closer to valuing nature, linking that appreciation with the professional activities that make up the daily fabric of Christians living in the midst of the world. In this second aspect, it seems reasonable to recall that work is the main tool we use to transform nature, including the creation of completely artificial landscapes. These transformations can be negative, to the point of generating habitats contradictory to their natural meaning, irreversibly deteriorating their significance, but also potentially positive, developing them in a meaningful way, strengthening their conservation or promoting their restoration.

Table 4.1 and figure 3 summarise the systematic analysis that I will undertake in the following sections of this chapter. The columns indicate the dimensions extracted from Escrivá's theology of work and the rows the subdivisions that I have identified: nature as analogous to work and work as transformed by caring for nature.

Within the first group, I have chosen three ecotheological concepts that can be linked to the three dimensions of work: 'environmental empathy' for the intrinsic, 'ecological conversion' for the subjective and 'priest of Creation' for the relational. The last two categories have been previously used in ecotheology, while the former comes mostly from my own reflection, based on Biblical and traditional sources. All these three categories were not developed by Escrivá, but they can be connected to his theological ideas, as I will indicate in sections 4.3 to 4.5.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Table 4.1: Theological categories linking Escrivá's theology of work with ecotheology.

	Intrinsic	Subjective	Relational
Nature	Environmental empathy	Ecological conversion	Priest of Creation
Work & care	Co-creator	Co-redeemer	Co-sanctifier

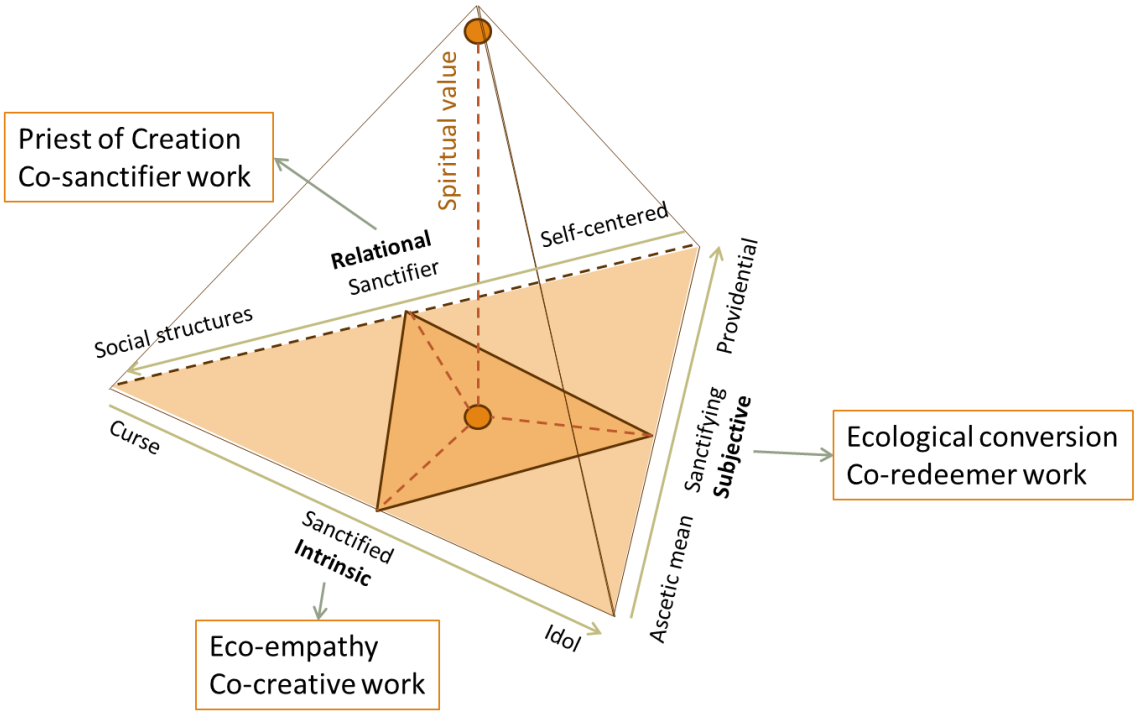


Figure 3: Extension of Escrivá's three dimensions of work to ecotheology

The second analysis I intend to develop concerns to the extension of Escrivá's theology of work by considering that work needs to be done with care for nature, based on expanding Escrivá's biblical interpretation of Gen 2:15, where he grounded the vocational consideration of work. Following an earth-caring vocation of work, I have developed a Trinitarian perspective adapting the Escrivá's dimensions of work to undertaking it with care for Creation. I reflect about what type of work is simultaneously co-creative, co-redeemptive and co-sanctifying. The first two categories have been cited before by theologians of work, but not to my knowledge the third. My starting point is that a holistic consideration of work should link it to the three external appropriations of the Trinity: Creation, Redemption and Sanctification. As far as the co-creative character of work is concerned, any work that claims to be holy and sanctifies the agent and others should continue God's creative work, not contradict

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

it. Since Creation and Redemption go hand in hand, that work should also be co-redemptive, linked to the Cross of Christ that restores all Creation to its origin, and should ultimately be co-sanctifying, through the union between work and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In a different context from that of the theology of work, this Trinitarian vision has been used by ecotheologians to underpin the ontological relationships between all creatures.[5]

The six theological dimensions to be treated in this chapter are illustrated by Escrivá's theological concepts, including key categories of his lay spirituality that I have reviewed in section 3.3. The unity of life will be valuable for the co-creative and co-redeemer aspects, the hidden life of Jesus is critical for the co-redeemer role and the human contribution to the exaltation of the Cross is particularly evident in the co-sanctifier dimension. I have also borrowed other theological concepts taken from the Christian tradition, but to which Escrivá gave a particular interpretation: communion of saints, common priesthood, and human virtues. I will explain in more detail each of these concepts in their respective sections.

Before delving into the three dimensions that help to sanctify the world and sanctify the work by caring for nature, I will reflect on the ecotheological implications of Escrivá's vocational conception of work, particularly in his interpretation of the biblical references to work, pondering whether those references allow us to conclude that work should be done with a caring attitude for nature.

4.2 Caring for nature in the vocational dimension of work.

4.2.1 Escrivá's biblical approach to professional vocation.

As indicated in sec 3.1 Escrivá conceived work as the fundamental component of the lay spirituality he promoted, the 'hinge' around which the vocation to a contemplative life and the exercise of Christian virtues in the secular world evolve:

> Your human vocation is a part — and an important part — of your divine vocation. That is the reason why you must strive for holiness,

[5] Pope Francis, for example, devotes an entire epigraph to this question in LS (n. 238-240), stressing that the interconnections between all beings '...invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity' (LS, n. 240).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

> giving a particular character to your human personality, a style to your life; contributing at the same time to the sanctification of others, your fellow men; sanctifying your work and your environment: the profession or job that fills your day, your home and family and the country where you were born and which you love (CPB, n. 46).

He frequently based this vocational dimension of work on the first two chapters of Genesis, in which God entrusts human beings with the task of continuing, in some way, his creative work. Those chapters have been commonly used to support different theologies of work, as well as different versions of the relationship between humankind and the rest of creation. As is well established in the scholarship on the book of Genesis, they show two different traditions, the priestly (Genesis 1 and 2:1-3) and the non-Priestly (Genesis 2:4-25), both emphasising different and complementary views of God's creative action.[6] Gen. 1 describes the evolutionary cycles of Creation and the role of the various creatures in the divine plan, showing the beauty and goodness of the whole ('and he saw that everything was good' in several verses of this chapter). Gen. 2:4-25 describes a different account of the origins, focusing on the garden of Eden, the role of the first human (Adam) and his relationships with other animals and then the first female. The story leads to chapter 3 with the disobedience of Adam and Eve and the final expulsion of Paradise.

Regarding the role of humanity in Creation, the Priestly narrative concedes dominion to human beings over the rest of creatures as a consequence of being created in God's image, giving them the mandate to 'fill the earth and subdue it' ('*et replete terram et subicite eam*': Gen. 1:28),[7] which has been interpreted as an endorsement of the indiscriminate use of other creatures.[8] However, in the

[6] For a detail analysis of the sources of these chapters within previous creation narratives, see David Carr (2020). Non-priestly material in Gen 2 was traditionally defined as Yahwist.
[7] Along with the English translation, I have included the Latin expressions, as these were the texts originally quoted by Escrivá in some of his texts. Wherever appropriate, I have also included the Masoretic terms of the Hebrew Bible to elucidate their meaning.
[8] This was the main argument of White's ecocriticism of Christianity (1967), followed by other authors (Chatterton et al. 2009; Hayes and Marangudakis 2001; Jenkins 2009; Taylor et al. 2016b), which has been contested from different angles (see section 1.1). I agree however with Harrison (1999) that what is more important is not so much how this verse should be interpreted (by biblical scholars) but how it has been interpreted in the Christian tradition (by commentators on Holy Scripture), this interpretation being more anthropocentric in recent centuries, particularly when Cartesian dualism became prevalent in Western Europe (see the critical comment of Kureethadam (2017) and Sherrard (1992) on this evolution).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

context of theologies of work, this verse has been understood as a manifestation of God's willingness to entrust human beings with the responsibility of developing creation and ultimately transforming it through their work, as part of that human dominion.[9] The Non-priestly tradition of Gen. 2:15 better evidences the vocational dimension of work, as even before original sin, human beings are placed in the Garden of Eden and are asked to 'work/till and care/keep for it' *('ut operaretur et custodire illum')*. This was the main biblical argument used by Escrivá in his vocational approach to work, quoting this verse in many of his writings.[10]

This intuition of St Josemaría is shared by several biblical scholars, who consider Gen 2:15 as a constitutive definition of humanity's vocation.[11] These authors pointed out the contrast between the biblical narrative on work and the Sumerian and Babylonian creation myths, in which work is considered a divine punishment.[12] Escrivá considers that since the divine call indicated in Gen. 2:15 predates the original sin, the vocation to work should not be seen as an evil consequence of the Fall, but as a positive mandate that makes us sharers in the unfolding of Creation.

> From the beginning of creation man has had to work. This is not something that I have invented. It is enough to turn to the opening pages of the Bible. There you can read that, before sin entered the world, and in its wake death, punishment and misery, God made Adam from the clay of the earth, and created for him and his descendants this beautiful world we live in, '*ut operaretur et custodiret illum*', so that we might cultivate it and look after it (FoG, n. 57).

In the context of ecotheologies, Gen. 2:15 has not been associated with the vocational character of work, but rather has been noted for providing a gentle

[9] This connection between work and dominion over all creatures is explicitly included in GeS (n. 12 and 57), and in several sections of LE (see 3.4.2).
[10] For example, in FU, n. 482; TF, n. 681; FoG , n. 57, 81, 169; CMEB, n. 10, 24, 55; Letter 11.3.1940, n. 13 and Letter 31.5.1954, n. 15, as well as in the main legal documents defining the aims of OD (see 3.1.2).
[11] For example, Claus Westermann and John Scullion (1984, pp. 219-222) frame this constitutive character of work in the context of the importance attached to it in Genesis ('work is regarded here as an essential part of human existence', p. 220). Hamilton (1990) holds the same view of the fundamental role of work in the biblical narrative: 'Work enters the picture before sin does, and if man had never sinned, he still would be working' (p. 171).
[12] In his analysis of creation accounts from cultures neighbouring the Bible, Carr (2020) stresses the contrast between the positive view of work in Gen 1-2 and other Mesopotamian myths (Enuma Elish, Atrahasis), which conceived work as a curse. In these narratives human beings were created to relieve the heavy labour of lower gods. The same idea appears in Pérez-Gondar (2023).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

view of the relationship between humanity and the rest of creation, closer to an environmental stewardship approach than Genesis 1:28, which seems to endorse the human dominion-subduing of the earth.[13]

Although Escrivá used both Gen. 1:28 and Gen. 2:15 to substantiate the vocational character of work, the latter was much more frequent in his writings.[14] Most probably he did so not because Gen. 2:15 were more environmentally friendly than Gen. 1:28, but rather because the former more clearly evidenced the original divine call to work, even before the Fall and therefore not linked to any negative perception of labour. However, it is also worth to note that Escrivá never considered that the main purpose of work was to subdue the earth, so his conception of work cannot be linked to the acceptance of an indiscriminate transformation of nature.[15] It is clear from his writings that his main interest was to show the spiritual value of work, as a means of personal sanctification, beyond its environmental implications, but also that his positive view of material realities, particularly through his comments on the original goodness of Creation, implied a pro-environmental rather than an anti-environmental attitude.

Gen. 2:1-3 (still within the Priestly tradition) includes explicit mentions of God's work: 'He rested on the seventh day from all the work which he had undertaken' (Gen. 2:2), repeating the same idea in the following verse.[16] The divine rest, the Sabbath (cf. Gen. 2:3) is precisely justified by summarising God's work during the preceding days. Consequently, following the beginning of Gen. 2, we can properly call Creation 'the Work of God' and God 'the first Worker'. Unlike other theologies of work, which have seen in Gen. 2:2 a statement of God's work activity,[17] Escrivá did not conceive human work as an imitation of

[13] This argument is widely used by ecotheologians and biblical scholars: Bauckham (2010), Bouma- Prediger (2010, 2019), Castillo (2019), Hamilton (1990), Hill (1998), Moo & Moo (2018), Osborn (1993), or Smith (2011).
[14] He quoted Gen. 1:28 in two documents: CPB, n. 47 and Letter of 05/06/1945, n. 14, while Gen. 2:15 was cited at least 15 times.
[15] On the few occasions when Escrivá linked work and dominion (twice in CPB n. 47), he did not emphasize the transformative character of work, much less advocate the indiscriminate transformation of nature.
[16] Bergsma (2018) points out that the Hebrew term used to refer to God's work in this verse (*melaka*) is widely used in the Old Testament to refer to different types of work, including secular and sacred tasks.
[17] For example, LE explicitly quotes Gen. 2:2 to underline that creation is the work of God, and that humankind imitates this divine activity with work precisely because we were created in the image and likeness of God (n. 25). Similar ideas in Maspero (2021) and Pérez-Gondar (2023).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

God's creative work, but primarily as a participation in it (cf. CPB, n. 47). He always presented the working life of Jesus as the example that a Christian should imitate, with those hidden years of Jesus' life being central to his theology of work (see 3.3.2).

4.2.2 Ecotheological implications of Gen. 2:15.

Focusing on the main verse that Escrivá used to substantiate the vocational character of work, it is worth exploring the theological consequences of this verse in what relates work and care of nature. The Vulgate version that Escrivá quoted for this verse included two verbs, '*operaretur*' (cultivate/till/work) and '*custodire*' (custody/keep/care), and therefore if this verse grounds the vocational character of work it is relevant to question whether this original divine call comprises the two verbs or just the first one. In fact, St Josemaría never commented in his frequent quotations of Gen. 2:15 on the relevance of '*custodire*' for the vocation to work or even its implications in the way one should work, and therefore we do not know in what sense '*custodire*' is part of his theology of work, let alone how it can be related to nature. In spite of his silence on this aspect and given that Gen. 2:15 is substantial in Escrivá's vocational interpretation of work, I think it is important to dwell on it in attempting to link his concept of work with ecotheology. Within this perspective, several key questions arise. The most obvious is what does the divine call to '*custodire*' the garden really mean? Is it simply to ensure that the fruits are harvested at the right time, i.e. to watch over the harvest, or rather to ensure that the land is worked in such a way that its fertility endures? And, if we adopt the meaning of 'caring for', what does this care bring to the vocational dimension of work?

I shall begin by reflecting on the first question based on the biblical narrative and the interpretation offered by the early Christian tradition and recent ecotheologians. What does '*custodire*' really mean, both from the point of view of the action to be performed (to care for, to keep, to watch over) and the object (garden, crop, land)?

The Latin verb used in both the Vulgate and the Neovulgate is frequently used in the Old Testament, describing many actions, such as to guard (Gen. 3:24), to keep (a promise Gen. 17:9; 30:31), to protect someone (Gen. 28:15) or even to confine (in prison: Gen. 39:20), just to quote from Genesis. The Hebrew

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

word used in Gen. 2:15 ('*samar*') has similar meanings (to keep, maintain, guard), but according to Kristin Swenson in the context of Gen. 2:15, where the narrative takes place in a pristine setting, the verb indicates a custodial attitude on behalf of '...the garden's welfare (...which also...) produces delight and serenity for the human being', and therefore it should be better translated as caring or caretaking'.[18] However, she also indicates that the object of care is not the land in general ('*adamah*'), but only the garden ('*gan*'), because '*samar*' is not quoted again in Gen. 2-3, while '*abodah*' (work) is included in Gen. 3:23 referring to postlapsarian working conditions.[19] Therefore, it can be concluded that after the Fall work is no longer done gently, with care, but rather with toil, 'by the sweat of your face shall you get bread to eat' (Gen. 3:19), hence the double meaning of work, which is still retained in many languages, as a task and as an effort.

On the other hand, the verb '*samar*' appears again in Gen. 4:9, but in this case it does not refer to the land but to a person. When Cain responds to God after killing his brother, he excuses himself by saying: 'Shall I care/custody ('*samar*') my brother?'[20] This implies that care also applies to postlapsarian conditions. Following Swenson's interpretation again, Cain discovers that 'even though he worked in reverent service to '*abodah*' the land, carrying on that part of the human mandate, he was not absolved of the duty to '*samar*' and that duty, Cain learns, extends not only to the land but to other people, too'.[21] As a result of rejecting his responsibility he finds the rejection of the land, which will bear him no fruit.

The careful attitude towards the earth implied in Gen. 2:15 also appears in other biblical texts, such as the post-Flood covenant with Noah, which includes all creatures (Gen. 9), the prescriptions of Leviticus to rest the earth (following the Sabbath cycle: Lev. 25:2-5), or the command to avoid harming 'the grass

[18] (Swenson 2006, p. 376).
[19] 'Abodah' also appears in Gen. 2:5 to describe the absence of human work, before the creation of Adam, again without 'samar' since there were no humans to care for the land.
[20] The Latin translation follows the same sense: 'Num custos fratris mei sum ego' (Gen. 4:9).
[21] (Swenson 2006, p. 383).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

of the earth or any plant or any tree' during the last plagues of Revelation (Rev. 9:4, similar idea in 7:3).[22]

The analysis of the ecclesiastical tradition on Gen 2:15 does not provide further insights on the interpretation of this verse to illuminate the Christian consideration of work, since the theology of work is not extensively dealt with by the early Fathers (see 3.4.1). Escrivá greatly appreciated the commentary on Sacred Scripture by those early theologians, but he never quoted any in relation to his use of Gen. 2:15. Several Fathers did extensive commentaries of Genesis 1, describing in detail the different phases of Creation and the importance of the final Sabbath rest, but only a few also commented on Gen. 2:15,[23] and none considered this verse as the foundation of an original vocation of human beings to work, let alone that the divine command to 'care for it' should refer to the well-being of the earth.[24] However, it is worth quoting the Bergsma's commentary, who emphasizes that the combination of '*abodah*' and '*samar*' is quite unusual in the Hebrew Bible and is commonly linked to a liturgical office.[25] Following his interpretation, Adam, before the Fall, would have been called by God to perform in some way a liturgical work in dealing with the earth, or, in other words, he could be considered a priest of creation.[26]

The use of Gen 2:15 within ecotheology is much more extended, mostly to underpin the stewardship role of Adam. But the relevant comments of this verse do not consider its connections with theology of work, therefore emphasizing

[22] A detailed analysis of these passages is beyond the scope of this dissertation. For a more detailed analysis, see the 'Earth Bible' project (Habel 2011).
[23] The detailed analysis of Bouteneff (2008) on early Fathers' comments on Gen. 1-3 do not even mention Gen. 2:15. The compilation made by the Catena Bible project (https://catenabible.com) includes 4 commentaries by Fathers on Gen 2:15 (Ambrose, Ephrem, Augustine and Chrysostom; none of who were covered by the Bouteneff' essay), while Gen. 1 was commented on by Basil, Tertullian, Augustine, Jerome, Chrysostom, Nemesius and Hippolytus.
[24] This is the sense of St Ambrose's commentary on this verse. 'The act of tilling and the act of keeping are one and the same thing. In tilling there is a certain exercise of man's virtue, while in keeping it is understood that the work is accomplished, for protection implies something completed'. A similar idea in St Ephrem. In his comments on Genesis, St Augustine gives two interpretations of 'custodire' in the context of Gen. 2:15. In *De Genesi adversus Manichaeos* he understands it as 'watching over' the work done, while in *De Genesi ad litteram*, written a few years later, he assigns this care to God's providence over human beings.
[25] (Bergsma 2018, p. 18). A similar idea is shared by another biblical scholar (Hahn 2006). However, these two verbs also appear in Deut 13:5 and 16:12 with a non-cultic, legal meaning (Michał Karnawalski, personal communication in April 20th, 2024). In any case, the liturgical interpretation of Bergsma and Hahn is certainly plausible.
[26] The idea of being a priest of creation has been developed by different orthodox scholars, in particular by John Zizioulas (2006). I will expand on this theme in section 4.5.1.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

the '*custodire*' but forgetting the '*ut operaretur*'. Norman Habel, in his particular ecotheological interpretation of the biblical narrative, interprets '*abodah*' and '*samar*' by 'serve and preserve', assuming that the garden was forest, not agriculture land and therefore the role of Adam was to maintain its integrity,[27] while Brown considers that Eden was an agricultural irrigated area and Adam's work was to make it more fertile and preserve its fruits, to '*tend and keep* what has already been planted'.[28] Hiebert stresses the different roles assigned to human beings in Gen. 1 and 2, the former as a manager and the latter as a farmer, 'an equal member of the community of life and a servant of nature's processes'.[29] Bauckham translates '*custodire*' to 'keep' or 'preserve', implying that the divine mandate entails that Adam takes care of the soil.[30] Castillo brings a political ecology interpretation to the Genesis narrative. He defends the interpretation of Gen 2:15 (in relation to other chapters of Genesis) as a call for humans to live in a threefold communion with God, neighbour and earth, giving them the role of gardeners of the world, but never mentions the connections between 'serving and caring' the garden and human labour.[31] Within specific studies on the two verbs included in Gen 2:15, Giussepe Di Carlo argues that the conjunction between '*abodah*' and '*samar*' suggests to 'defend and preserve the integrity' of Creation, and that this responsibility 'extends into the future and could be called providential'.[32] Following Brueggemann on this point,[33] Di Carlo considers that a caring attitude towards Creation is part of the divine vocation to be co-creators and custodians, in the threefold relationship with God, earth and our fellow human beings. Nggada and Malgwi defend the argument that Adam's activity in Eden was to work and care for the earth, implying a divine mandate to work, even before the Fall, and therefore, in the same sense as Escrivá, consider work a positive reality, a primary component of the human vocation.[34] They favour a more literal interpretation of Gen. 2:15, considering

[27] (Habel 2011, pp. 46-66).
[28] (Brown 1999, pp. 138).
[29] (Hiebert 2000, p. 117).
[30] (Bauckham 2010, p. 22). The same translation is provided by Brown (2010, p. 81).
[31] (Castillo 2019, pp. 67-101).
[32] (Di Carlo 2013, p. 19).
[33] (Brueggemann 1982).
[34] (Nggada and Malgwi 2021). They follow in this respect other biblical scholars such as Waltke (2001) and Westermann and Scullion (1984).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

'*abodah*' as manual and non-liturgical work, and '*samar*' as the responsibility to maintain the fertility of the garden, imitating God who also worked in Creation and protects his creatures. However, as this work was carried out in paradisiacal conditions, framed in a harmonious relationship with nature, they considered that it could also be considered a priestly activity, connecting also with the idea of 'being a priest of our environment', with the 'responsibility of protecting it against anything that will pollute its ideal standard'.[35] In the same vein to these authors, Pope Francis uses Gen 2:15 as a biblical base for environmental stewardship:

> Tilling refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while keeping means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving. This implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature (LS, n. 67).[36]

Regardless of the importance of Gen. 2:15 for the early Christian reflection on Creation, the exegetical analysis of the biblical text and Escrivá's frequent use of this verse underline its relevance for the connections between the theology of work and ecotheology, which is the main contribution of my research. Considering the substantial character of this verse for both disciplines, the absence of texts that have put them in direct relation is particularly striking. On the one hand, from the frequent quotations of Gen. 2:15 by ecotheologians, I have not found any reference to the possible application of this verse to support the vocational dimension of work. On the other, the general and widely used commentaries on Genesis by theologians of work do not mention what '*samar/custodire*' adds to '*abodah/operaretur*' to its vocational character, apart from a manifestation of agricultural activity.[37]

With regards to the question that I posed at the beginning of this section, we can conclude that, despite the possible different interpretations of '*custodire*', this verb is certainly part of the constitutive vocation of human beings,

[35] (Nggada and Malgwi 2021, p. 78).
[36] In an earlier address, Francis specified that caring for the earth implies, 'making the world increase with responsibility, transforming it so that it may be a garden, an inhabitable place for us all'. (Pope Francis 2013). Cardinal Turkson, commenting the LS, underlines a similar idea by pointing out that the human vocation: 'is "to till and to keep" it (the universe). But tilling and keeping cannot include domination and devastation -lest we till too much and keep too little! These make a mockery of dignity and respect of God's gift' (Turkson 2019, p. xx).
[37] (Hamilton 1990; Skinner 1956; Westermann and Scullion 1984).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

as manifested in Gen. 2:15. In short, the internal connection between work and care should better frame the purpose and ways of working within an ecotheological perspective. In that sense, '*operaretur*' carries a certain responsibility to make the earth more fruitful, expanding the potentialities opened up by Creation through human effort, but it is also linked to '*custodire*', which includes a relational meaning and thus a responsibility (to care) for other human beings and the natural world, contributing to its maintenance, restoration or flourishing.[38] I have developed my ecotheology in this double sense and intimate connection between work and care.

4.3 Intrinsic dimension: sanctifying nature.

In this section I will reflect on the implications that the intrinsic dimension used by Escrivá in his theology of work has for our attitude towards the care of nature. Following the outline I presented in the introduction to this chapter, I will divide the discussion into two sub-sections: the first focusing on what theological categories can be used to support the idea of sanctifying the natural world, likening it to Escrivá's proposal to sanctify work, while the second on what aspects of the sanctification of work are modified when that work is done with care for nature, following the vocational dimension of 'work and care' described in 4.2. The first aspect, the sanctification of the natural world, is presented in the context of the theological category of 'environmental empathy', while the second involves stressing the importance of aligning human and God's work in Creation, or in other words, reflecting on what kind of work can properly be considered co-creative.

4.3.1 Sanctifying nature through environmental empathy.

In discussing the term 'sanctifying work', I commented in section 3.2.1 that this expression has an analogical meaning, for properly speaking only someone, not something, can be holy, because holiness requires docility to God's grace and free will to act according to that grace. Seen in this way, it makes no

[38] Other authors share this idea. For example, in his theology of work, Volf commenting also on Gen. 2:15 indicates that 'All work must have not only a productive but also a protective aspect. Therefore, economic systems must be integrated into the given biological systems of ecological interdependence (since...) all human labour must include an element of creation care' (Volf 1991, p. 145).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

sense to speak of a sanctified work when considering its result (a table, a class, a bus being driven are not properly holy), but only the action of working can be called holy.[39] In this analogical sense, it is worth asking what it means to sanctify nature and what theological categories underpin the sanctification of nature, including the extent to which our actions contribute to this end.

Escrivá defines holiness as 'the fullness of charity' (FU, n. 739), so that to aspire to holiness means to aim at the integral fulfilment of someone, the end for which that person was created, in a single word to reach one's highest spiritual perfection. GeS and LE based the dignity of work on its capacity to perfect creation, which would justify for those documents the command to dominate other creatures (Gen. 1:28).[40] Interpreted literally, this implies that creation is somehow unfinished, as if God wanted to make it imperfect so that human beings could complete it. The expression is apparently contradictory to two principles that require a more nuanced interpretation of the GeS text. On the one hand, if the human work completes creation, how then can we understand the Judeo-Christian tradition that speaks of a world freely created by God, without any preconditions, and therefore fully in accordance with His will?[41] Why would God have wanted the world to be imperfect, unfinished, just so that human work would have some meaning? On the other hand, we have sufficient scientific evidence from the fossil record to affirm that humanity appears at a very advanced stage of terrestrial evolution, after billions of years of biological activity. Does this mean that Creation has not been perfect for billions of years

[39] So argues Ocáriz (2000). Stapleford (2018) reflects on the moral judgement of work distinguishing between the output and the intention, following Aristotle, claiming that the output (the making) is judged only as good or bad by its quality, whether the intention (the acting) implies properly the moral assessment of the free agent. Here, in the framework of Escrivá's concept of sanctifying work, I am referring to convert it into a sacred offering to God, providing that the content is morally good or at least neutral.

[40] For GeS the aim of human work is 'to bring to perfection the divine creation' (n. 67). A similar idea is included in Lumen Gentium, n. 36: 'so that created goods may be perfected by human work'. John Paul II in LE, as well as some other theologians (Wyszynski 1960) offer a similar interpretation.

[41] That God created everything 'ex nihilo' is a conception deeply rooted in the Christian tradition, and a concrete way of affirming God's absolute freedom in creation, which was not conditioned by pre-existing matter. See, among others, O'Callaghan (2022, ch. 7) or Zizioulas (2021a). Aquinas insists on this idea in his treatise on creation: 'The fact of saying that God made all things by His Word excludes the error of those who say that God produced things by necessity. When we say that in Him there is a procession of love, we show that God produced creatures not because He needed them, nor because of any other extrinsic reason, but on account of the love of His own goodness' (Saint Thomas Aquinas 1265-1274, I, q 32, a. 1).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

until the arrival of our species? Were those creatures who lived in a period of Earth's history when there was no human presence imperfect? Are not the other celestial bodies that have never had, and never will have, contact with human beings perfect? In short, what kind of perfection does human work bring to the world?

It would take too long to answer these questions in detail. Following the Christian conception of Creation, the perfection of Creation is considered to refer to its original state, deteriorated by human sin. But why did Adam/Eve's fault affect the rest of Creation? Sin implies free will, and cooperation with sin implies having some sort of affinity with the sinner. Adam is humus ('adamah'), as the rest of the material creatures, but he is the only 'adamah' who is endowed with free will and, therefore, the only one with the capacity to contradict God, to disobey His commands. The sin of this 'adamah' affects the rest of 'adamah', by sharing Adam's material condition, his 'earthliness'.[42] For this reason, it seems theological reasonable that the original perfection of Creation was lost with the Fall, affecting not only human beings, but all other species as well.[43] This 'communion in sin' only makes theological sense if we accept an intimate union between human beings and other creatures that binds the destinies of both. This moral bond is what I have elsewhere called 'environmental empathy', which implies that humanity's actions affect other creatures, because there is an intimate communion between the whole material Creation: we share in the creatureliness of matter with all other material beings. I introduced this concept in 2012 within a review article on the theological categories of relationship between God, human beings and the rest of creation.[44] I defended there that this moral connection is one of the historical approaches to explain God-human-nature relations present in Christianity:

[42] The union between humanity and the rest of creation in our 'earthliness' is widely considered by orthodox theology: 'we tend to overemphasize our creation ''in the image and likeness of God' (Gen. 1:26) and to overlook our creation from the dirt and 'the dust of the ground' (Gen. 2:7). Our 'heavenliness' should not overshadow our 'earthliness''. (Chryssavgis 2010, p.181).

[43] It can be argued that human sin occurred billions of years after other creatures were affected by it, which raises a problem similar to that of conceiving human work as the tool that perfects creatures that have had no relation to it. However, in the case of the original sin, human disobedience has a cosmic character encompassing the whole creation, whereas work impacts a particular creature or set of creatures that receive the outputs of that work. In this sense, the Fall has a parallel effect to Christ's redemptive sacrifice, which has a timeless character even though it occurred at a particular moment in history.

[44] (Chuvieco 2012, p. 14)

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

> This tradition considers that humans and nature share a similar dependence on God and are dependent on each other. However, only humans have free will and therefore are the only ones able to challenge God's designs. When humans do so, nature is also affected by human weakness and, consequently, the ideal equilibrium between human and nature vanishes. Following this tradition, humans are somehow the 'principals' of Creation, and our decisions affect the moral well-being of the whole environment. [45]

I used 'principals' indicating our role as the sole moral agent of the material realm. A metaphor for this role would be that of the eldest sibling in a large family, where the other children are not yet of sound mind, and therefore the primogenitor is the only one morally responsible for what happens in the household, while the consequences of his/her behaviour affect the rest of the family. Similarly, 'environmental empathy' implies that humankind can be considered as the eldest sibling of material creatures. Even though the term 'empathy' has been frequently used to refer to the ability to understand and appreciate other people's feelings, I am using this word to emphasise our moral union with nature, based on the ontological creatureliness shared with other material beings, which are affected by our good or evil doings. The free rebellion of humankind against God implies the deterioration of the material world's original sanctity; we are also called to restore that sanctity by being united to the Redemptive mission of Christ and the Sanctifier role of the Holy Spirit. In short, the moral actions of humanity affect the rest of Creation: all material creatures are affected by human behaviour, so we can say that moral and environmental degradation go hand in hand.[46]

'Environmental empathy' explains that the degradation of nature can properly be called a moral issue, not only because specific human wrongdoings are often behind that deterioration, but also because any wrongdoings contribute to spreading the moral imbalance caused by original sin.[47] As Cardinal Peter

---

[45] (Chuvieco 2012, p. 14).
[46] The relationship between original sin and the curse on the earth is briefly discussed by Bushblack (2011) and to a longer extend by Brown (1999). John Paul II also linked original sin and the degradation: 'resulted not only in man's alienation from himself, in death and fratricide, but also in the earth's 'rebellion' against him' (1990, n. 3). Zizioulas (2021a) considers that the Fall introduces 'nothingness' and death counterbalancing the effect of an 'out of nothing' creation.
[47] Several recent Church documents have linked moral and natural degradation: 'I wish to repeat that the ecological crisis is a moral issue' (John Paul II 1990, n. 15), and Benedict XVI in the same line indicated: 'Our present crises – be they economic, food-related, environmental or social – are ultimately also moral crises, and all of them are interrelated' (Benedict XVI 2010, n. 5).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Turkson rightly pointed out, 'the demands of morality are a *sine qua non* for the well-being not only of the environment, but also of humanity'.[48] In the same vein, Pope Benedict XVI's social encyclical indicated that in order to protect nature, technical or economic measures are not enough, even if they are important, because 'what is decisive is the overall moral tenor of society'.[49] Opposed to this conception are the dualistic human/nature approaches that consider human beings as alien to nature, and therefore morally unrelated.[50] These attitudes were promoted by the Cartesian conception of nature as a machine, detached of sacred significance, which has been identified as the ideological basis for the degradation of nature.[51]

We can trace the concept of 'environmental empathy' in several passages of Sacred Scripture, where humanity's moral deterioration is followed by natural calamities and misfortunes. The story of original sin itself already evidences this intimate union between human beings and the rest of creation: after confirming human guilt, God condemns Adam and Eve to toil, to suffer death and disease, even in childbirth, but also curses the earth for human disobedience ('Cursed be the soil because of you!', Gen. 3: 17), implying that — without participating in humanity's sin — the earth follows his tragic destiny.[52] The same can be applied to the account of the Flood (Gen. 6-9), when God decided to 'wipe out from the earth the men (...) but also the beasts and the creeping things and the birds of the air', because of the 'man's wickedness on earth' (Gen. 6: 5-7): again, mankind's moral wrongdoing causes a natural disaster.

The same relationship between moral and environmental decay is present in other passages of the Bible. For example, the prophet Hosea relates the unfaithfulness of the chosen people to the suffering of nature:

> There is no fidelity, no mercy, no knowledge of God in the land. False swearing, lying, murder, stealing and adultery! in their lawlessness,

[48] (Turkson 2019, p. xiv).
[49] (Benedict XVI 2009, n. 51)
[50] See Chapter 6 of Volf (1991).
[51] See for example, Kureethadam's essay (2017, 268chapter VII), which identifies Cartesian philosophy as the foundation of the modern anthropocentric worldview.
[52] Habel (2011) within his Earth Bible project considers this curse difficult to justify, particularly as he sees the soil 'adamah' as the mother of life, from which beings were moulded. He does not mention the potential moral connection between Adam and 'adamah', as he understands the text from the 'adamah' perspective.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

> bloodshed follows bloodshed. Therefore the land mourns, and everything that dwells in it languishes: The beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and even the fish of the sea perish (Hos. 4:1-3).

While the second book of Chronicles shows the natural healing power of moral conversion:

> If I close heaven so that there is no rain, if I command the locust to devour the land, if I send pestilence among my people, and if my people, upon whom my name has been pronounced, humble themselves and pray, and seek my presence and turn from their evil ways, I will hear them from heaven and pardon their sins and revive their land (2 Chr. 7: 13-14).

The prophet Haggai, for his part, connects the drought and the neglect of liturgical worship in the temple of Yahweh:

> You expected much, but it came to little; and what you brought home, I blew away. For what cause? says the LORD of hosts. Because my house lies in ruins, while each of you hurries to his own house. Therefore, the heavens withheld from you their dew, and the earth her crops. And I called for a drought upon the land and upon the mountains; Upon the grain, and upon the wine, and upon the oil, and upon all that the ground brings forth; Upon men and upon beasts, and upon all that is produced by hand (Hag. 1:9-11).

The internal union between humankind and the rest of the creatures is also portrayed in the Biblical narrative of the Covenant, one of the most recurrent themes of the Old Testament. The first one takes place with Noah after the Flood, and includes not only human beings, but also other living creatures, which had previously been incorporated into the Ark, and saved from drowning:

> See, I am now establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you: all the birds, and the various tame and wild animals that were with you and came out of the ark. I will establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all bodily creatures be destroyed by the waters of a flood; there shall not be another flood to devastate the earth (Gen. 9:9-11).[53]

[53] Osborn (1993) refers to the inclusion of non-human creatures in other biblical accounts of God's covenant: Ho. 2:20; Je. 33:20-25; Ezk. 34:25. I have doubts about this attribution for the last two.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

The New Testament also offers some images of this intimate moral union between humankind and nature. A particularly impressive one is the reaction of the natural forces to the death of Christ on the Cross, which can also be an excellent example of how the natural world accompanies moral actions, as nature responds to the death of the God-Man by mourning: 'the earth quaked, rocks were split' (Mt. 27:51). In the New Testament, the account in the letter to the Romans, where St Paul links the suffering of creation with human redemption, as the earth groans in expectation of the manifestation of the children of God (Cf. Rom. 8: 19-21) is also a clear evidence of this profound connection (I will return to this in 4.5.1).[54]

This intimate union between human beings and all other creatures is also present in the writings of the Fathers, especially in those most sensitive to appreciate nature.[55] Modern ecotheologians have also mentioned this parallelism between sin and nature degradation, echoing the impact of the original sin on the curse of the land.[56] A similar vision has been endorsed by the LS, within the concept of sublime communion that unites humanity with the rest of creatures. This intimate union has been identified by several ecotheologians as the best way to overcome the dualistic paradigm proposed by modern Cartesian thought.[57] In opposition to such dualism, the new worldview should be characterised by holism, emphasising interrelatedness and interdependence, both in its theological and biological dimension, today well characterised by the idea of the web of life, which implies that all living organisms are in mutual dependence.[58] The rest of the creatures, therefore, depends on our moral actions, not only in terms of our actions in nature, but also in our relationship with God and with other human beings. Biologically, the reverse is also true, since we

[54] Commenting on Rom. 8, Osborn (1993, p. 97) states: 'The responsibility for this state rests firmly on humanity: our place in the created order is such that our disobedience brings with it ecological consequences'.
[55] For example, St Augustine, in responding to the negative worldview of the Manichaeans, pointed out that disorder and suffering are the consequence of original sin, which affects humans as well as other creatures, since the earth shares the negative consequences of human weaknesses (Augustine 388-393, 1,13,19). St Basil also reflected on the inner union between all creatures (Basil 361-364, Hom. 2, 2).
[56] (Hiebert 2000, p. 119).
[57] Kureethadam (2017) develops this idea in detail.
[58] A proposal related to this idea is the concept of Biophilia, expressing the need of human beings to be in relationship with nature (Kellert 2005).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

depend on the rest of Creation for our own maintenance; therefore, both directions express our intimate relationship with all other creatures.

If our moral actions affect the rest of creation, our best contribution to sanctify nature is living faithfully the will of God. 'Environmental empathy' implies that the sanctification of nature is closely related to the pursuit of personal sanctification. Echoing the words of St Paul (Rom. 5:17-18), if by 'the transgression of one person, death came' (and the degradation of nature), 'so through one righteous act acquittal and life came to all' (and thus the restoration of nature). Obviously, we cannot sanctify nature in our own capacity, but we can join in the Redemption wrought by Christ, extending His mediatorial role to all creatures, for all will find their ultimate destiny in him, 'by whom all things were made' (Jn. 1:3) and who 'will make all things new' (Rev. 21:5). In summary, 'environmental empathy' implies that nature shares the implications of our moral actions, being degraded when they are bad, or sanctified when they are good.[59]

This spiritual connection between humans and nature can be related to a theological concept particularly dear to Escrivá, the 'communion of saints', which has a long presence in the Christian Tradition, even being included in the Creed of Nicaea (325). Although it has been explained from different perspectives, it indicates the interior union among all the faithful in the spiritual gifts bestowed on the Church by the Holy Spirit through the unique mediation of Christ.[60] The analysis of the importance of 'communion of saints' in the teachings of St Josemaría is covered by Burkhart and López mainly in their chapter dedicated to the building of the Church, substantiating this concept within Escrivá's vision of how ordinary Christians contribute to the sanctification of the Church.[61] Escrivá defined the 'communion of saints' as the deep union of those who partake of the Trinitarian life of God and form the great

[59] From a different starting point, Zizioulas (2021b) arrives to a similar conclusion, since for him being 'priest of creation' (see 4.5.1) entails 'the responsibility of sanctifying and referring back to God His own creation' (p. 59).
[60] This was Escrivá's approach to the communion of saints, which he often quoted in his writings: TW, n. 544-550, n. 997; FU, n. 56, 472, 615, 948; TF, n. 258, 462, 856, 945; CPB, n. 89; FoG, n. 76, 154. Letter of 24.03.31, n. 56.
[61] (Burkhart and López 2010 - 2013, vol. 1, ch. 3). References to this concept are also included in vol. 3 dedicated to sanctification of work and to the means of sanctification.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

family of the children of God, united with all the members of the Church, including those who are struggling on earth, those who are suffering in Purgatory and those who are enjoying the glory of heaven (Cfr. ILC, n. 18).

In practical terms, this concept implies for Escrivá that our good and bad deeds not only affect us personally, but also collectively, increasing or decreasing the holiness of the whole Church. Recalling the responsibility of sustaining the sanctity of other members of the Church, he often reminded the relevance of one's struggle for the spiritual welfare of others:

> Constantly call to mind that at every moment you are cooperating in the human and spiritual formation of those around you, and of all souls — for the blessed Communion of Saints reaches as far as that. At every moment: when you work and when you rest; when people see you happy or when they see you worried; when at your job, or out in the middle of the street, you pray as does a child of God and the peace of your soul shows through; when people see that you have suffered, that you have wept, and you smile (TF, n. 846).

He liked to use the image of blood transfusions (cf. TW n. 544) as an analogy for what is involved in sending good spiritual graces to other Christians through one's good deeds (in union with God's grace). Within the growing wave to 'socialise' the Christian vocation during the 1950s and 60s, he recalled that sanctity is personal, although not individualistic. Each one is responsible for his own holiness, but also for the sanctification of others, emphasising the relational dimension of Christian life.[62]

> A Christian cannot be selfish. If he were, he would betray his vocation. Far from Christ are those content with keeping their soul in peace —and a false peace at that— while ignoring the good of others (CPB, n. 175).

Some of his quotes related to 'communion of saints' stressed that all Christians are part of the great family of the Church, in which all the baptised faithful share the spiritual gifts acquired in the Redemption. The Church is a family because all faithful are children of God, brothers in the faith, united by bonds of charity and sacraments Escrivá recalled in this regard the strong fraternity lived by the first Christians, also to help each other to imitate more faithfully

[62] This idea connects with the relational dimension of work analysed in sections 3.2.3 and 4.5.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

the life of Christ, which leads them to call themselves 'saints', for example in several of Paul's letters (Rom., 1 Cor. or Gal.).

Extending this idea to the sanctification of nature implies that all human actions filled with spiritual meaning and performed out of love for God and service to others actually contribute to making the natural world holier. If the 'communion of saints' can be applicable to all other creatures, following the intimate ontological and moral union between all created beings, one's personal striving for holiness is contributing to the restoration of the original holiness of nature. Even those Christians who are not interested in the preservation of the natural world can contribute to their spiritual growth simply by being good Christians. This requires aspiring to the good, striving to overcome one's weaknesses and sins, in communion with the other members of the Church. This concerns all dimensions of our existence, for all —in one way or another, following ChM's concept — have a spiritual impact. From the perspective of this thesis, 'environmental empathy' combined with 'communion of saints' implies a particular responsibility to contribute to the well-being of the whole of creation. All honest works done out of love for God and service to others, regardless of their social value, have a positive effect on nature, theologically speaking, because they help it to grow in holiness.

I shall illustrate the repercussions of our spiritual and material life on nature with two concrete but extreme examples, in terms of their everydayness (one infrequent, the other common). They are two morally wrong behaviours that indirectly affect nature: war and consumerism. The environmental repercussions of war are devastating, causing long-term effects on biodiversity, soil erosion and air and water pollution.[63] Since antiquity, involving nature in human struggles has been a clear manifestation of the madness associated with war, to the extent that destroying nature has often been used as a tool of war itself, to deliberately cause further hardship and scarcity and to demoralise the opposed army. The book of Deuteronomy warns against this indiscriminate practice, which goes beyond any moral argument (self-defence, for example) that might support a just war:

[63] This topic would require a long discussion that would defocus my argument. Additional information can be found in (Austin and Bruch 2000; Khan 2022).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

> When you are at war with a city and have to lay siege to it for a long time before you capture it, you shall not destroy its trees by putting an axe to them. You may eat their fruit, but you must not cut down the trees. After all, are the trees of the field men, that they should be included in your siege? (Deut. 20:19).

Consumerism, on the other hand, implies a strong reliance on material goods as a source of happiness and thus a tendency to accumulate them. Although personal actions may be considered insignificant in the overall picture of environmental problems, it should be borne in mind that most production is intended to serve personal consumption, and therefore personal lifestyle choices have the greatest influence on the cumulative environmental impacts of a given society.[64] In addition, several environmental leaders have stressed the importance of personal coherence and commitment to social change,[65] which aligns with and reinforces the theological perspective offered by the communion of saints within the framework of 'environmental empathy'.

I will end this section by stressing that the struggle for holiness, love of God and love of His creation can be exercised in the midst of one ordinary life. If, following Escrivá's ChM the sanctification of most Christians should be pursued amid their normal professional, social or family circumstances, so too the effort to sanctify the natural world should be made in ordinary life itself. Not everyone can participate in a conservation project or help in the restoration of a degraded area, but everyone can, and should, contribute to caring for nature regardless of what and where the work is done. Here the concepts of sanctifying material realities and caring for nature, at least the nature around us, clearly converge. With certain similarities to Escrivá's Navarre homily, although in a very different setting, Lyanda Lynn Haupt pointed out that

> it is in our everyday lives, in our everyday homes, that we eat, consume energy, run the faucet, compost, flush, learn and *live*. It is here, *in our* lives, that we must come to know our essential connection to the wilder earth, because it is here, in the activity of our daily lives, that we most surely affect this earth, for good or for ill.[66]

[64] There are many examples of this. For example, in the case of the carbon footprint, several studies have concluded that more than 70% of emissions in Western countries are linked to personal consumption (Chuvieco et al. 2021; Ivanova et al. 2017; Jones and Kammen 2011).
[65] See also in this regard the speeches of several leading environmentalists (Lois Gibbs, Chico Mendes, Petra Kelly), collected by Tal (2006).
[66] Cited by (Ormerod and Vanin 2016, p. 348), emphasis by them.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

4.3.2 Sanctifying nature through co-creative work.

In the previous section, I have shown the theological implications that our moral interconnectedness with the rest of creatures imply. More directly, the contribution of human activities to bringing nature to perfection (or to degrading it further) is related to the type of work that is done, as through work the natural world is transformed to satisfy human needs (or whims depending on whether or not they are real necessities). In this section, I will reflect on how work can contribute to restoring the original holiness of the natural world, and more specifically what kind of work can be qualified, in this deep theological sense, as co-creative, following God's creative purpose for nature. To this end, I will recall the theological categories proposed by Escrivá for sanctifying the action of work (intrinsic dimension), extending their application to the impact of our work on the sanctification of the natural world.

Let us remember Escrivá's definition of a sanctified work: that which is performed with human perfection and righteousness of intention, out of love for God and in service to one's neighbour. As indicated in 3.2.2, an obvious premise for sanctifying work is that the activity performed be morally good (or at least indifferent). A task that pursues a moral evil cannot be sanctified. In our context of sanctifying work, following the vocational dimension of work with 'care for nature', it seems consequential that work would only be sanctifiable if it contributes to maintaining or restoring God's original purpose for creation. In other words, the sanctification of nature through human work requires as a premise that the purpose of that work helps, or at least does not contradict, the creative will of God. As indicated earlier, Christian theology regards creation as a free and unconditioned act of God.[67] Since He is the supreme intelligence and goodness, creation is not arbitrary, the fruit of a capricious divine ingenuity that creates beings at random. There is order in the universe, but there is also meaning, because somehow God wants to bind himself to His creatures through what Levering calls the 'web of justice':

> Although creation is pure gift, God can rightly be said to owe creatures something, namely, what pertains to the achievement of the

[67] (O'Callaghan 2022).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

> end or goal proper to the nature that he wisely and lovingly gives creatures.[68]

The most obvious consequence of this 'purposeful' Creation is that everything created has a specific purpose, 'nothing is superfluous', because every being is the fruit of God's love, which endows every creature with an ultimate meaning that eventually explains its existence. In this sense, theologically speaking, everything has an inherent value (on its own sake),[69] because everything has been created by a loving and provident God, while having also a certain instrumental value for other creatures. The original bounty of creation is clearly indicated in Gen. 1:31 when after completing the work of creation, 'God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good'. St Basil writes that 'nothing was made without reason, nothing by chance. Everything shows an ineffable wisdom',[70] echoing here the Sacred text:

> For you love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made; for what you hated, you would not have fashioned. And how could a thing remain, unless you willed it; or be preserved, had it not been called forth by you? (Wis. 9:24-25).

All beings have value because they were all part of God's original design, including the many millions of species that have never had contact with humans and were therefore instrumentally useless to us, but, with our current scientific understanding, useful for the development of other species in the '*creatio continua*' of biological evolution. As Levering points out, in addition to showing God's perfection and generosity, the existence of innumerable species has an ontological significance of giving glory to God: 'ultimately, the purpose of the entire creation, rocks included, is cosmic praise and rejoicing', and thus they all share the ultimate goal of all creatures, the glorification of their Creator, regardless of the historical period in which they lived: 'Rather than being

---

[68] (Levering 2017, p. 306).
[69] Most environmental ethicist divide ethical values in intrinsic and instrumental, depending on whether they consider the worth on the being itself or on its utility for other beings. The textbook of Robin Attfield (2018) and Leena Vilkka (1997) summarize these concepts. Karen Green (1996) provides a sound reflection on the types of values that have been applied to the appreciation of nature, while Baird Callicott (1995) provides a review on the philosophical fundaments of attributing value to nature. Ronald Sandler (2012) considers that the instrumental value facilitates justifying actions that degrade ecosystems or species based on the potential subsequent compensation of those losses.
[70] (Basil 361-364, Hom. 5, 8).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

useless, dinosaurs and galactic systems are theophanic: in their finite actuality, they point to the creator who is pure act'.[71] This idea is beautifully expressed in Psalms 19, 96 and 148, as well as in Dan. 3:52-90, and forms the basis of what some theologians have called 'cosmic liturgy' (see section 4.5).

The co-creative role of human work is widespread in both Catholic and Protestant theologies of work.[72] Escrivá also used this image in several texts, within his vocational consideration of work:

> As I have been preaching since 1928, work is not a curse; nor is it a punishment for sin. Genesis had already spoken about the fact of work before ever Adam rebelled against God. According to Our Lord's plans, work was to be a permanent feature of man who, through work, would cooperate in the immense task of creation (FoG, n. 81).

However, this co-creative role of work has sometimes been understood as a theological underpinning of the human destruction of nature.[73] Could it also be seen as a basis for its conservation? I think so, for two reasons. First, being a co-creator means following God's plan for all creatures, rather than pursuing one's own interest, and second, the co-creative role entails helping nature to unfold its potentialities.

Being co-creators implies respecting the original divine plan set for it, rather than using creation for our own benefit. Being co-creators is quite different from being creators, assigning us an authoritarian role over the rest of creatures, even to the point of generating new at will, as if they were intended to glorify humankind rather than to give glory to God. That was the root of

---

[71] (Levering 2017, p. 142). The previous quote is from p. 144.

[72] This idea is present both in the early Fathers and in recent theologians. For example, St. Augustine states: 'You see, there was no stress of wearisome toil but pure exhilaration of spirit, when things which God had created flourished in more luxuriant abundance with the help of human work' (Augustine 403-415, book 8, 8) quoted by Therrien (2020). See also Barsella (2014). Among modern theologians, the concept of co-creation is used by several authors (Chenu 1965; Goosen 1976; John Paul II 1981; Kaiser 1966). Osborn (1993, p. 139) uses the term sub-creator with a similar meaning. Sölle (1984) connects this figure with the subjective value of work: 'We need to understand ourselves as co-creators who require constructive and joyful work in which we are challenged to develop our creative potential' (p. 85). Finally, Ostring and Davidson (2016, ch. 3) present a critical review of various theologians' approach to considering work as co-creative.

[73] As noted in 3.4.2, John Paul II makes several references to Gen. 1:28 in LE, linking human dignity in labour to having received the mandate to fill and subdue the earth. I do not infer that LE advocates the 'artificialization' of the earth, but only that he agrees with other authors in that direction (Wyszynski 1960). However, it should also be noted that other writings of John Paul II show a clear concern for environmental issues, explicitly stating that irresponsible use of natural resources would be immoral, e.g., see '*Centessimus annus*', n. 13. (John Paul II 1991) or the message for the World Day of Peace (John Paul II 1990).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

original sin, desiring to be like God, adopting a role that completely exceeds human potentials, for after all, men can only manipulate what exists, not beget from nothing. In recent years, the transformative power of biotechnology seems to give us the capacity to carry out a redesign of nature for our own benefit, or more precisely to the benefit of a few wealthy individuals and corporations that have the funds and capacities to develop that technology.[74] A particularly relevant area is the so called 'enhancement' of human nature implying the abolition of suffering, the expansion of natural intelligence and the updating of vital organs, extending life indefinitely.[75]

Returning to the co-creative dimension of professional work, the first practical consequence of sanctifying any work in cooperation with the divine plan of creation would be to consider as immoral, and therefore not 'sanctifiable', any task that implies an irreversible degradation of nature. Different scientific disciplines are observing that the abusive transformation of the planet, in particular deforestation in tropical regions, water and soil pollution, landscape changes caused by large infrastructures, urbanisation and climate change are leading to what is already being called the Sixth Mass Extinction of species.[76] These species will cease to give glory to God if they do not exist, as Pope Francis vividly illustrates:

> Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost for ever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right (LS, n. 33).

[74] The use of biotechnologies to modify the genetic code of wildlife is now widespread (Shakweer et al. 2023), but raises numerous ethical concerns, like other artificial interventions on natural processes. For example, solar management is conceived by some authors as a potential solution to climate change (Dannenberg and Zitzelsberger 2019), but also has potentially catastrophic consequences. These would be examples of the 'technocratic paradigm' denounced by Pope Francis in LS.

[75] The lucid analysis of Alfredo Marcos and Moisés Pérez (2018) provides interesting insights on the ethical impacts of 'Transhumanism'. Keen (1969, pp. 135-140) offers another perspective on the conflicts between 'homo faber' and nature.

[76] For a review of the extent and causes of the current rate of species loss, see Barnosky et al. (2011) and Cowie et al. (2022). For a theological perspective on this question, see (Kureethadam 2014).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Is it possible to speak of sanctified work when its aim is to destroy God's creation?[77] Is the sanctification of work compatible with activities that involve irreversible degradation of the natural world (unscrupulous mining, using highly toxic materials that pollute soil and water, chemical production that introduces new non-biodegradable materials that harm living organisms, high-impact public works, unsustainable forestry, among others) especially when there are no plans to restore the damage? In my opinion, the coherent answer to these questions is no: this would be an immoral type of work, similar to others that denigrate human dignity. I am aware that economic and social precariousness may lead many people to participate in these tasks, perhaps because they do not have other alternatives to support their families; for others, collaborating in these jobs may be the result of a lack of sensitivity or ignorance of the impacts. In any case, I believe that the moral burden of the degradation of nature falls on the promoters of these initiatives, who should find alternative ways to meet human needs, and even more so when the ultimate destination of these tasks is superfluous consumption. This 'pragmatic argument', which supports somehow sacrificing nature in favour of human development is a fallacy, as it is well demonstrated that nature degradation also affects the most vulnerable people.[78]

On the other hand, moral standards should be based on ontological values, which are permanent, rather than on social conventions, which change historically. If I may make a historical parallel, it is incomprehensible to us today that a Christian society would consider the slave trade morally acceptable. The economic benefits of this heartless traffic of human beings were immense, many families made a living from this occupation (utilitarian vision), widespread social acceptance gave it a favourable moral sanction, and some people even justified it on religious grounds, twisting the meaning of Scripture. Today there are no arguments to excuse an action that can now only fill us with shame. Will

[77] In a similar line of thought Guitián (2018) reflects on the need to respect the 'grammar of creation' (which 'basically implies that companies should analyse the impact of their operations on the environment', p. 174) if business enterprises want to be in accordance with Catholic moral thinking. It includes several examples of this attitude, considering environmental impacts, but also the effects on human ecology.

[78] This is the main argument of the Pope Francis' LS, but also of many other thinkers who define human development in terms of multifaceted variables (Gudynas 2014; Sen 1988; Wiedmann et al. 2020).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

something similar happen with the mistreatment of nature that we do today with similar justifications based on pragmatism or social perception?

Does this mean that all transformation of nature is morally wrong? No, in fact some of those transformations may be positive, creating beautiful and resilient 'social' landscapes' (for instance 'dehesas' in Spain or 'landes' in France, which are the result of a long interaction between nature and rural population), but frequently they are not. The theological discussion then surrounds the potential criteria to setup the limits beyond which care for the earth is violated, converting nature transformation in something morally unacceptable. This reflection goes beyond utilitarian calculations that turn nature's values into market commodities: rather is necessary to carry out a comprehensive evaluation of ethical, social, economic and theological implications to avoid irreversible degradations of nature, avoiding justifications that are only based on preconceived decisions or pure economic interest.[79]

The second implication of being co-creators involves contributing with our work to the flourishing and fulfilment of the original purpose of all creatures. Assuming that creation is not static but develops over time through God's providential love and care, our co-creative work should involve the attentive care of all creatures, helping them to develop in the direction in which God originally created them. In this perspective, work goes beyond transformation (making something new out of something else) to include sustaining (preserving something as it is) and restoring (returning something to its original state). In this sense, a co-creative work implies that human beings can also develop creation by bringing their own ingenuity to realise 'the potentialities that He Himself put into things' (LS, n. 124), albeit always in consonance with their original destiny. In this sense we can understand the command 'to subdue the earth' in Gen. 1:28, which we cannot ignore — since it is as much a part of Holy Scripture as Gen. 2:15 — but which reflects human's ability to ensure the harmonious development of nature, because having instrumental values does not imply ignoring its intrinsic ones: all creatures, including human beings, are instrumental for other creatures, and all transform nature in their own benefit.

[79] Different environmental ethics textbooks have proposed an ethical framework to build this analysis. For example, the CARVE method proposed by Eric Gampel (2009).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

What matters is that the transformation benefits as many living beings as possible.

In any case, my discussion here is not so much about what is morally acceptable, but about which work leads one to contribute to the sanctification of the world while sanctifying oneself by doing that work. In this sense, the aim is more related to establishing a moral summit or ideal, than an acceptable minimum. This requires a prior recognition of the essence and teleological destiny of the living organisms potentially impacted by human interventions, of their creatural value and thus of their divine origin, or, in other words, of the need to understand first their 'ultimate supernatural destiny in Jesus Christ'.[80]

> By subjecting ourselves to creation in our work we learn first-hand a sense for the creator's care. We begin to see the integrity, even sanctity, of a world that otherwise may seem of little value. Through our creative work, in other words, we can join with and more intimately appreciate God's own creative, sustaining work.[81]

This creative purpose is a fundamental source of value for nature. For example, if the enormous diversity of creatures reflects God's goodness and generosity, then helping to sustain their existence, or better still, to flourish, would be an obvious consequence of following God's divine will for creation, as well as a sign of gratitude and respect for the Creator. Clearly, this is not about sacralising nature, even to the point of idolatry, but about discovering the sacredness of nature as a reflection of divine beauty and majesty, rejoicing with God in His creation. As a well-known ecotheologian points out:

> ...our use of creation should always be a use which is itself directed toward the praise of the creator. In other words, our work and our consumption should themselves be forms of prayer in which the goodness and the purposes of God are foremost in mind.[82]

A new appreciation of nature in the light of this co-creative role of work should imply changes in the work being done and in the way it is done, including a new theological dimension that helps to assess whether or not the original destiny of all creatures is being followed, whether it goes in the line of restoring or reinforcing the negative consequences of original sin. This attitude is a way

[80] (Ocáriz 1997, p. 49-50).
[81] (Wirzba 2003b, p. 140).
[82] (Wirzba 2003b, p. 136).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

of making explicit Escrivá's advice to discover 'that divine something which is hidden in small details' (PLW, n. 116), hidden not only in the most ordinary realities, but also in the natural environment, in all the living beings that collectively share the planet with us.

The co-creative role of work can be aligned to its vocational dimension through the concept of divine filiation, the deep sense of being children of God, which was a central theological concept in Escrivá's spirituality.[83] Escrivá recommended that the sense of divine filiation should permeate all activities: prayer, work, leisure... but also the living of the virtues: faith, fortitude, joy, hope..., so that all facets of the Christian life should be impregnated with the idea that God is our Father and treats us with special affection. Sanctifying work as children of God implies a deep sense of 'working at home', as heirs rather than as servants. No one destroys his own house. It is obvious that people working in a family business tend to do their best to improve the legacy of their predecessors and to pass it on, even improved, to the next generation by careful and responsible use.[84] All creation is a gift, a manifestation of a loving Father who manifests himself in the immense diversity of creatures, and who wants us to be His heirs (cf. Rom. 8:17; Gal. 4:7):

> We must try to be children who realize that the Lord, by loving us as his children, has taken us into his house, in the middle of the world, to be members of his family (CPB, n. 64).

The recognition of divine filiation makes the Christian more aware of the gift of Creation, appreciating the wonders that God has prepared for His daughters and sons. Creation is not a storehouse from which each one can take what he wants, moved by own self-interest, but a gift received from our Father

[83] See section 2.2.1. This topic is discussed in detail in chapter 4 of Burkhart and López (2010 - 2013). These authors distinguish two levels of divine filiation, the 'natural' one proper to all humans because of being created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26), and the 'supernatural' one, linked to the forgiveness of original sin received in Baptism. The latter will reach its fullness in Heaven. Escrivá understood the relevance of divine filiation in the second sense.

[84] The parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-32) also includes a teaching on this attitude of working as a son or as a labourer on the father's farm. The older brother is unable to rejoice at his brother's return, because he did not work as a son, but as just another labourer, afraid to enjoy his father's goods, nurturing a resentment built on the melancholy of not being able to enjoy what was really his.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

which we must share with the rest of our brothers and sisters, for all are children of God, and with all other creatures made according to the bounty and generosity of the Creator:

> ...precisely because we are children of God, we can contemplate in love and wonder everything as coming from the hands of our Father, God the Creator. And so we become contemplatives in the middle of the world, loving the world (CPB, n. 65).[85]

In short, work that sanctifies the world must aim to maintain its natural richness, minimising anything that may disturb, let alone destroy, the natural beauty and integrity of ecosystems. This implies that all work that directly affects the transformation of nature must be carried out with care and prudence, avoiding unnecessary disturbance and restoring where necessary. Escrivá's intimate consideration of divine filiation helps to frame the professional activities in the paradigm of continuous creation by considering any transformation of nature in the holistic vision of God's gaze. Working as children of God means working at home, as heirs of a gift received from our Father, but also as brothers and sisters of other creatures, responsible for their care and flourishing.

4.4 Subjective dimension: sanctifying oneself through caring for nature.

The second dimension of Escrivá's theology of work concerns its subjective value, that is, the impact of work activity on the sanctification of the worker. Extending this idea to the recognition of the spiritual value of the natural world, I will develop two aspects: first, how the categories used by Escrivá to seek sanctity at work can be applied to sanctifying oneself within the natural world, in particular the adaptation of his idea of personal conversion to ecological conversion, and second, to what extent the concepts that facilitate sanctifying oneself at work can be extended to a kind of work that cares for nature. In this latter sense, I will explore the second dimension of the Trinitarian perspective of work, conceiving it as co-redeemer, based on the imitation of

[85] As many authors have pointed out, a sense of wonder is the first step in recognising the value of nature (Bouma-Prediger 2019, ch. 2; Carson 1998; Chuvieco 2023). In a recent book, Pope Francis states that 'Beauty is the gateway to ecological awareness'. (Papa Francisco 2020, p. 31).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Christ's hidden life and the coherency that implies living the 'unity of life' in all dimensions of daily activity.

4.4.1 Ecological conversion: personal sanctity and care for creation.

Following Escrivá's proposals, the intention of a Christian who seeks to sanctify oneself by caring for the natural world has similar requirements to those of sanctifying oneself at work: rectitude of intention (seeking God's glory), union with Christ by being contemplative and leading a virtuous life. Adapting these ideas to the sanctification of the natural world involves: firstly, the right intention to care for Creation first and foremost out of love for God, guarding or restoring what He created for the purpose for which He created it; secondly, developing a contemplative attitude in nature by finding the image of God hidden in His Creation; and thirdly, exercising virtues that help us to be more aware of our responsibilities in caring for Creation, thus reducing our environmental impacts and favouring those actions that make it develop according to its original divine purpose. These three aspects fit well in the idea of ecological conversion, developed by Pope Francis in the LS (nn. 216-222) but proposed earlier by John Paul II and endorsed by Benedict XVI.[86]

Conversion is a theological concept which is deeply rooted in the Christian tradition. The adjective ecological implies that the attitudes and visions needed to care for nature must go beyond cosmetic changes. In this sense, the concept of conversion is holistic, including not only the religious component but also the intellectual, moral and psychological dimensions.[87] In essence, a profound conversion, religious conversion being a prime example, involves falling in love, because only love makes behavioural change possible. Escrivá related the process of conversion to divine filiation, which greatly facilitates the process of changing attitudes and behaviour in the conviction that God is our father and will receive a contrite heart with abundant generosity, as the vivid image of the prodigal son parable (Lk. 15:11-32) portrays.[88] 'Awareness that God is our Father

[86] John Paul II was the first to suggest this term in 2001 during a general audience (John Paul II 2001), and two years later included it in an official Vatican document addressed to bishops (John Paul II 2003). For background analysis of Pope Francis' ecological conversion, see Chuvieco (2017).
[87] The different facets of ecological conversion are covered by Ormerod and Vanin (2016), who base their proposal on Lonergan and Doran's concepts.
[88] St Josemaría's main text on conversion is a homily published under the title 'The conversion of the children of God' (CPB, nn. 57-66).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

brings joy to our conversion: it tells us that we are returning to our Father's house' (CPB, n. 64), and therefore the sacrifices required to change sinful attitudes and overcome human weakness acquires a positive and hopeful vision:

> Human life is in some way a constant returning to our Father's house. We return through contrition, through the conversion of heart which means a desire to change, a firm decision to improve our life and which, therefore, is expressed in sacrifice and self-giving (CPB, n. 64).

In the realm of ecology, conversion implies realising, in the words of Ormerod and Vanin, that 'being in love with God opens up the possibility not only of loving God, but of loving all that God loves, and loving as God loves (…therefore) it is a recognition of the sacredness of creation'.[89] In other words, and following Philip Sherrard here, we must rethink ourselves as a species and recuperate the integral sense of nature, material and spiritual, 'recovering a sense of our own holiness (…) and the holiness of the world about us'.[90] Again the idea of ecological conversion based on love for the world easily connects with the proposal of Escrivá to 'passionately love the world' (PLW, n. 118), extending to all creatures his original scope. To love the world is the indispensable foundational basis for caring for it, all the more so when that love is a consequence of love for the One who offers us creation as a gift. If we are to give the task of caring for the world a sanctifying value, it should primarily mean partaking in God's love for all creatures and contributing to their sustenance to give God's glory by their very existence. Out of the love of God, nature can also have an instrumental value, serving the needs of others (humans or not) as an image of God's gift to the world, who sent His Only begotten Son 'so that it may have eternal life' (Jn. 3:15). Sanctifying the world implies, as indicated in section 4.3, aiming to promote those activities that guarantee its maintenance and flourishing, while avoiding those tasks that contradict that purpose, especially when they are based on greed, the pursuit of unjust profit, the selfishness of considering personal interests over the common good.

The second pillar of ecological conversion is prayer. As sanctification of work requires being contemplative at work, following Escrivá's spirituality,

[89] (Ormerod and Vanin 2016, p. 334).
[90] (Sherrard 1992, p. 9).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

sanctification of the natural world also demands a contemplative attitude towards nature, finding God in His creative work, recognizing its spiritual dimension. Since 'all things have been created through him and for him' (Col. 1:17), nature is also a sacrament of Christ, who became incarnate in the materiality of human flesh to redeem the world and all its creatures. This apophatic presence of God in nature is reflected in numerous passages of Sacred Scripture, from Elijah's encounter with Yahweh on Mount Horeb (1 Ki., 19:12) to the Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor (Mt., 17: 1-9). It is also evident in the contemplative tradition of nature in Christianity, from the early Church (St Basil, St Augustine) to the mystics of all ages: from Isaac of Nineveh in the 7th century to St Francis in the 12th, from St John of the Cross in the 16th century to St Charles Foucauld or Thomas Merton in the 20th.[91]

The presence of nature in Christian contemplation is also evident in the many sacred places (monasteries, sanctuaries, hermitages, etc.) built and maintained for centuries in the context of beautiful natural landscapes,[92] because Christianity has always recognised that 'every part of creation has the potential to become a medium through which God can speak to us, can meet with us'.[93] Finally, encountering Christ in the natural world through the contemplation of its beauties is also present in the writings of the recent Magisterium of the Church.[94] For example, John Paul II indicated that 'to contemplate creation is to hear a message, to listen to a paradoxical and silent voice'[95]; Benedict XVI indicated that 'In nature, the believer recognises the marvellous result of God's creative activity',[96] while Pope Francis recalls that 'contemplation of creation allows us to discover in each thing a teaching which God wishes to

[91] I have discussed the relationship of these Christian mystics and natural contemplation in a recent book chapter (Chuvieco 2023). Johan Paffhausen (2013) reviews the meaning of natural contemplation within the Orthodox tradition, while John Anthony McGuckin (2013) presents the ideas of St. Gregory of Nazianzus on this question, and Christina M. Gschwandtner (2013) discusses the connections with nature of the liturgies related to Mary.
[92] Not only Christian shrines, but also those of other religious traditions. The importance of these sacred sites for nature conservation was reinforced by the creation of a special commission within *the International Union for Conservation of Nature* to study the spiritual and cultural values of protected areas (Mallarach 2012).
[93] (Osborn 1993, p. 156).
[94] Groppe (2017) offers a brief analysis of this contemplative tradition within Christianity and its repercussions in the LS encyclical letter.
[95] (John Paul II 2001).
[96] (Benedict XVI 2009, n. 48).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

hand on to us' (LS, n. 85), since each creature 'reflects in its own way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness' (LS, n. 69).

Escrivá often used the expression 'our cell is the street' to encourage those following his charism to live a contemplative life, as profound as that of a monk in his cell, on the street, in the midst of their ordinary activities, to become 'contemplative souls by maintaining a constant conversation with God and not breaking it off at any time of the day' (FoG, n. 238). This is a practical manifestation of what Escriva's 'unity of life' (see 3.3.3) implies. If Escrivá foresaw that a contemplative life is compatible with the noisy streets of big cities, it is even more so in the peaceful quiet of natural landscapes. Finding God in nature is related to praising God together with nature and through nature, following a rich Christian literature of cosmic praise (Ps. 19, 96, 148, Dan. 3), part of which St Josemaría suggested to recite daily.[97]

The third component of the subjective dimension of seeking holiness in caring for nature is the practice of virtues. In 3.2.2 I have briefly reviewed the main virtues that foster sanctification at work (fortitude, frugality, attention, humility). All of them are relevant in the pursuit of personal sanctification in the natural world. Human virtues were a key component of St Josemaría's message, who stressed that grace improves the natural condition, but it does not eliminate it: 'because human virtues constitute the foundation for the supernatural virtues' (CPB, n. 74). In his view, the personal struggle to acquire virtuous habits and reject vices was part of personal sanctification, always connected to the sanctifying action of the Holy Spirit.

In terms of environmental impact, different authors have demonstrated how a virtuous life is linked to a lower environmental footprint, even if the practitioners do not have an environmental motivation.[98] Other authors have

[97] He recommended to use the hymn *Trium Puerorum* as thanksgiving prayer after Mass. This liturgical hymn comes from an ancient Catholic tradition, rooted in the 9th century, which includes the Benedicite section of the book of Daniel (chapter 3), plus a section of Psalm 150. Both call on all creatures to praise God. The hymn was included in several editions of the Roman Missal, notably in the early 20th century edition, where it was placed as an official prayer of thanksgiving after Mass, until it was removed from the obligatory prayers in 1962. In 1950 Escrivá suggested including the recitation of this hymn in all OD oratories after the celebration of Mass (https://opusdei.org/en/article/a-song-of-praise-and-love-the-trium-puerorum/, last accessed November 2023).

[98] (Deane-Drummond 2019; Kureethadam 2016; Orellano et al. 2020). In the same vein, I agree with Pope Francis that 'only by cultivating sound virtues will people be able to make a selfless ecological commitment' (LS, n. 211).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

shown how different Christian traditions offer relevant spiritual resources to undertake ecological conversion. For example, the Benedictine spirituality supported very important environmental virtues; humility, stability and frugality.[99] A review by Mallarach and others on the ecological implications of the lifestyle of Christian monastic and eremitical communities, both in the Catholic and Orthodox traditions,[100] presented an overwhelming positive impact on the lands managed by these coenobitic communities, including several examples of areas long managed by monasteries that have been declared and protected natural areas (the case of Mount Athos is particularly emblematic). Most monasteries have traditionally lived off the land they cultivate, so the conservation of forests, water and soil is fundamental to their very survival: the concept of sustainability of this regard was developed by these monasteries well before it was proposed in recent documents.[101]

Obviously, the lifestyle of monasteries cannot be replicated by lay Christians, who have family, professional and social responsibilities that prevent them from living ascetic practices alike those of religious communities. However, the virtues that lie behind the vocation of monks or nuns are common to all Christians and should therefore be lived by all, with the necessary adaptations to personal circumstances. The lay spirituality proposed by Escrivá combines a deep commitment to live those virtues with an appropriate adaptation to the secular activities that make up the ordinary life of lay people. Frugality, humility, generosity, fortitude were a substantial component of Escrivá's message, as they should be for any Christian spirituality, but he tried to accommodate them to the daily circumstances of the lay faithful. By way of illustration, he recommended that parents live the virtue of poverty at home by avoiding superfluous expenses linked to personal whims or indulgences, by taking care that things for personal use last, by eating or drinking soberly, by avoiding the waste of food: in short, a host of seemingly small actions that promote a more

[99] Kardong (1994).
[100] (Mallarach et al. 2014).
[101] Sam Berry (2007b) edited a book developing different dimensions of sustainability, with the first chapter explaining the roots of this concept in international agreements (Berry 2007a).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

sober lifestyle, which necessarily contrasts with a materialistic view of existence in which happiness tends to be equated with the possession of material goods.

Along these lines, Silvia Albareda presented a recent analysis of the virtues promoted by St Josemaria's spirituality, in dialogue with the LS and the modern concept of sustainability.[102] She highlights the practical application of his ideas on what she calls 'ecology of the daily life', especially through the exercise of certain virtues: frugality, being compatible with creating gentle and family atmospheres in the residences of OD, proper care of the objects used, reutilising them when possible, avoiding unnecessary expenses...

> ...one of the signs that we're aware of being lords of the earth and God's faithful administrators is the care we take of the things we use: keeping them in good condition, making them last and getting the best out of them so that they serve their purpose for as long a time as possible and don't go to waste (FoG, n. 122).

Albareda considers that these virtues are rooted in Escrivá's core ideas of loving the world passionately and showing love in the ordinary details of everyday life. Although the main reason for living these virtues may not be ecological but rather be caused by the desire of imitating Christ's example, avoiding superfluous spending and making good use of the material resources at hand has an important influence on the environmental impact of those who follow this spirit.

This would be a good example of integration between sanctification and care for nature, living a Christian virtue, poverty, which entails a detachment from material goods, considering them as means, not ends, to reach perfection. Poverty for a Christian is not an economic situation, but a free choice to live a sober life, imitating the lifestyle of Christ, who had 'nowhere to lay his head' (Mt., 8:20). For someone living amidst the world, this implies mastering the material means at one's disposal, detaching oneself from earthly goods, to set one's

[102] (Albareda-Tiana 2023). The author exchanged the original text with me, and we have some discussions on the contents, and consequently there are similarities with my own reflection here. With a different orientation, Guillem Derville (2015b) published a study showing potential connections between Escrivá's spirituality and the encyclical LS. He focused on the ecological importance of work, as well as Escriva's spiritual appreciation of all material realities (reminding readers here the concept of ChM taken from the Navarre homily), particularly vivid in the sacrament of Eucharist.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

heart on God and others, rather than on seeking material wealth as an end in itself. In Escrivá's approach, this voluntary detachment from material goods is compatible with living in the midst of the world:

> The ordinary Christian has to reconcile two aspects in his life that may at first seem contradictory. There is on the one hand, true poverty, which is obvious and tangible and made up of definite things. This poverty should be an expression of faith in God and a sign that the heart is not satisfied with created things and aspires to the Creator; that it wants to be filled with love of God so as to be able to give this same love to everyone. On the other hand, an ordinary Christian is and wants to be one more amongst his fellow men, sharing their way of life, their joys and happiness; working with them, loving the world and all the good things that exist in it; using all created things to solve the problems of human life and to establish a spiritual and material environment which will foster personal and social development (CMEB, n. 110). [103]

The ecological importance of the virtues, especially sobriety, frugality, simplicity of life, detachment or poverty, whatever one wants to call it, has been stressed by various ecotheologians, including examples from the Protestant, Orthodox and Catholic tradition, as well as by environmental pioneers, such as Thoreau or Marsh.[104] I consider particularly relevant for my argument, the exposition of Joshtrom I. Kureethadam and Steven Bouma-Prediger on this regard. The former published a review of ecological virtues that should accompany the ecological conversion proposed by LS.[105] He identified praise (aligned to cosmic wonder), gratitude (particularly evidenced in the Holy Eucharist), care (for other human beings and the rest of creatures), justice (minding the impacts of nature degradation on the most vulnerable people), work (oriented towards caring for creation and for other persons), sobriety (refraining from

[103] Escrivá did not consider the pursuit of wealth to be an intrinsic evil, but he warned against considering it as the ultimate goal of human existence. In his view, poverty and detachment were compatible with an ordinary life and a reasonable use of material goods in accordance with one's professional and social status.
[104] Thoreau wrote in 1854: 'Most of the luxuries and many of the comforts of life are not only not indispensable, but positive obstacles to the upliftment of humanity. The more of these things you have, the poorer you are (Thoreau 1854, p. 8). A few years later, George Perkins Marsh stated: 'Man has too long forgotten that the earth was given to him only for usufruct, not for consumption, still less for waste' (Marsh 1864, p. 36). Dorothy Sayers wrote in 1940: 'A society in which consumption has to be artificially stimulated in order to keep production going is a society founded on trash and waste, and such a society is a house built upon sand'. (Sayers 1940, 3/33), and Pope Francis in 2015: 'Christian spirituality proposes an alternative understanding of the quality of life, and encourages a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption' (LS, n. 222).
[105] (Kureethadam 2016).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

unbridled consumption), and humility (to accept our own creatureliness and the limits of the planet). A few years later, Bouma-Prediger devoted a book to an analysis of what he calls ecological virtues, which he considers essential for ecological conversion.[106] In his opinion, following the ethical tradition of Aristotle, the most important thing is not so much what we should do, but what kind of person we want to become, and for this it is necessary to have stable habits that enrich us internally, that improve our character. He highlights the sense of wonder and humility to accept the natural beauty that surrounds us and seek its conservation; self-discipline and prudence to make the right decisions with the information at hand; justice and love to take into account all sides of an issue, in particular the most vulnerable one; and courage and hope, to change whatever is necessary when the maintenance of the essential elements for the life of ecosystems is at stake.

Living virtuously has many implications in everyday life: saving energy at home by switching off unnecessary lights or appliances or minimising artificial air conditioning; reducing transport emissions by using public transport, electric mobility (trains, cars) or human propulsion (bicycles, walking); minimizing the food footprint, by avoiding waste, consuming local products, reducing red meat intake or eating organic food, and above all by eliminating superfluous consumption.[107] All of these aspects entail sacrifice and self-denial, because ecological conversion should be translated into concrete actions and therefore will affect us personally. These individual commitments pave the way for the social changes that will ultimately make it possible to generalise those habits to the society as a whole. Thus, ecological conversion implies a responsibility that leads to explicit and relevant transformations in the way we relate to the natural world.

For Pope Francis, 'ecological conversion' encompasses multiple dimensions of our existence: it implies '…a distinctive way of looking at things, a way of

[106] (Bouma-Prediger 2019).

[107] There is an ample literature on calculating environmental footprint of our ordinary consumption, which is the main responsible of global nature degradation. In the realm of climate change, for example, the calculation of carbon footprint is widely extended (Salo et al. 2019; Spaiser et al. 2019), having positive effects to induce people's behaviour change (Poortinga et al. 2019; Sala and Castellani 2019), as well as to understand their motivation to undertake that change (Chuvieco et al. 2021; Orellano and Chuvieco 2022).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

thinking, policies, an educational programme, a lifestyle and a spirituality' (LS, n. 111). In this regard, it entails a comprehensive understanding of conversion, closely linked to sanctification. Escrivá also reconciled the two concepts, implying that sanctification is perseverance in the first conversion: 'Conversion is the matter of a moment. Sanctification is the work of a lifetime' (TW, n. 285). Ecological conversion implies a change in our way of thinking that should be extended in time. The theological concept of sanctification extends the idea of conversion to a lifestyle that perdures, with inner victories and defeats: the struggle for sanctification is compatible with the acceptance of human weaknesses, but also with stable habits (that is what virtues are), which implies a life-long commitment. Without this spiritual component, we will remain immersed in a materialistic view of other creatures, who will only be viewed as a resource for economic activity, for our own interests. Education must play a fundamental role in this change of worldview, by fostering a sense of belonging to a common home, to a web of life in which all elements are necessary for the functioning of the whole. Educating for ecological conversion involves cultivating its different dimensions, encouraging the learner to reflect on one's own values, prejudices and limitations in order to change behaviour.[108] Indeed, this process of conversion implies both a change of vision and a change of conduct, which is closely linked to virtues.

4.4.2 Sanctifying nature through co-redemptive work.

The second part of this section aims to show what kind of work makes it possible to sanctify the worker while at the same time caring for creation. I recall here some of the ideas proposed by Escrivá on the subjective dimension of work (see 3.2.2), extending their ecotheological implications. The main question I answer here refers to the implications of working with care for creation in the subjective dimension of work (that is in the task of sanctifying oneself at work). Following my Trinitarian proposal, I develop here the dimension of being co-redeemers at work, which expresses the contribution of human labour to sanctifying the world and to giving 'back to matter and to the most trivial

[108] Timothy Hanchin and Christy L. Hearlson (2020) develop some educational proposals to stimulate ecological conversion in universities.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

occurrences and situations their noble and original meaning' (PLW, n. 114).[109] St Josemaría mentioned frequently the co-redemptive character of all facets of the Christian life, but primarily work. Following a long Catholic tradition, he stressed that God wants the collaboration of human beings in the Redemption of humanity, because He needs the free acceptance of Grace by each person. We read in the Gospel that Jesus used even the minor contribution of a boy (five loaves and two fishes) to feed multitudes (Cfr. Jn. 6:8; also Mt. 14:17 & 15:34; Mk. 6:38; and Lk. 9:13). Similarly, Escrivá considered that human work, done with love to God and in service of others, regardless its social relevance, had a co-redemptive value, which efficiently contributes to the Redemption operated by Christ:

> Because, done in this way, this human work, however humble and insignificant the task may seem, contributes to the Christian ordering of temporal realities —to manifesting their divine dimension— and is assumed and integrated into the prodigious work of Creation and the Redemption of the world: work is thus elevated to the order of grace, is sanctified, becomes the work of God (CMEB, n. 10).[110]

The co-redeeming implications of human work have been developed by other Catholic theologians, particularly when they are based on a greater appreciation of the theology of Creation, after many decades of a perhaps excessive interest in personal salvation, which somehow marginalised the interest in the theology of Creation and, consequently, in the theology of work.[111] In the

[109] By co-redemption I mean the participation in Christ's redemptive mission to open the possibility of personal salvation, closed by the Fall. Co-redemption does not mean in this theological perspective the transformation of nature to human purposes, as Francis Bacon and other precursors of modern anthropocentrism seemed to suggest. According to Kureethadam (2017), who dedicated an extended chapter to Bacon in his analysis of the philosophical roots of the ecological crisis (pp. 47-84), Bacon 'saw in the hitherto unprecedented means offered by science and industry as a way to regain the dominion over the natural world conferred on humanity by God in Genesis and which humanity had forfeited as a result of the Fall' (p. 64). Another critical view of Bacon's impact on anthropocentric approach to nature is offered by Jordi Pigem (2006).

[110] Aranda following Escrivá's ChM links human redemption and the renovation of the material creation, as only the faithful who escapes from alienation of sin and recuperates his-her creatural condition can restore the effects of sin on the natural world: 'The material creation shines again with all its original beauty, gives up all its meaning, before the redeemed man. It shows itself as the home that creative Love made for man, a home that with us is on its way to the ultimate and mysterious perfection' (Aranda 1987, p. 293).

[111] This is the argument of Sanz-Sánchez (2018, 2019), a secondary scholar of Escrivá. He and other authors have pointed out that bringing together work and religion requires reinforcing the connection between creation and Redemption, 'because creation is the bridge that links work and Redemption' (Sanz-Sánchez 2018, p. 170). Among other early Fathers, St. Irenaeus (180), in his

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

conception of the early Church, the *'imitatio Christi'*, had above all an eschatological dimension, which allowed workers to be considered as *'co-operarii'* in the redemptive work of Christ, 'thus every kind of work was reconsidered as means whereby humankind participated in the economy of salvation'.[112] For modern Catholic theologians, the redemptive dimension of work is generally linked to Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. For example, Gustave Thils considered that professional activities can be a vehicle for transmitting Christ's redemptive mission,[113] while John Paul II presented the effort associated with different professional tasks as an occasion to unite oneself to the Cross of Christ (LE, n. 27), echoing in this respect GeS (n. 67). José Todolí also linked the toil that all works involves to the Cross of Christ, thus acquiring a co-redemptive efficacy:

> The value of fatigue, of the little pain that human suffering brings with it, truly becomes the greatest of values, the redemptive value of Christ's passion.[114]

Although Escrivá also related the co-redemptive dimension of work to the Cross of Christ through his inspiration of 'putting Christ at the summit of all human activities' (see 3.3.1), he most often related it to the working life of Jesus in Nazareth, a period of His life that Escrivá greatly appreciated because it showed the spiritual value of ordinary life, in this case the working life of Christ (see 3.3.2). He stressed that Christ's redemptive character encompasses his whole life, not just the Passion and Resurrection.[115] Thus, the work of ordinary Christians, united to the work of Christ through prayer, sacrifice and the struggle to live the virtues in the professional environment where each one carries out his-her activity, can also properly be called co-redeemer. In short, work can be redemptive when it is united with the work of Jesus, thus uniting Crea-

response to the Gnostic authors, stressed the continuity between God the Creator and Redeemer. The co-redeeming character of work is absent in Protestant theologians because of their view on justification from '*sole fide*', not from human actions (Sanz-Sánchez 2018).

[112] (Barsella 2014, p. 56).

[113] (Thils 1947).

[114] (Todolí 1952, p. 579).

[115] '...since Christ took it into his hands, work has become for us a redeemed and redemptive reality' (CPB, n. 47). 'We have come to call attention once again to the example of Jesus, who spent thirty years in Nazareth, working as a carpenter. In his hands, a professional occupation, similar to that carried out by millions of people all over the world, was turned into a divine task. It became a part of our Redemption, a way to salvation' (CMEB, n. 55). See also CPB, n. 14 and TF, n. 702.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

tion and Redemption, since both manifest God's Trinitarian love for His creatures, which in Christ will find their eschatological destiny, being drawn to His Cross through the help of human work. In the words of Escrivá:

> Through his incarnation, through his work at Nazareth and his preaching and miracles in the land of Judea and Galilee, through his death on the cross, and through his resurrection, Christ is the centre of the universe, the firstborn and Lord of all creation (CBP, n. 105).

If being co-redeemers involves imitating the life of Christ, pursuing a co-redemptive work implies procuring personal holiness by imitating the working life of Jesus and living the 'unity of life' —joining work and contemplation— in all professional activities. For example, in commenting the importance of the virtue of diligence for sanctifying one's work, Escrivá reflected over the care of details that Christ would put in His work:

> 'Diligent' comes from the verb 'diligo', which means to love, to appreciate, to choose something after careful consideration and attention. The diligent man does not rush into things. He does his work thoughtfully and lovingly. Our Lord, perfect man in every way, chose a manual trade and carried it out attentively and lovingly for almost the entirety of the years he spent on this earth (FoG, n. 81).

For the purposes of this chapter, a co-redemptive work implies considering that personal sanctification should be linked to the care of creation that Jesus put in his work. St Josemaría never commented on this aspect, but it is quite reasonable to imagine that Christ's work would be done with full and gentle concern of all creatures in proper appreciation of His Father's creative work. Since there are no biblical accounts from those working years of Jesus at Nazaret, we can only infer from other Gospel verses what would that work be like. Jesus grew up in a modest family of limited means, so we can assume that He had a sense of avoiding unnecessary expenditure and making good use of the resources available. A significant detail along these lines is found in the scene of the multiplication of the fish and the loaves. After feeding a large crowd, Jesus asked the disciples to gather up the leftovers (cf. Jn. 6:12-13), so that nothing was wasted: he who needed only a few resources to feed a multitude did not want anything to be wasted, most likely to make us aware of the value of food. In the same way, being a carpenter together with Joseph, he surely cut down those trees that were necessary for the various devices they were asked

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

to build, leaving enough individuals for their natural regeneration. In the Gospels, we have testimony of Jesus' sensitivity to understand the natural cycles and to draw spiritual teachings from agricultural activities, which were commonly referred to in His preaching. He knew well the signs to predict weather conditions (Lk. 12:54-55; Lk. 21:29-31), He appreciated the beauty of lilies and other wild plants (Mt. 6:28-29), He frequently told parables related to agricultural tasks: the wine and the branches (Jn. 15:5), the sower (Mt. 13:1-9), the mustard tree (Mt. 13:31), the wheat and the tares (Mt. 13:24-31), and many others, and explained God's providence to humankind with the example of the sparrows (Lk. 12:6-7). From these expressions it may be inferred that Christ's kind and compassionate character applied also to His dealings with non-human creatures.[116]

It is also noteworthy that the testimonies of his prayer mentioned in the Gospels took place in natural settings ('He went up into the mountain by himself to pray': Mt. 14:23; Mk. 6:46; Lk. 6:12; Lk. 9:28) and in the garden of Gethsemane (Mt. 26:36; Mk. 14:32; Lk. 22:39), not in the Temple, although He also went there to offer ritual sacrifices. In short, a co-redemptive work should imitate Jesus' appreciation for the nature with which he lived. Likewise, striving for personal holiness at work implies that, in addition to being fully imbued with love of God and service to others, a sanctifying work should aspire to care for Creation, helping to maintain or develop it according to its original destiny.

While we do not have many references to natural environments in Escrivá's preaching; there is evidence that he commented often on the same natural parables of Jesus,[117] drawing spiritual meaning from their implications for ordinary life, though without explicit reference to their environmental implications. However, since he recommended working with the example of Jesus' work, one should aspire to work with a similar appreciation of the natural world as Jesus',

[116] However, the Gospel presents a striking example of the opposite when Jesus, a few days before his Passion, curses a fig tree because it did not bear fruit (Mt. 21:19-21), but this should be understood as an image of the unfaithfulness of the chosen people, which offered only apparent fruits. Escrivá commented this gospel verse referring to the need of making good use of our time: 'Don't forget the fig tree cursed by our Lord. And it was doing something: sprouting leaves. Like you... Don't tell me you have excuses. It availed the fig tree little, relates the Evangelist. that it was not the season for figs when our Lord came to it to look for them. And barren it remained for ever' (TW, n. 354).

[117] FU 677; TF, n. 464; CPB, n. 123, 147, 150, 180, among many others.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

offering the sacrifices and joys of the labour as a participation in the Redemptive mission of Christ.

> Our Lord has given us as a present our very lives, our senses, our faculties, and countless graces. We have no right to forget that each of us is a worker, one among many, on this plantation where He has placed us to cooperate in the task of providing food for others. This is our place, here within the boundaries of this plantation. Here is where we have to toil away each day with Jesus, helping him in his work of redemption (FoG, n. 49).

If we accept that Adam's sin affected all creatures (4.3.1), we should conclude that Redemption is also universal. Therefore, the co-redemptive dimension of work must also affect all creatures, not only human beings. Christ, through His obedience to the Father's will restored humanity (cf. Rom. 5: 17), but also the non-human creation, to its original state, albeit in a mysterious way, for the consequences of sin are still present. This implies that by striving for sanctification through the professional activity (obviously with the Grace of God and united to the redemptive mission of Christ), one participates in some way in the restoration of nature, although the rest of creatures still depend on our correspondence to the will of God, as indicated in 4.3.1. In other words, through our struggle to work with care for nature, we are helping the sanctification of all creatures, bring them to their final destination ('to sum up in Christ all things, things in heaven and things on earth' (Eph. 1:10), giving rise to the 'new heaven and the new earth' (cfr. Rev 21:1), since:

> Redemption does not mean the annihilation of creation but rather its renewal. Salvation is not escape from the earth but the reclamation of the earth.[118]

This eschatological character of nature redemption is portrayed vividly in this messianic paragraph from Isaiah, which implies that violence and suffering in nature will end at the consummation of times:

> Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; The calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them. The cow and the bear shall be neighbours, together their young shall rest; the lion shall eat hay like the ox. The baby shall play by the cobra's den, and the child lay his hand on the adder's lair. There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy

[118] (Bouma-Prediger 2010, 103).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

> mountain; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the Lord (Is. 11:6-9).[119]

However, the co-redemptive dimension of work does not only have an eschatological character, but also means to be realised in our everyday professional circumstances, linking here the subjective and relational dimension of work. The restorative dimension of work (see 4.5.2) is a critical component of achieving personal holiness in the midst of professional activities, as it is clearly linked to working with right intention (returning creatures to give due glory to their Creator), in union with Him through contemplation of nature at work, and exercising virtues that ensure that work is an earthcaring activity.

This attitude is most evident in those tasks that have a direct impact on the natural world: agriculture, fishing, stockbreeding, mining, forestry, public works, etc., but it can have indirect applications in all other jobs. On this point, we can unite the sanctification at work advocated by Escrivá with that of Simone Weil, who considered the spiritual dimension to be essential to finding a deeper meaning in all professional activities.[120] In her view, such a spiritual connection would be more easily achieved in agricultural activities, as they better connect human effort and the potentials of nature. Rural activities, such as farming and animal husbandry, involve being dependent on natural cycles (rain and drought, heat and cold waves) or even on catastrophic events (hail, floods, storms), and are therefore naturally more oriented than urban jobs towards adapting to forces one cannot control, rather than to imposing one's own. Traditional liturgical practices within the Judeo-Christian tradition have stressed the connection with agricultural cycles, particularly in the harvesting.

Sanctifying oneself in the work of caring for God's creation implies in this area helping nature to provide the fruits that help human and other creatures' needs. The more natural this help is, the less negative damage the earth will suffer from these needs. For example, organic farming has already shown remarkable advantages over industrial farming, both in terms of natural and so-

[119] Several theologians of work have developed this eschatological perspective (Cosden 2006, 2018; Moltmann 1993; Volf 1991).
[120] 'Our age has its own particular mission, or vocation -the creation of a civilization founded upon the spiritual nature of work'. (Weil 1952, p. 96) quoted by Hanson (2022, p. 193).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

cial conditions, promoting local employment and stability for people. The opposite extreme would be a 'hyper-technified' agricultural production, including the use of genetically modified organisms and massive chemical inputs, which, in addition to environmental pollution, tends to create economic and cultural dependence on external actors, often resulting in the impoverishment and abandonment of traditional rural communities.[121] It is not so much a matter of preventing any forest from becoming a cultivated area, but rather of ensuring that land is not exploited with short-term profit intention, without due regard for its biophysical limitations and the social good of the people who depend on that land. History offers many examples of the human abuse of land and the consequent mass impoverishment of peasants.[122] Much less notorious, but of greater global concern, is the increasing contamination of soils and waters by over-fertilisation, which according to different experts is already exceeding planetary boundaries, and the use of pesticides that are impacting on many natural organisms as well as human health.[123]

In the case of other professional activities that have little or no direct connection with nature, the sanctification of the worker should involve consideration of the indirect impacts that the activity may cause on the environment, seeking to avoid unnecessary transformations of nature, and being sensitive to God's original design for the living organisms that will be affected by the work itself.[124]

Along with a contemplative dialogue with God amidst professional activities, the sanctification of work with an attitude of care for the nature implies,

[121] Vandana Shiva is perhaps one of the most active authors in denouncing this type of highly technical agriculture, both in its social and environmental impacts (Shiva 1991). Albareda-Tiana (2010) dedicated her doctoral thesis to this author. The pioneer approach to globalization of Ernst Schumacher (1973) still provides a lucid analysis of its negative impacts on the most vulnerable people.

[122] The Dust Bowl of the 1930s, the collapse of the Mayan or Easter Island civilisations are examples of such catastrophic events (Hart 1984).

[123] The concept of planetary boundaries (values that keep the Earth system functioning as we know it now) and tipping points (thresholds above or below which the system may experience abrupt changes) has been explored by several scientists in the last decade (Rockström et al. 2009; Steffen et al. 2015; Steffen et al. 2018).

[124] See 4.3.2. Quoting Aquinas, Meyer (1997) states: 'If God is at work in all created substances in a general form of concurrence, it stands to reason that his action is even more effective when man freely chooses to work for God. Moreover, man's unique nature allows him to discern God's designs and thereby contribute directly to creation by doing his will; this is a new and important feature of the subjective dimension of work'.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

as indicated earlier, living Christian virtues, particularly those that directly affect the environmental impacts of our labour. If on a personal level frugality, fortitude, humility and generosity are basic attitudes for the sanctification of work, they are also fundamental in developing the co-redemptive dimension of work that procures the sanctification of all creatures. Imitating Christ's example, frugality in work implies using those means required to do it well, avoiding superfluous consumption of goods and/or energy; fortitude is necessary to oppose those tasks that would severely degrade nature, as well as to maintain one's commitment to high environmental standards, particularly when pragmatic considerations may tend to marginalise them for short-term economic benefits; humility implies the ability to learn from others how work can be more environmentally friendly, but also from natural processes, often done more efficiently and harmlessly than artificial transformations, such as in ways of generating energy or reusing surplus materials.[125] Finally, generosity and selflessness are key to considering the impact of personal actions on co-workers and the rest of society:

> The basic attitude of self-transcendence, breaking through isolated consciousness and self-referentiality, is the root that makes all care for others and the environment possible, and that brings about the moral reaction to consider the impact of every action and every personal decision outside oneself' (LS, n. 208).

4.5 Relational dimension: sanctifying with nature.

The relational aspect of Escrivá's theology of work implies that professional activities can also be an occasion to sanctify others, through prayer, friendship and good example. By others he meant other human beings, but I extend here this idea to non-human creatures, who also participate in Christ's redemption and thus in its final consummation (see 4.4.2). Similar to what I did for the intrinsic and subjective dimensions of work, I develop two closely related aspects of the impacts of the relational dimension in ecotheology: on the one hand, I explore how the idea of sanctifying others through work can be applied to sanctifying others through nature, including non-human creatures, and, on

[125] A whole new field of research and industrial design, named biomimetics, aims to imitate natural processes, assuming that they are more efficient and sustainable. There are already several specialised journals on this topic, as well as dedicated books (Habib and Martín-Gómez 2021; Primrose 2020).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

the other hand, I reflect on what kind of work makes it possible to sanctify them through our professional activities. In the first case, I shall comment on the theological concept of 'priests of Creation', used in recent decades to underline the role of humankind in glorifying God along with the rest of creation, associating it with the idea of the common priesthood and priestly soul proposed by Escrivá. On the other hand, I will reflect on the consideration of work as 'co-sanctifier', linking our labour to the sanctifying action of the Holy Spirit.

4.5.1 Priests of Creation: returning creatures to the Creator.

As I have indicated in 4.2.2, several authors consider that the union of 'abodah' and 'samar' in Gen. 2:15 indicates a certain priestly vocation of Adam.[126] Beyond the discussion on whether this hypothesis can be sustained biblically, Adam's work could be considered as a sacred activity because it was received from God as a vocational call to develop the potentialities of the land where he stayed (to cultivate and take care of the garden), hence Adam's role in relation to the earth can be connected with the concept of common priesthood, helping to bring land to its perfection. This theological category was strongly emphasised by Escrivá (see 2.2.1), within the lay spirituality he tried to promote, based on recalling the relevance of Baptism to partake in the main offices (*munera*) of Christ (Priest, Prophet and King).[127] He stressed that all the faithful become priests when they receive this sacrament and have the vocation to strive for holiness, but also the responsibility to help others to attain it, to be able to consecrate the world to God, to unite themselves to the priesthood of Christ who renews all things and brings them to their fullness.

> All things on earth, even the material creatures, even the earthly and temporal activities of men, are to be brought to God — and now, after sin, redeemed, reconciled — each according to its own nature, according to the immediate end which God has given it, but knowing how to see its ultimate supernatural destiny in Jesus Christ (Letter 19.03.1954, n. 7).

[126] (Bergsma 2018; Hahn 2006; Shott 2022). Morrow (2009) dedicates his paper to analyse the liturgical significance of the first chapters of Gen., concluding that Adam (in fact all human beings) was created for liturgical worship.
[127] I indicated in the historical context of ChM that the development of common priesthood in the Church occurred mostly in the first decades of the 20th century, mainly from the impulse of Paul Davin in France, contemporary of Escrivá, and the previous works of Newman and Mohler.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

The common priesthood (substantially differentiated in Catholic theology from the ministerial priesthood) involves attentive care for others, procuring their spiritual and material well-being, while offering to God the joys and conflicts of daily life, returning all things to him, consecrating them, that is making them holy. This is the essence of the relational dimension of work as conceived by Escrivá, but it is also applicable to many other circumstances of daily life:

> Let us ask our king today to make us collaborate, humbly and fervently, in the divine task of mending what is broken, of saving what is lost, of fixing what man has put out of order, of bringing to its destination whoever has gone off the right road, of reconstructing the harmony of all created things (CPB, n. 183).

Following the concept of 'unity of life' (see 3.3.3), which leads to a giving of coherence to the whole day in an attitude that unites contemplation and action in ordinary life, St Josemaría suggests that the best way to express the common priesthood of the faithful is through the 'priestly soul',[128] which implies the desire to turn all activities into an occasion to give glory to God, consecrating them (making them holy), while at the same time encouraging, through prayer and sincere service to all, friends, companions, relatives and acquaintances to draw closer to God:

> Live and work for God, with a spirit of love and service, with a priestly soul, even though you may not be a priest. Then all your actions will take on a genuine supernatural meaning which will keep your whole life united to the source of all graces (TF, n. 369).

Although Escrivá referred the priestly soul to the eagerness to bring other people closer to God, I argue that this concept can be extended, without distorting its content, to the concern to sanctify other creatures. In fact, it is worth remembering that one of the central ideas of Escrivá's ChM is the attraction of all things to the Cross of Christ through the ordinary activities of Christians, particularly through work. In the inspiration he received in 1931, indicating that Christ's exaltation would come about when he were lifted up on the Cross through the faithful work of his followers ('si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia

[128] Escrivá complemented this concept with that of 'lay outlook', forming the two faces of the common priesthood proper to all lay people.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

traham and meipsum': Jn., 12:32), Escrivá quoted John's verse using the old Vulgate translation (the standard Catholic version at the time) which used the word 'omnia' (all things, *τα παντα* instead of the current translation of 'omnes' (all people, *παντας*) (see 3.3.1). 'Omnia' was the term that Escrivá always used when referring to that inspiration, and building on this, the participation of all creatures in the exaltation of Christ comes to a logical conclusion. In fact, in one of his accounts of this inspiration, he explained its significance by pointing out that all Christians should participate in this exaltation of the Cross of Christ by bringing all things to God:

> ...through ordinary work in all the tasks of the world, it was necessary to reconcile the earth with God, so that the profane — even if profane — would become sacred, consecrated to God, the ultimate end of all things (Letter 9.01.1932, n. 2).

Thus, St Josemaría translated this divine inspiration in the sense that all things would be attracted to the Cross of Christ by a sanctified and sanctifier work, so through professional activities the earth would be reconciled with its Creator, placing the Cross of Christ at the summit of all human activities. The final phrase of Escrivá's quotation is particularly relevant, for it indicates that everything will be sanctified by the actions of the children of God united to the Crucified: all things, 'even if profane', would end up being consecrated by those actions, inasmuch as they are intimately linked to the sacrifice of Christ.[129]

The common priesthood and the ecological priesthood are grounded in the relational dimension between God and all human beings proposed by St Josemaría, extended by different theologians to the rest of creatures.[130] In fact, it refers to the ontological relationship that unites all creatures and reinforces the 'environmental empathy' that unite us to all material creatures (see 4.3.1). This theological principle reinforces the ecological interdependence of all living organisms, which maintains the functioning of the ecosystem through the mutual interaction of all its components. We know enough about the flows that

[129] A similar text illustrates this vocation of the priestly soul to promote the restoration of the world to its original creative purpose: 'We love the world because God made it good, because it is perfect out of his hands, and because — if some men sometimes make it ugly and bad, through sin — we have the duty to consecrate it, to bring it, to restore it to God' (Letter 19.03.1954, n. 6).
[130] This is the main argument of Zizioulas (Chryssavgis and Asproulis 2021), also covered by pope Francis in LS (n. 68-69).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

keep the various ecosystems alive to confirm that human existence depends on the proper operation of the other elements that make them up. The quality of the air, water and food that keep us alive is intimately related to the maintenance of the natural functionalities that also sustain all other living things. Without plants, there would be no photosynthesis and therefore no food production, nor would there be an atmosphere to keep the earth's temperature in a range that allows life to flourish.

The 'priestly soul' in St Josemaría's vision is thus aligned with a concept widely used by ecotheologians in recent decades, according to which every human being is called to be a 'priest of creation'.[131] If the common priesthood is derived from the charisms received in Baptism, being a priest of creation is connected to two theological concepts: on the one hand our moral leadership in the created material world (here the concept may be linked to 'environmental empathy' and 'communion of saints', reviewed in 4.3.1), and, on the other, the inherent vocation to work and care received before the Fall (see 4.2.2). For John Zizioulas, one of the pioneers in using the concept of 'priest of creation', this notion overcomes the internal reasons for the current ecological crisis:

> The ecological crisis is a cultural crisis. It is a crisis that has to do with the loss of the sacredness of nature in our culture. There are only two ways to overcome this. The first is paganism. The pagan considers the world sacred because it is permeated by the divine presence (...) The other way is Christianity, which considers the world sacred because it maintains a dialectical relationship with God, in such a way that it respects it (without worshipping it), and at the same time considers the human being as the only possible link between God and creation, a link that either brings nature into communion with God, and thus sanctifies it, or condemns it to the status of a "thing", whose meaning and purpose are directed exclusively to human satisfaction.[132]

[131] This concept has been developed mainly by orthodox theologians, in particular by John Zizioulas (2006, 2013, 2021d), but has also been addressed by other ecotheologians (Fox 2001; Wirzba 2011). The paper of Wirzba (2011) reflects on the spiritual attitudes that a priestly sensibility towards Creation involves: gratitude, ascetism, and sacrificial self-offering.
[132] (Zizioulas 2006, p. 90).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

In a synthesis paper on this concept,[133] Zizioulas compares this notion with the stewardship model, which is now widely adopted by Western Christianity.[134] He considers that stewardship implies a managerialist and conservationist approach to nature, which he criticises because it implies a utilitarian and mechanistic view of creation, and because it entails a passive consideration, reducing human action to preserving rather than developing. In his opinion, the concept of priest of Creation enriches this approach considerably. Firstly, because it provides a more positive vision of our relationship with nature, considering that humans are the only material creature with freedom and creativity, with a spiritual dimension, and therefore the only capable of offering material realities to God, spiritualising them: 'only the human being is united with creation while being able to transcend it through freedom'.[135] Therefore, we are the only species capable of uniting the world and relating it to God for its own benefit (not just for ours). Christ is the perfect model of the priest of creation, since by His Death and Resurrection He restored the unity and communion of all creation with God. Following Zizioulas, the understanding of the human being as a priest of creation implies an existential, rather than functional (as in the steward model), relationship with nature, because it affects what one is, rather than what one does, and because the destruction of nature has not only moral (it is wrong) but also ontological (it ceases to be) consequences.[136]

If caring means sustaining and assisting the development of other creatures, this 'ecological priesthood' implies an even greater responsibility: striving for the full perfection of the natural world, bringing it back to God (with the aim of sanctifying the world), but also restoring its material well-being, healing the effects of human sin — not only the original sin, but the ongoing transgressions that affect the integrity of the web of life — on nature.

---

[133] (Zizioulas 2013).
[134] This notion implies that God gave humans the responsibility of caring for earth's resources, particularly based on Gen. 2:15 and Gen. 9. For the environmental stewardship model see, among others (Berry 2006, 2007a; Houghton 2006; John Paul II 2001; Wirzba 2003b; Woodrum and Hoban 1994). There are also critics of this model (Attfield 2006; Palmer 2006), because they consider it too anthropocentric.
[135] (Zizioulas 2013, p. 167).
[136] 'As priest of creation we have the unique mission and immense responsibility of uniting God and the material world. Our task is not simply to preserve creation but to purify it and elevate it to the level of divine existence' (Zizioulas 2021b, p. 58)..

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

In the Old Testament, Noah is the paradigmatic example of the human vocation to be a priest of creation, as he builds an ark where all creatures find salvation from the Flood, but also where he cares for them all. This requires a docile attitude to do God's will, but also humility to care for the specific needs of each creature during the days of incessant rain. Both care and humility are important components of the priestly soul, which bases an interest in building bridges to others who may be far removed from God in a spirit of service and generosity:

> Noah's ability to humble himself to the demands and needs of the animals. Yet these characteristics are precisely what led to Noah's being proclaimed righteous. Noah is righteous because like God the creator he took upon himself the maintenance of all creation.[137]

Being priests of creation underlines the relational dimension of our role within the rest of the created world, which some authors consider to be ontological, indicating that all created beings, especially living ones, are intimately united by our 'creatureliness', which implies being dependent on God's love to come into and remain in existence.[138] Moreover, the Trinity is present in all creation: human beings are in mutual relationship because, as images of God, they reflect in some way the relational character of God's Trinitarian life.[139] We are in communion with God, with other humans and with the rest of Creation, and this is what makes us persons, following the classical concept of person as one who is in relationship. Denis Edwards has developed, with particular lucidity, the impacts of this relational dimension within ecotheology:

> Human beings are made in the image of God in the sense that they are made for interpersonal love. A mountain range, a brilliant parrot, a great soaring tree, a delicate wildflower bending in the wind—these too are images of God. They are the self-expression of God, sacraments of divine presence in the world. They image God in their

[137] (Wirzba 2003a, p. 33). A similar idea is described in Bouma-Prediger (2010).
[138] (Zizioulas 2010). The intimate relationship between all creatures is also included in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 340, and has been covered by different ecotheologians: 'The Trinitarian social basis of God gives us the paradigm of our human existence as one intimately connected with others, including all of creation' (Deane-Drummond 2016, p. 154).
[139] Several authors (Edwards 2001; Fox 2001; Lowes 2001) have developed a relationship between the Trinitarian life of God and the universal communion between all creatures.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

> own specificity. But the precise specificity of the human is the personal and the relational, and this involves the human in the vocation to relate to other creatures as God does.[140]

The Eastern Church has also paid special attention to this ontological relationship between all creatures. Zizioulas, for example, wrote:

> If we live in a relational universe, not as external visitors to it but as parts of it, any individualistic approach to existence is bound to contradict not only the will of God but also the truth of our own being.[141]

In short, being a priest of Creation in the ordinary situations in which lay Christians go about their daily lives involves taking the lead in humanity to provide a spiritual relationship between God and His material creatures, consecrating them to Him and filling them with spiritual transcendence.

The relational dimension of sanctifying nature must be completed by considering that the intimate union between all creatures has also a cosmological character, closely related to the liturgical office of the priesthood. Christianity conceives the world as a sacramental communion between God and His creatures, and this concerns both the present destiny and the eschatological future.[142] The Judeo-Christian tradition provides many examples of the cosmological dimension of the liturgy, which implies that all creatures participate in the praise of God, giving Him glory by the very fact of their existence (Psalms 89, 96 or 148). The ultimate manifestation of this cosmological union between God and matter occurs during the celebration of the Eucharist, the principal sacrament of Christian worship, where the incarnate God becomes matter (creation) to offer Himself to us as spiritual nourishment. Louis Bouyer recalled that the first Christian Eucharistic prayers had their origin and model in the Jewish prayers prepared for solemn meals which began with a blessing of the gifts of creation.[143] In fact, the oldest Eucharistic prayer, still used in the Catholic Church, includes an explicit consideration of this cosmological dimension:

---

[140] (Edwards 2014, p. 22). See also (Amo-Usanos 2019). Admitting that all creatures are images of God remains controversial in the Church, but the sacramental value of creation is almost universally accepted, which implies at least that they reflect in some way the beauty and goodness of God.
[141] (Zizioulas 2010, pp. 146–56)) quoted by (Theokritoff 2017, 8/19).
[142] 'We cannot discuss salvation according to the Orthodox understanding without considering how the rest of creation fits into the picture' (Theokritoff 2010, p. 145).
[143] 'Life and Liturgy', 1956, quoted by Edwards (2014, p. 89).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

'Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall'.[144] The cosmological reference is also clear in the offering of bread and wine, as both are received by the goodness of God and are 'fruit of the earth/wine and the work of human hands', becoming 'Bread of Life' and 'Spiritual Drink'.

Munteanu points out that Maximus the Confessor made a decisive contribution to broadening the cosmological perspective of Christ's Presence in the Eucharist, when 'this world truly ascended to heaven together with God the Logos'.[145] In the Eucharist, humanity returns to God the gifts of Creation as a pure offering, raising to God 'what already belongs to Him'.[146] In recent decades, the Eucharist has been cited by many different theologians concerned with the care of the natural world, since it expresses the intimate union between God and the materiality of creation.[147] For example, Simone Weil proposed placing the Eucharist at the centre of everyday life, especially in rural areas, where the work of the peasants is embodied in the wheat and grapes that will sustain the body of Christ:

> Manual labor is either a degrading servitude for the soul or a sacrifice. In the case of work in the fields, the link to the Eucharist, if it is only felt, is enough to make it a sacrifice.[148]

Teilhard de Chardin also considered that the Eucharist manifests the cosmic communion of Christ with all creatures.

> As our humanity assimilates the material world, and as the Host assimilates our humanity, the eucharistic transformation goes beyond and completes the transubstantiation of the bread on the altar. Step by step it irresistibly invades the universe.[149]

---

[144] Eucharistic Prayer II. English translation of the Roman Missal. The Catholic Church in England and Wales (https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Missal/Text/index.shtml). Although more recent, the cosmological references are even clearer in the Eucharistic Prayer III: 'You are indeed Holy, O Lord, and all you have created rightly gives you praise', and IV: 'There, with the whole of creation, freed from the corruption of sin and death, may we glorify you through Christ our Lord, through whom you bestow on the world all that is good'.
[145] (Munteanu 2010, p. 118).
[146] Hans Urs Von Balthasar (2003) develops this idea in detail in his study on Maximus the Confessor. For Daelemans (2016, p. 94) this cosmological approach to liturgy is the main antidote against ontological dualisms: 'We celebrate our rootedness in the world, we celebrate blessed matter, against any gnostic or fundamentalist dualism that tries to separate soul and body, heaven and earth, immanence and transcendence'.
[147] Among others Zaehner (1971), Zizioulas (2021a) and Collins (1995).
[148] *Le Christianisme et la vie des champs*, p. 25, quoted by Hanson (2022, p. 190).
[149] (Teilhard de Chardin 1960, p. 115).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Prominent Christian leaders also join in this cosmological assessment of the Eucharist. For example, Patriarch Bartholomew declared:

> Indeed in our liturgical life, we realize by anticipation the final state of the cosmos in the Kingdom of Heaven. We celebrate the beauty of creation and consecrate the life of the world, returning it to God with thanks. We share the world with joy as a living mystical communion with the Divine.[150]

While Pope Francis even more emphatically stated:

> In the Eucharist, fullness is already achieved; it is the living centre of the universe, the overflowing core of love and of inexhaustible life. Joined to the incarnate Son, present in the Eucharist, the whole cosmos gives thanks to God (LS, n. 236).

A similar idea was suggested by Joseph Ratzinger, reflecting on the symbolic character of Sunday as a fusion of three elements: a cosmological sign (common to pre-Christian celebrations), a reminder of Christ's Resurrection and the first day of Creation. Thus, each Sunday celebrates God's gift, but also calls all God's children to care for it, as a preservation of what our Father has freely given:

> In the first day of the week is contained the Pauline idea that creation awaits the revelation of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19). Just as creation is destroyed by sin (we can see it!), so it is saved when the 'sons of God' appear. This is how Sunday interprets the commandment of creation: 'Subdue the earth' (Gen 1,28). It does not mean: Slave it, exploit it, do with it what you will! But it means: Recognise it as God's gift! Care for it and protect it, like children who care for their father's inheritance. Take care of it so that it becomes a true garden of God and that its inner meaning is fulfilled, that is, that in it too God may be 'all in all'.[151]

Within this profound connection between creation and Creator that the Eucharist reflects, the vocation to be priests of creation is especially evident. Escrivá also greatly appreciated the cosmological dimension of the Holy Mass. For example, in an informal meeting with Mexican women from OD in 1970, he said:

---

[150] Address by His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew at the Environmental Symposium, Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church, California, November 8, 1997 (quoted by Tal (2006, p. 206).
[151] I include here a translation of the Spanish version (Ratzinger 2005, p. 55).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

> At Mass I am never alone: I feel very much in the company of others (...) And I feel surrounded by all the birds that fly through the blue skies, some soaring high enough to look the sun in the face, like this eagle on your Mexican coat of arms, and the little birds, all of them, all of them, and all the animals that are in the waters and those that are on the land, the rational animals, as we human beings are, even if we sometimes lose our rationality, and the irrational ones that scurry across the face of the earth or dwell in its hidden depths. This is how I feel, as I renew the Holy Sacrifice of the Cross, not of the Supper, but of Calvary.[152]

This sentiment was very much alive in his life, for a similar image is repeated in other texts. For example, in a homily dedicated to the priestly vocation, he wrote:

> When I celebrate Mass with just one person to serve it, the people are present also. I feel that there, with me, are all Catholics, all believers, and also all those who do not believe. All God's creatures are there –the earth and the sea and the sky, and the animals and plants– the whole of creation giving glory to the Lord.[153]

Informed by a priest of creation perspective, the attitudes of human beings to care for the natural world will be very different from today, because the priestly vocation implies a deep concern to bring the surrounding realities closer to God, which implies an inner connection and a sincere affection for all creatures, who eagerly await the manifestation of the children of God (Cfr. Rom. 8:19-21).

4.5.2 Sanctifying nature through a co-sanctifier work.

> If we reflect on the proper relationship between human beings and the world around us, we see the need for a correct understanding of work; if we talk about the relationship between human beings and things, the question arises as to the meaning and purpose of all human activity (LS, n. 125).

This quote from Pope Francis' encyclical letter frames the relevance of work in the relational dimension between human beings and the rest of creation, but also the importance of understanding the theology of work with a relational

[152] (AGP A.4.81-3 t700522a).
[153] This exception is taken from 'A Priest forever' (ILC, n. 44). A similar idea appears in the notes of his oral preaching of 1969: 'when I say Dominus vobiscum, even if I am alone with the one who helps me, I say it to the whole Church, to all the creatures of the earth, to the whole of creation, even to the birds and the fishes' (Quoted in *Cronica*, 1969, p. 63, included in the AGP, Library, P01).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

perspective. I have already mentioned the ecotheological importance of linking creation and redemption and thus of considering work as co-creative and co-redeemer to achieve a more integrated vision of how work can sanctify the world and sanctify oneself in work. I extend this perspective here with a third dimension, which has not previously been addressed in theologies of work: its 'co-sanctifier' factor, but which can be neatly linked to the relational dimension and aims at sanctifying, through work, all creatures. In doing so, I underpin the importance of recovering the original meaning of the triple relation between God, human beings and the rest of creatures, extending analogically the Trinitarian relationships to include humanity and the entire natural world within the theology of work.

The whole Trinity is a relationship, but we can consider the Holy Spirit as the paradigmatic example of Relationship, since He has been commonly conceived as Love, which is the relationship *par excellence*, between the Father and the Son.[154] The traditional interpretation of Trinitarian activities in their external manifestations assigns to the Holy Spirit the task of sanctification.[155] Escrivá embraced this view and was one of the contemporary authors who, from the 1930s onwards, sought to promote knowledge of and devotion to the Third Person of the Trinity, whom he called *'El gran Desconocido'* ('the great Unknown'), because he considered that he was much less taken into account by traditional preaching and devotional books than the other two Persons of the Trinity.[156] This is the title of his homily dedicated to the Holy Spirit on the feast of Pentecost of 1969 (CPB, n. 127-138).[157] This text is fundamental for understanding Escrivá's vision of the role of the Sanctifier, both in the historical development of the Church and in the life of ordinary Christians struggling for holiness in their daily lives. St Josemaría highlighted the transformation of the apostles

[154] I used here masculine pronouns to refer to the Holy Spirit in the same way Escrivá did it.
[155] (Mateo Seco 2005).
[156] He started to use this expression in 1932, as documented by Rodríguez (2010) and published it for the first time in TW (n. 57) in 1939
[157] (2010). The official English translation of this homily uses instead the expression 'the great Stranger', which I consider inadequate. Escrivá frequently quoted the Holy Spirit in his published texts (325 times, plus another 23 with the Greek version of Paraclete). He also used - much less frequently - other terms, such as the Comforter or the Advocate.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

after receiving the Holy Spirit on the feast of Pentecost.[158] From timid and distrustful, they become full of confidence and energy, winning many new disciples for the early Church. But this renewed spiritual power is also present today in all Christians who welcome the Holy Spirit into their souls. He is very active and effective, distributing charisms of grace, inspiring good deeds, making affections grow:

> The Holy Spirit carries out in the world the works of God. He is, as we read in a liturgical hymn, the giver of grace, the light of our hearts, the soul's guest, our rest in work, our consolation in sorrow. Without his help there is nothing innocent or valuable in man, since he is the one who cleanses the soiled, heals what is sick, sets on fire what is cold, straightens what is bent and guides men toward the safe harbour of salvation and eternal joy (since....) The Holy Spirit is the Spirit sent by Christ to carry out in us the work of holiness that our Lord merited for us on earth (CPB, n. 130).

Escrivá considers, in line with the Catholic tradition, that the Holy Spirit continues to guide the Church, sustaining it in times of prosperity and in times of distress. He also guides it by freely offering His charisms: wisdom, divine filiation, fortitude, counsel, fear of God.... St Josemaría often recommended following the inspirations of the Holy Spirit that we receive during prayer, asking for His help to progress in the spiritual life, respecting the integrity of our soul and body as His temple, and asking for His advice to understand better and follow the Divine Will. Escrivá referred to the Paraclete as the principal author of the Holy Scriptures, frequently quoting Him when commenting on a passage from the New Testament.

Despite his interest in stressing the importance of the Holy Spirit in the sanctification of ordinary realities, Escrivá hardly linked the consideration of work as a means of sanctifying others through the Holy Spirit, at least in his published texts, where his references to the Paraclete are not explicitly linked to work, nor did he refer to human work as 'co-sanctifier', as a way of collaborating with the Holy Spirit in the sanctification of souls. Whenever he mentioned the relational dimension of work, sanctifying others through it, which he did frequently in his writings, it was linked to the co-redemptive character,

[158] The Acts of the Apostles, which describes the beginnings of the Church, has sometimes been called the gospel of the Holy Spirit (Hanson 1967), because of the extraordinary role played by the Paraclete in the early spread of Christianity.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

in particular to Christ's work in Nazareth and His Passion (see 4.4.2), rather than to the sanctifying action of the Holy Spirit.[159] In any case, it can be assumed that Escrivá took this connection for granted, for he recognised that all sanctifying action of others is always done in collaboration with the Holy Spirit, because holiness is the fullness of love and the proper name of the 'Paraclete is charity' (CPB, n. 87), and therefore all sanctification is mediated through His actions: 'The Holy Spirit is the Spirit sent by Christ to carry out in us the work of holiness that our Lord merited for us on earth' (CPB, n. 130).[160]

From an ecotheological perspective and following the three-dimensional structure of Escrivá's theology of work, this 'co-sanctifier' role of labour completes the Trinitarian approach to work and care for nature that I have developed in this chapter for two reasons: firstly, including the Holy Spirit in the action of sanctifying work underlines its life-giving action, and secondly, because working with a relational perspective allows all creatures to be included in the perspective of sanctifying work, while being sanctified and sanctifying others through it.

I have already commented that recent theologians of work within the Protestant tradition have proposed to change the traditional view of vocation to consider work as a charism of the Holy Spirit.[161] My proposal here is associated with expanding the three dimensions of Escrivá to ecotheology, completing the Trinitarian concept of work. In this framework, the 'co-sanctifier' dimension implies partaking with the Holy Spirit in the sanctification of all creatures, following the traditional assignment of *ad-extra* actions of the Trinity. Therefore, the aim of sanctifying others through work should be based on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The receivers of this sanctification action through work in Escrivá's vision were both professional colleagues and the society as a whole, since all professions provide opportunities to collaborate in social development.

---

[159] I realise that this distinction may be controversial, since redemption and sanctification have blurred boundaries, but I consider here that redemption opens up the possibility of being sanctified, while sanctification entails our free collaboration in the sanctifying action of God in our lives..

[160] Other quotations in relation to the sanctifier role of the Holy Spirit are: 'Get to know the holy Spirit, the great Stranger, on whom depends your sanctification' (TW, n. 57); 'Let us acquire the habit of conversation with the Holy Spirit, who is the one who will make us holy' (CPB, n. 136).

[161] Particularly Volf (1991) and Cosden (2018) as an alternative form of vocational understanding of work in the Lutheran tradition (see 3.4.3).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

He never proposed the extension of this idea to the sanctification of other creatures, because he never mentioned that non-human creatures needed to be saved, but he did mention the cosmological dimension of work as a means to help all Creation reach its final destiny:

> You, as a Christian and, perhaps, as a research worker, writer, scientist, politician or labourer, have the duty to sanctify those things. Remember that the whole universe — as the Apostle says — is groaning as in the pangs of labour, awaiting the liberation of the children of God (FU, n. 311).

Therefore, extending this idea of sanctifying others through work to non-human creatures seems a plausible addition to Escrivá's theology of work. Here redemption and sanctification are particularly related, since restoration aims to return degraded ecosystems to their original functioning, repairing the damage caused by human intervention, healing the diseases that soil, air and water pollution cause in the most vulnerable people and in other living communities. I will focus on two aspects of how this external action of the Paraclete relate to the earth caring dimension of work.

On the one hand, the Paraclete is defined in the Nicene Creed as 'the Lord, the Giver of Life'. Giving life is closely related to sustaining and helping all creatures to flourish rather than destroying or degrading them. A work allied to the Holy Spirit should not be linked to actions that intentionally harm His creatures. Certainly, many professional activities transform the natural world, sometimes quite drastically, and it is also true that this transformation is necessary to meet basic human needs, but it must always be done with minimal negative impacts and with the specific aim of restoring it, by whatever means possible, to its pre-intervention state. A co-sanctifier work, done in cooperation with the 'Giver of Life' and for the well-being of others, must never result in the extinction of other creatures, but rather on promoting its flourishing and perfection. I cannot set out all the edges of this qualification here, as they may sometimes be quite ambiguous, but what matters here is the conviction that a sanctifier work (a work that sanctifies us and others, including all other living things) must be an action that 'improves' the environment rather than 'degrades' it, an activity that promotes the functioning of a natural process while avoiding natural destruction for the sake of economic efficiency or greed.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Could livestock production be considered an example of destructive work (a life-taking action, likely contrary to the life-giving role of the Holy Spirit), since it involves the killing of animals intended for human consumption? Although the subject is a delicate one, and would require extensive research in itself, I consider that livestock work is not morally reprehensible, at least from an ecological point of view.[162] The animals that are slaughtered on these farms are raised by human labour, not taken from natural environments, and therefore not necessarily interfering with the preservation of natural ecosystems.[163] While I can accept that hunting is necessary for indigenous people who have no alternative ways to feed themselves, I believe that killing wild animals for other than strictly necessary purposes, such as would be the case of recreational hunting, is morally unacceptable.[164] Along the same lines of using animals only when necessary, I believe that their use in scientific medical research would be morally acceptable, provided that other alternatives are not feasible and animal suffering is minimised.

The second theological aspect within the relational dimension of work in the light of its connections with the Holy Spirit concerns the iconic image of the Paraclete in the form of a dove, as it appears in the description of the baptism of Jesus. All four Gospels refer to the scene: 'He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and coming on him' (Mat. 3:16); 'he saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending on him like a dove' (Mk. 1:10); 'The sky was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form like a dove on him' (Lk. 3:21-22); 'I have seen the Spirit descending like a dove out of heaven, and it remained on him' (Jn. 1:32). The Western art has preserved this icon of the Holy Spirit as a

[162] I am not referring here to the ethical consideration of animal suffering, which may be similar for wild and farmed animals, but to the ecological significance of both. Farm animals have no ecological value as such, as they do not support any ecosystemic activity. On the contrary, they generally entail negative effects on the ecosystem, especially in terms of emissions into the atmosphere (greenhouse gases), soil and water pollution. In this sense, there is a big difference in ecological impact between extensive and intensive livestock farming, with generally positive effects of the former. In any case, I agree that animal suffering must be avoided, while maintaining farming activities to satisfy basic human needs: food or clothing.

[163] Certainly, they would interfere when the demands of meat are so great that imply the expansion of pasture or feeding crops in detriment of forested areas. In this regard, reducing the consumption of meat and favouring extensive cattle ranging are more sustainable than intensive feed locks.

[164] Another issue would be hunting for population control of species, which can be required wherever natural predators have been eliminated. However, it is more advisable to introduce them, even in a gradual manner, to avoiding the social conflicts that may arise between predators and farmers.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

dove even referring to passages where this image does not appear in the Bible, such as in the Anunciation, the reception of the Holy Spirit by the Apostles at Pentecost (when Luke indicates that it appeared in the form of 'tongues of fire') or in representations of the Trinity (for example, in paintings depicting the Assumption of Mary). The figure of a dove links Christ's messianic mission with the messianic icon of Noah (salvation of the material world), the dove being the animal instrumental in communicating that 'waters have lessened on the earth' (Gen., 8:11). In both cases, the dove is associated with the Holy Spirit's action, providing graces to humans through water, a material symbol of salvation, so it fits well with the sanctifying dimension of material realities so characteristic of Escrivá's ChM.

This image also reinforces the ecotheological perspective of work, which considered as 'co- sanctifier' brings salvation to all living beings in union with the sanctifying action of the Holy Spirit. Psalm 104 expresses well the involvement of the Holy Spirit in bringing all to life: 'When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth' (Ps., 104:30). Other biblical images of the action of the Holy Spirit reinforce this relationship with the natural world: water (cf. Jn. 4:10; 1 Cor. 12:13), fire (Lk. 1:17; Lk. 3:16) and the cloud (Lk. 9:34-35).[165]

To be collaborators with the Holy Spirit in the sanctification of other creatures implies — following Escrivá's relational dimension of work — labouring with an attitude of service, that seeks the well-being of all living organisms, not just humans, considering their needs when proposing a development project, helping them to maintain or enhance their vital functions and avoiding their permanent degradation. Even a more direct action of sanctifying other creatures through work occurs when professional tasks are oriented towards restoration of what has been degraded, which should a component of any transformation of natural landscapes. There is a large body of literature focused on methods for landscape restoration, which being desirable and morally

[165] See, for example: (Mateo Seco 2005, p. 565-66).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

sound, needs to be done with proper consideration of diverse dimensions, including not only biophysical characteristics, but also historical, cultural, aesthetic, political and moral aspects.[166]

From a theological perspective, it is worth quoting the paper of Rebecca Artinian-Kaiser, where she links ecological restoration and redemption.[167] She considers that restoration is a value assessment process, that implies considering the different facets affecting the healing of a degraded area. From a Christian perspective, she considers the resurrection of Christ as the theological basis of any restoration activity, since through resurrection (new creation, renovation of all things) creation is both restored and transformed. She suggested two aspects that would make this restoration action theologically meaningful: the extension of nature value, reinforcing the intrinsic dimension of all created beings, and the 'creative attentiveness', which implies that all transformations of nature should be informed by love, partaking in the love of God through his restoring action.[168] Along the same lines, Pope Francis considers that restoring the ecological equilibrium is not only a matter of natural sciences, but also of social disciplines, including theology, because it entails 'establishing harmony within ourselves, with others, with nature and other living creatures, and with God' (LS, n. 210).

The 'co-sanctifier' character of work with the Holy Spirit implies also fostering a public commitment to solve problems affecting other creatures, for example through political and social actions that facilitate their conservation and/or the restoration of species or ecosystems. In this case, the practice of Christian virtues that consider the impact of our actions on other creatures would be a condition for sanctifying work. These virtues include environmental justice to avoid unnecessary interventions that alter natural landscapes; charity to appreciate the value of each creature and its contribution to the web of life; humility to recognise the limitations of our knowledge in transforming nature; prudence to limit such alterations to what is essential or necessary, avoiding any action that involves a high risk to people or ecosystems, particularly when

[166] (Higgs 1997; Jackson and Hobbs 2009).
[167] (Artinian-Kaiser 2018).
[168] Here I find an evident connection with Escrivá's 'passionately loving the world', and his vision of sanctifying work by putting love into the little details to convert into 'heroic verse the prose of each day' (PLW, n. 116).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

there is a danger of reaching tipping points involving potentially catastrophic reactions of the Earth system.[169]

Working with the Holy Spirit in sanctifying the rest of Creation will make our work more respectful of the environment, being the cornerstone of human beings' efforts to prevent further degradation of nature and to restore its beauty and perfection, following the modelling action of the Paraclete and his contribution to return all things to their divine meaning. In the words of an ancient Father, St Cyril, quoted by Escrivá in his homily on the Paraclete:

> The Holy Spirit is not an artist who draws the divine substance in us, as though he were alien to it. It is not in this way that he leads us to a resemblance with God — but rather, being God and proceeding from God, he himself marks the hearts of those who receive him as a seal upon wax. In this way, by the communication of his own life and resemblance, he restores nature according to the beauty of the divine model and returns to man his resemblance with God.[170]

4.6 Critical assessment of the proposed framework.

In this chapter I have presented the connections between the theology of work and ecotheology, following the spirituality of St Josemaría. To do so, I have divided the presentation into two aspects, on the one hand how the theological concepts used by Escrivá to love the world can be extended to love the natural world, and on the other, how the effort to sanctify work interacts with care for nature. In both cases, I have followed a Trinitarian perspective using the three dimensions of work suggested by Escrivá: intrinsic (sanctified), subjective ('sanctifier'), and relational (sanctifying), assigned to the collaboration of humans with the *ad-extra* activities of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, respectively. I present here an extended summary of my model and a critical reflection on its strengths and weaknesses.

4.6.1 Summary of Escrivá's contribution to ecotheological categories.

From the analysis of the biblical texts used by Escrivá to support his vocational approach to work, I have shown that the divine call to work is prelapsarian and therefore has a positive character, in the line of loving the world and

[169] Among many others Steffen (2018) and the latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2022).
[170] 'Thesaurus de sancta et consubstantiali Trinitate', 34 (PG 75, 609). Quoted in CPB, n. 134.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

material realities, which is the core message of Escrivá's ChM. The concept of labour portrayed in Gen. 2:15, linking work and care (*'operature et custodire'*) overcomes reductionist views of work as primarily oriented to the satisfaction of material needs: it allows us to recover the vocational dimension of professional activities as a path to holiness, while promoting the sanctification of the natural world through an attitude of care towards others, including non-human creatures. Although St Josemaría did not explicitly consider the link between work and care, his vocational approach to work provides solid ground to establish that connection, by considering the impact of our work on the rest of creation. This inner relationship between work and care for creation has not been previously developed by either theologians of work or ecotheologians. For the former, Gen. 2:15 is an alternative argument on the relevance of human labour (being the primary Gen. 1:28), while for the latter it implies a stewardship attitude towards creation but detached from work. Joining '*operaretur*' and '*custodire*', is therefore an innovative approach to the ecotheological appreciation of work and material realities.

Escrivá's positive view of the world, a world which is to be passionately loved (cf. PLW, n. 118), entailed an optimistic confidence on human capacities to care for nature and, where necessary, to transform it in a respectful way. Loving the world because it was created by God, because it was inhabited by Christ and because it is the realm that the Holy Spirit calls us to sanctify are compelling arguments for adopting a caring attitude towards nature, which should be translated into practical commitments and actions.

Taking up the three dimensions defined by Escrivá in his theology of work, I have shown that the intrinsic, subjective and relational perspectives offer new and robust insights for providing an ecotheological perspective on everyday life. This dissertation has developed two versions of this relationship: ecotheological categories that use the natural world as an analogy for work in the three dimensions indicated, and three dimensions that extend the sanctification of work by considering the mandate of Genesis 2:15 to "work and care" as part of its vocational dimension, developing a trinitarian scheme on which to base this attitude.

Among the former approach, considering the world as the object that needs to be sanctified, the ambience where the personal sanctification takes place and

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

the main place where sanctifying others occur, I propose to develop the intrinsic dimension on the concept of 'environmental empathy', which assumes the deep moral connection between human beings and the rest of creatures that links our moral behaviour to the sanctification of nature (figure 4). Connected to the Christian principle of 'communion of saints', this ecoempathy links our good/bad deeds to the sanctification/degradation of the natural world, not only considering our direct actions in relation to nature, but all other activities too. Furthermore, this principle implies that our moral behaviour has repercussions not only on our relationship with God and with other human beings, but also with the rest of creation, even if the actions are not directly related to nature. Following again the 3D model of '*in medio virtus*' that I presented in chapter 3, and considering ecoempathy as the ideal attitude, the default position of this dimension would be 'ecoindifference', the attitude that assumes that our actions have no moral connection with nature and, in a way, restricts the solution of environmental problems to the application of technology. The excess position on this axis would lead us to consider that nature is already holy, it does not need our contribution, basically because it is assumed that it is sacred, God itself (pantheism).

The subjective value, sanctifying oneself with nature, implies appreciating the spiritual value of the beauty and wonders of creation, as a gift that demands a grateful attitude towards the Creator. The ecotheological proposal for this dimension includes the concept of 'ecological conversion', which encompasses multiple dimensions of change: intellectual, moral, psychological and religious. Within the latter, and following of Escrivá's proposals, a worker who sets out to sanctify nature must do so with an attitude of care, both in content (the type of task performed, avoiding destructive activities) and in procedure (the way it is carried out, with love and attention). The contemplation of nature and the experience of living virtues would be a specific way of developing this dimension. Within the value scale, this dimension would oscillate between 'ecoapathy', which implies a disconnection between nature and personal sanctification, as if our salvation could only be done in relationship with other human beings, and 'ecoanxiety', in which the consideration of the responsibility linked

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

to our environmental impacts would become oppressive and unhealthy, forgetting that ours is only a collaboration in salvation: the only true Saviour is Jesus Christ.

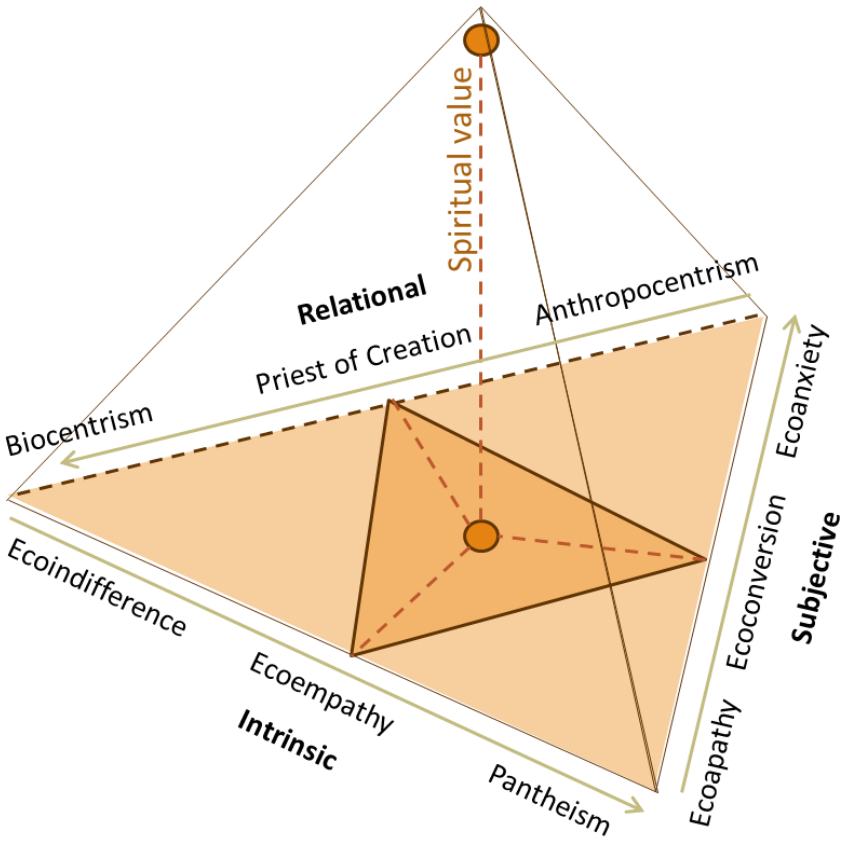


Figure 4: Graphical representation of the categories linking ChM and ecotheology

Finally, the relational dimension, sanctifying others through nature, involves serving as a bridge between spiritual and material realities, by being 'priests of creation', extending our 'common priesthood' received in Baptism, and exercising the 'priestly soul' so dear to St Josemaría. Consecrating the world to God by offering Him our ordinary activities, in connection with the well-being of other people and of the rest of creatures and uniting all in the cosmological worship of God, of which the Eucharist is the highest manifestation. Seeking the sanctification of all creatures implies caring and acting for their well-being, considering the possible negative impacts of our decisions on other creatures. Within the value scale of this dimension, the default position would be a strong anthropocentric attitude, which would disregard the spiritual

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

value of other creatures, giving them an exclusively instrumental consideration, while the excess attitude would be 'biocentrism', which entails a biological egalitarianism, nullifying the pre-eminence of human beings as 'imago Dei' and eldest brethren of other material creatures. In practical terms, both extremes, anthropocentrism and biocentrism, do not recognise any spiritual relationship between human beings and the rest of creatures, despising the spiritual capacity of human beings to bring all creatures closer to God and to make them sharers in his praise.

My second framework for extending Escrivá's theological categories to ecotheology relies on a Trinitarian concept of work, which helps us to understand it as a holistic activity in relation to God, our fellow human beings and the rest of nature, entailing a co-creative, co-redeemer and co-sanctifier dimension, collaborating in God's Creation, Redemption and Sanctification, respectively, to perfect the natural world through work, sanctifying oneself by working with care for nature and sanctifying other creatures (figure 5). In this framework, the intrinsic dimension implies that work would be co-creative insofar as it follows God's original will for His creatures. Contrary to an anthropocentric view, not all transformation of nature implies bringing it to perfection (sanctifying nature) and therefore not all human work can be considered part of the '*creatio continua*', the potential that God gave Adam in Gen. 2:15 and Gen. 1:28 to develop His earth. Only through care for other human beings and other creatures work sanctifies nature. What kind of work fulfils these conditions? On the one hand, that which can become a pleasing offering to God because it is done with human perfection and uprightness of intention, adding to these conditions the explicit desire to contribute to developing God's creative work, either through direct actions (activities that prevent the degradation of nature or contribute to its healing) or indirect deeds (activities that promote the same benefits). Within this dimension, the default position would be destructive work, carried out without regard for its negative impacts on nature, while the excess would be a presumptuous attitude that would consider human work as the only means to perfect nature, as if only artificial landscapes had spiritual value.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

The subjective dimension of working with care for nature involves being united to the redemptive mission of Christ, turning our work into a tool to restore and heal the damage caused by human wrongdoings. The co-redeeming vision of work implies striving to better identify one's work with Christ's, in union with his Cross and His working years at Nazareth, while collaborating in the well-functioning of ecosystems, avoiding any transformation that would drastically alter their natural balance or restoring it whenever it has already occurred. Part of sanctifying oneself at work entails to cultivate a contemplative attitude that facilitates the union with God in the midst of professional tasks, and the effort to live the ecological virtues in those tasks, in particular frugality, humility and generosity to consider the needs of other creatures. Within this subjective dimension, the defective position would be to work without any consideration of its impact on our sanctification, adopting a purely materialistic vision, while the excess would be a Pelagian way of working, in which God's grace would be unnecessary, as if one could attain sanctity depending only on human effort.

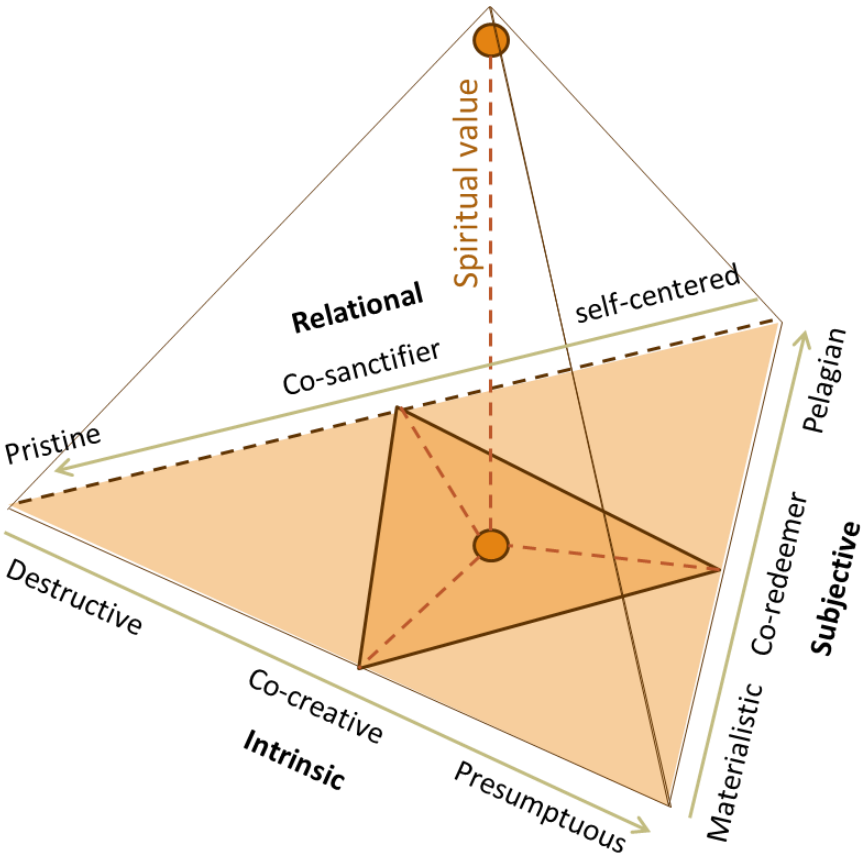


Figure 5: Graphical representation of the categories linking theology of work and ecotheology

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Finally, the relational dimension of work with care for nature connects the sanctifying role of the Holy Spirit, the 'Giver of life', with the environmental impacts of daily professional activities. Work becomes here 'co-sanctifier', an instrument for sanctifying others, thus cooperating with the action of the Paraclete in the well-being of all creatures, both human and non-human. The practicing of the virtues aligns in this regard with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, with special emphasis on prudence (wisdom and science) to make decisions that help other creatures flourish and ecosystems function; courage (fortitude) to be consistent with those decisions in personal life and to seek their extension to enrich social values to nature, and humility (counsel, fear of God) to rectify whenever original decisions prove to have more negative than positive impacts on others. Here the scale of value ranges from the self-relational stance, when work should aim only to serve human interests, to an exaggerated attitude of considering that all human transformation is evil and work should aim to maintain nature as pristine as possible, avoiding any intervention.

4.6.2 Strengths and limitations.

Many authors have indicated that science alone, being fundamental to understand and, to some extent, predict the evolution of environmental problems, is not going to solve them. Connecting science with ethical, social, cultural and religious values becomes therefore critical if we aim to overcome global environmental challenges. This requires developing new ways of linking ecological concern with humanities and social sciences, among which ecotheology is essential. I have presented a framework that makes this connection possible by considering work as the core of human sanctification, the place where our encountering with God occurs amidst our ordinary lives, the matter to be sanctified, to strive for personal sanctification and to sanctify others. My ecotheological framework relies on the spirituality and the theology of work from St Josemaría Escrivá. Following the three dimensions that he identified, I have built a Trinitarian approach that connects environmental care and the spiritual value of work. Both topics have been developed in the last few decades, but in a parallel way. Therefore, I consider my proposal innovative and substantial, as it provides new insights to link ecotheology with the ordinary life of many Christians, both because work is the means by which we transform nature, and

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

because it is the main environment in which most people spend their active lives.

I hope that my proposal will be welcomed by those Christians who consider work to be at the centre of their daily activity, those who aim to find a spiritual meaning in their ordinary occupations, those who wanted to make a positive impact in the lives of the workmates, serving them with their work and serving the whole society where they develop their professional activities. Work and worship are united through the concept of 'unity of life' proposed by Escrivá, while the effort to make a perfect offering to God, aiming to putting the Cross of Christ at the summit of our professional tasks, and imitating the hidden life of Jesus, imply a new paradigm of work ethic that would carry out a spiritual revolution, precisely now that labour conditions are drastically changing. Beyond practical implications of those changes, fostered by the application of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, nanorobotics or genetic engineering, the spiritual dimension of human lives would provide an original understanding and meaning to those new scenarios, helping them to serve better, not contradict, human dignity while caring for other creatures. The framework I propose in this dissertation aligns work and ecotheology through the three dimensions (intrinsic, subjective and relational), by being more aware of our ecological empathy with the rest of creatures, which calls for an ecological conversion and demands a priestly attitude to consecrate them to God. These dimensions are grounded on a contemplative approach to nature, as a gift given by God Creator, finding in nature His sacramental image, sharing with nature the merits of Christ's Redemption, enjoying with nature the life given by the Holy Spirit. The practical implications of these attitudes apply to the way we work, first to the contents of our professional activities, that should consider their environmental impacts to help the sanctification, not the destruction, of nature, adopting a co-creative role, expanding the redemptive mission of Christ and collaborating with the sanctifying action of the Holy spirit. Along with the contemplative dialogue with God, a sanctified, sanctifier and sanctifying work requires the practice of virtues, particularly those affecting our impacts to others and nature: frugality, generosity, prudence, justice, humility, among others.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

An ecotheological proposal based on striving for personal and relational sanctification overcomes some of the problems found in the stewardship model, now widely accepted in Christianity, as it is based on loving and care, rather than on ethical responsibility.[171] Working with care in a framework that generates a consecrated offer to God, done for love of Him and to others, striving for sanctifying ourselves and others, in relation also with other creatures, implies an ideal that goes beyond responsibility and brings stronger motivations for change: it is not a matter of what we should do (ethics), but rather of what we would like to be (virtues).

In terms of limitations of my framework, the most obvious one is the necessary acceptance of the starting point: the creative, redemptive and sanctifying role of God in our lives: materialistic of atheistic approaches would unlikely benefit from my proposal. Since the Christian orientation of my work is a starting point, I do not consider this aspect a weakness of my model, but only a frame that indicates the edges where the model can be applied.

For those accepting the idea of God, but coming from non-Catholic or even non-Christian traditions, some aspects of my proposal may be relevant, particularly those related to encountering God in the midst of professional activities, being contemplative and living virtues at work. The concept of sanctification that I have presented may have a different meaning for some Christian traditions, and therefore the idea of sanctifying oneself at work and sanctifying others through work (with the grace of God, obviously) may have a different interpretation for them to what I assume here. In the same line, Escrivá's vocational conception of work, which involves being called to work, rather than being called to a particular kind of work, may not be acceptable to other Christian traditions, but it overcomes the criticism of those who consider Luther's concept of vocation to be too static.

Within Catholic theologians, the main criticism of my proposal may come from those still interpreting the biblical narratives and the Tradition as mainly human-centred, as if caring for creation would imply diminishing the concern

[171] The 'Beyond Stewardship' programme of the University of Exeter provides various resources to support different theological models of human relationships with the rest of Creation, based on diverse interpretations of Christian traditions and recent theological proposals (https://www.exeter.ac.uk/research/projects/theology/beyondstewardship/, last access on January, 2025).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

for human beings. This potential criticism forgets that we are part of material creation, as both Biblical accounts of Genesis indicate, and therefore we cannot live aside nature, both from a biological and theological point of view. On the other hand, my proposal does not endorse biological egalitarianism, but rather considers humanity as having a special spiritual responsibility to the rest of creatures, because being the only creature both spiritual and material implies that our moral behaviour impacts other creatures through our ontological communion ('environmental empathy') with them. Those considering that cosmic liturgy or sublime communion with the rest of creation may have pantheistic resemblances can further analyse biblical or patristic texts, particularly in the Eastern tradition, as well as recent Magisterial documents, including John Paul II's, Benedict XVI's and Francis'. These are also good sources to review the concept of ecological conversion, which is not a secular translation of religious conversion, but rather its coherent extension.

Those who think that the main change required is social, not personal, may not appreciate my scheme either, which is based on personal rather that collective action. I realise the importance of social changes to modify the current worldview that still favours a limitless use of nature, but I am quite convinced that social changes only come after personal conversions are made. Historically, the greatest collective changes (like abolition of slavery or accepting equal rights for women) have come from the effort of a few but strongly motivated persons. I can take in this regard the Biblical image of Gideon, who in his mission against the Midianites was asked by God to reduce his soldiers so he could not think that the victory was based on his own strength (Cf. Ju. 7: 2-7). It is also worth to recall a sentence from St Therese of Calcutta: 'What matters is the individual. If we wait until we get numbers, then we will be lost in the numbers and we will never be able to show that love and respect for the person'.[172]

Finally, critics to my proposal may come from utilitarian perspectives which consider fostering education and health and relieving poverty and vulnerability to natural hazards much more important goals than alleviating environmental problems. However, current science and the vast majority of social leaders now

[172] Quoted by (Le Joly and Chaliha 2002).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

think that both social and environmental degradation and interlinked, and therefore there are not short-cuts to solve these two crises independently. I agree in this line with pope Francis' claim that:

> The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation (LS, n. 48)

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

5 Conclusions.

At the beginning of my dissertation, I aimed to develop a theological framework that would connect the concerns and aspirations of lay Christians with the environment. For this, I chose the figure of St Josemaría Escrivá, as he proposed a spiritual appreciation of work and material realities that constitute the basic component of the daily lives of ordinary Christians, helping them to overcome the spiritual dualism that has prevailed in Western Christianity, somehow emptying professional, social and family activities of spiritual meaning. His idea of ChM emphasises the spiritual relevance of these activities, helping particularly, but not restricted to, lay Christians to see them as their proper place of encounter with God in the world, striving in these environments to live out their Christian vocation. Although Escrivá's original proposal to 'passionately love the world' involved primarily loving ordinary human realities, it seemed plausible to extend its theological basis to 'loving the natural world', broadening the concept of ChM to care for nature. My aim was to construct a framework in which this extension would not only be reasonable but also coherent, in the confidence that it would ultimately serve to enable those who seek to love the world through their Christian faith to love the natural world as well, and to become more involved in its care.

The thesis has been structured following a sequential analysis that connects Escrivá's approach to ChM with ecotheology. Firstly, I have tried to show the importance of overcoming any kind of dualism that tends to make a sharp distinction between man and nature. Previous authors have highlighted the relevance of anthropological or ontological dualisms, which pit matter against spirit, body against soul, human beings against nature, but none have identified spiritual dualism, in the sense proposed by Escrivá, as a potential thread for ecotheology, perhaps because it is more practical than theoretical, and has occurred in Christian rather than secular settings. I have shown, especially in my analysis of the theology of work, that both Catholic and Protestant traditions tended to divide the practical value of spiritual and material realities, with Catholics emphasising the former and Protestants the latter. Consequently, the

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

corporal and spiritual dimensions of the Christian faith have developed in parallel, as if material realities were detached from any spiritual value (separation between contemplative and active life). St Josemaría's proposal sought to overcome this spiritual dualism, particularly in the Catholic tradition, by underpinning the spiritual value of professional, family, social and cultural realities: all the honest spheres in which the life of lay Christians unfolds can be filled with spiritual meaning and become paths of personal sanctification. I have briefly presented Escrivá's personal and spiritual trajectory, with special emphasis on the main document in which he developed his ideas on ChM: the 1967 homily in Navarre. I have also commented on the impact of his ideas on other authors, both to corroborate and to criticise them, as well as on other ChM proposals, most of which are alien to his thought, but which could serve as comparative paradigms.

From chapter 3 onwards, I have focused my analysis of Escrivá's ChM on his theology and spirituality of work, because it is the most direct sphere in which the sanctification of material realities takes place for lay Christians, as well as being the usual means of transforming matter (and therefore nature) into goods to satisfy human needs. The relevance of work for St Josemaría's spirituality is grounded on being the prelapsarian vocation of humanity, and, therefore, the preferential realm to encounter Christ in daily life, the 'hinge' of the lay Christian vocation, as he often pointed out, the main path to holiness for those who spend most of their active lives working. Following his vision, I have identified three dimensions of work, which I have called intrinsic (aimed at sanctifying the product of work), subjective (oriented at sanctifying the agent of work) and relational (concerned with sanctifying others through work). This analysis is substantive for the extension of ChM to ecotheology, as these three axes have been the basis of my proposal. I have also analysed in this chapter the main theological categories used by St Josemaría to underpin his spirituality, in particular those peculiar to his thought: placing Christ at the summit of human activities, linking work and material realities to his sacrificial offering on the Cross; the exemplary relevance of the working life of Jesus in Nazareth, and the concept of 'unity of life', which implies developing a profound connection between professional activities and contemplation. From my historical analysis of how the Catholic and Protestant traditions have viewed the spiritual

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

value of work, I have shown that Escrivá's ideas were largely novel when they were presented and largely remain so. While many of his proposals have been incorporated into recent theological developments, I have also presented that his comprehensive consideration of the spiritual value of work in the sanctification of professional activities and in the effort to sanctify oneself and others in those activities remains unique and, except for a few, mainly Spanish-speaking theologians, mostly unknown.

Drawing on Escrivá's vocational and three-dimensional theology of work, I have constructed a theological framework that connects work and ecotheology. I have first reflected on the ecotheological implications of the biblical texts that Escrivá used to support his vocational approach to work, comparing his frequent recourse to Gen. 2:15 with other Catholic theologians' more-frequent use of Gen. 1:28. Although he never explained his choice of the former verse as being more environmentally friendly than the latter, I think is reasonable to deduce from this biblical foundation that his approach to work was very positive towards nature. The ecotheological extension of his vision implies that work must be done with care, following the second command of Gen. 2:15 (*'operaretur et custodire'*). Since we do not know Escrivá's interpretation of this second verb, we can rely on his indirect comments on the kind of work that sanctifies us, in particular the idea of rectitude of intention (working for love of God) and generosity to others, which implies that care involves working with attention to the consequences of our work on other human beings, but also on other creatures.

The framework I propose to connect the theology of work and ecotheology is based on six theological concepts that link the three dimensions of Escrivá's approach with a double orientation: three that apply his ideas of the sanctification of work analogously to the sanctification of nature, and another three that extend the sanctification of work to doing that work with care for nature. The first are based on concepts developed within ecotheology (environmental empathy, ecological conversion and priest of creation), and the second on a Trinitarian perspective of work (as an instrument to cooperate with God as co-creators, co-redeemers and co-sanctifiers of the world).

The intrinsic dimension of sanctifying nature entails the desire to sanctify it, repairing the effects of human wrongdoing. Extending the biological and

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

ontological communion that unites human beings and all other creatures with the moral dimension, I propose the concept of 'environmental empathy', which involves considering the impact of our moral actions on the degradation of nature, showing the biblical roots of this concept, which was not considered by St Josemaría. This environmental empathy implies that our actions affect nature not only directly when we transform the environment (to restore or degrade it), but also indirectly through the moral communion we have with other creatures. In this sense, I propose the extension of the concept of 'communion of saints' (included in the Nicene Creed and much appreciated by Escrivá) to the natural world, implying that, through this inner moral connection, our striving for personal holiness either improves nature by our virtuous acts or, eventually, degrades it by our sins. The intrinsic dimension of working with care for nature implies that human work must be associated with God's creative work: to be co-creator implies that professional activities should follow God's original will for his creatures, avoiding their degradation and even more their extinction.

The subjective dimension reflects on the environmental consequences that the pursuit of personal holiness can have. In this regard, I have brought up the concept of 'ecological conversion' widely used by several Christian leaders in recent decades, which implies a profound change of attitudes and behaviour. The theological basis of this conversion similarly follows Escrivá's proposals to pursue personal holiness in nature, cultivating grateful contemplation of natural beauties, imitating Christ's life of prayer in natural settings, and exercising the Christian virtues, generosity, frugality, humility. The subjective dimension of work with this dimension of care for nature implies underlining the co-redeeming impact of our work, in union with the working life of Jesus and the contribution of human work to his exaltation on the Cross.

Finally, the relational dimension involves sanctifying other creatures through our liturgical service as priests of creation, serving as a bridge between God and his creatures, including them in the cosmological liturgy to praise God — recognising through them the divine Beauty and Goodness — and helping them to fulfil their eternal destiny. This concept aligns directly to the 'common priesthood' stressed by Escrivá as part of the lay vocation received with Baptism, and the consequential concept of 'priestly soul', oriented toward procuring the sanctification of other human beings, but by extension also of other

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

creatures. Working with care implies caring for the well-being of all creatures, collaborating with the Holy Spirit as 'co-sanctifiers', turning our work into service to other people, but also non-human creatures, through concern for their own benefit and flourishing.

I have also identified some of the potential strengths and criticisms of my proposal, with different degrees of potential rejection depending on the position of the reader: from those who may not accept the spiritual-religious dimension of life, to those who may reject the Catholic conception of sanctification. Some may also find some of my arguments needed of further elaboration. I accept these criticisms, but the fair judgment of my work should compare what I planned to do and what I have accomplished. Constructing a new building requires laying a solid foundation and developing the basic structure that will later be filled in with walls, stairs, doors and, finally, appliances. I have tried to build only the structure, being aware that this dissertation has opened potentials that would require further elaboration, although some of the theological categories I have used are already sufficiently well established in ecotheology to establish solid foundations for future developments.

The theological concepts I have used are drawn from the Catholic tradition, in particular from the legacy of St Josemaria Escriva, but for the most part they can be taken up by other Christians, and even by believers of other faiths, so I hope that this framework will be useful for people of different Christian traditions. Perhaps even some of these categories could translate to agnostics or atheists, but I have not developed them with those potential recipients in mind, but rather for those who already share a basic acceptance of what the Christian faith is and how it can enrich our daily lives.

I began this dissertation by pointing out that systematic or moral theology has already provided solid bases for connecting Christian faith and environmental concern. Creation, incarnation or the sacramental view of nature are indeed profound arguments for ecotheology, as well as reflection on the social repercussions of environmental degradation. The framework I have proposed in these pages is an alternative and innovative way of approaching ecotheology, based on a spiritual path that is already having a positive impact on the lives of many Christians. I do not claim that my approach is any stronger or more convincing than previous proposals that have been made in this field from other

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

branches of theology, but I honestly think that it is coherent from a theological perspective and may be attractive to many faithful who seek to encounter God in the midst of their daily activities. Moreover, it is built on a holistic theology of work and should therefore be accessible to those who aim to find a deep spiritual meaning in their professional tasks. I hope that my research provides strong arguments for those finding a religious meaning in their quest to make this planet closer to the moment when 'God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good' (Gen., 1:31).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

6 References.

Albareda-Tiana, Silvia (2010), *Mujer, ecología y sostenibilidad. Elementos de convergencia entre el ecofeminismo de Vandana Shiva y las enseñanzas sociales de la Iglesia* (Pamplona: Tesis Doctoral. Facultad de Teología. Universidad de Navarra).

--- (2023), 'The Invisible Legacy of St. Josemaría Escrivá for Sustainable Living. Reasons, Attitudes and Virtues for the Care of Our Common Home', *Romana. Bulletin of the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei*, 74, 137-62.

Allen, John L (2007), *Opus Dei: An objective look behind the myths and reality of the most controversial force in the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday).

Allitt, Patrick (1998), 'American Catholics and the environment, 1960-1995', *The Catholic historical review*, 84 (2), 263-80.

Amo-Usanos, Rafael (2019), 'Fundamentos de ecología integral', Estudios Eclesiásticos. Revista de investigación e información teológica y canónica, 94 (368), 5-37.

Apostola, Nicholas K (1995), 'Labor and Rest in the Context of a Christian Perspective on the Economy', *St. Vladimir's theological quarterly*, 39 (2), 185-85.

Aranda, Antonio (1987), 'Espiritualidad y secularidad: A propósito de un texto del Fundador del Opus Dei', in Augusto Sarmiento (ed.), *La misión del laico en la Iglesia y en el mundo* (Pamplona: Ed. Univ. de Navarra), 279-97.

--- (2013), *Es Cristo que pasa*. Edición crítica (Madrid: Rialp).

--- (2018a), '"Amare il mondo apasionadamente". Chiavi teologiche di un testo siempre válido', *Studia et Documenta*, 12, 413-44.

--- (2018b), 'El trabajo de Cristo en Nazaret. Diversas claves de lectura teológica', in Javier Requena López Díaz, Federico M. (ed.), *Verso una spiritualità del lavoro professionale* (Roma: Pontificia Università della Santa Croce), 159-83.

--- (2019), *Amigos de Dios*. Edición crítica (Madrid: Rialp).

--- (2020), El hecho teológico y pastoral del Opus Dei (Pamplona: EUNSA).

Artinian-Kaiser, Rebecca (2018), 'Restoration and transformation: A theological engagement with ecological restoration', in Celia Deane-Drummond and Rebecca Artinian-Kaiser (eds.), *Theology and ecology across the disciplines*, 167-78.

Attfield, R (2006), 'Environmental Sensitivity and Critiques of Stewardship', in R.J. Berry (ed.), *Environmental Stewardship* (London: T&T Clark International), 76-91.

Attfield, R. (2014), *Environmental Ethics: An Overview for the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, UK: Polity).

--- (2018), *Environmental Ethics: A very short introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Augustine, Saint (388-393), *De Genesi adversus Manichaeos* (https://www.augustinus.it/spagnolo/genesi_dcm/index2.htm: Spanish translation by Lope Cilleruelo).

--- (403-415), *De Genesi ad litteram* (https://www.augustinus.it/spagnolo/genesi_lettera/index2.htm: Spanish translation by Lope Cilleruelo, OSA).

--- (2002), 'The work of monks', in Roy J. Deferrari and Mary Sarah Muldowney (eds.), *Treatises on various subjects. The fathers of the church, a new translation ; v. 16* (1st pbk. reprint. edn.; Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press), 323-94.

Aurell-Cardona, Jaume (2003), 'El ambiente intelectual de la España de comienzos de siglo y su influjo en Josemaría Escrivá', *La grandezza della vita quotidiana; 2: San Josemaría Escrivá: contesto storico, personalità, scritti*, 7-22.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

--- (2012), 'La formación de un gran relato sobre el Opus Dei', *Studia et Documenta,* 6, 235-94.
Austin, Jay E and Bruch, Carl E (2000), *The environmental consequences of war: Legal, economic, and scientific perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
Ávila García, Virginia (2022), 'Dos carismas: Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer (1902-1975) y Marcial Maciel (1920-2008)', *Signos históricos,* 24 (48), 48-87.
Ball, Ian (1992), *The earth beneath: a critical guide to green theology* (London: SPCK).
Barnosky, Anthony D., et al. (2011), 'Has the Earth's sixth mass extinction already arrived?', *Nature,* 471 (7336), 51-57.
Barsella, Susanna (2014), '"Ars" and Theology: Work, Salvation, and Social Doctrine in the Early Church Fathers', *Annali d'italianistica,* 32, 53-72.
Basil, Saint (361-364), *The Hexaemeron*, ed. translated by Philip Schaff in 1895 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark).
Bauckham, Richard (2010), *Bible and ecology: Rediscovering the community of creation* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press).
Bavel, Tarsicius van (1990), 'The Creator and the Integrity of Creation in the Fathers of the Church especially in Saint Augustine', *Augustinian Studies,* 21, 1-33.
Beckett, Paul (2021), *Labour Rights and the Catholic Church: The International Labour Organisation, the Holy See and Catholic Social Teaching* (Abingdon: Routledge).
Belda, Manuel (2003), 'El Beato Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, pionero de la unidad de vida cristiana', *El cristiano en el mundo* (Pamplona: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra), 467-82.
Belda, Manuel, et al. (eds.) (1997), *Holiness and the world : studies in the teachings of Blessed Josemaría Escrivá* (1st American edn., Princeton: Scepter Publishers).
Benedict XVI (2009), *Encyclical Letter Caritas In Veritate* (Vatican: https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html).
--- (2010), *Message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace* (Vatican: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20091208_xliii-world-day-peace_sp.html).
Bentivegna, J. (1972), 'The Matter as "Milieu Divin" in St. Irenaeus', *Augustinianum,* 12 (3), 543-48.
Bergsma, John (2018), 'The Creation Narratives and the Original Unity of Work and Worship in the Human Vocation ', in R. Keith Loftin and Trey Dimsdale (eds.), *Work : theological foundations and practical implications* (London: SCM Press), 10-29.
Bermúdez Merizalde, Catalina María (2016), 'Materialismos y "materialismo cristiano". Propuestas y retos en diálogo con la Teología', *Memorias del Congreso de Teología 2012* (Bogotá: Universidad de La Sabana-Serie Memorias 02).
Berry, Robert James (ed.), (2006), *Environmental Stewardship* (London: T&T Clark International).
--- (2007a), 'Sustainability: God's way for Greenwash?', in Robert James Berry (ed.), *When enough is enough: a Christian framework for environmental sustainability* (Nottingham: Apollos), 11-34.
--- (ed.), (2007b), *When enough is enough: a Christian framework for environmental sustainability* (Nottingham: Apollos).
Binde, Per (2001), 'Nature in Roman Catholic Tradition', *Anthropological quarterly,* 74 (1), 15-27.
Blanco, María and Martín, María del Mar (2016), *La Abadesa de las Huelgas. Edición crítica* (Madrid: Rialp).
Bouma-Prediger, Steven (1995), 'Is Christianity Responsible for the Ecological Crisis?', *Christian scholar's review,* 25 (2), 146-56.
--- (2010), *For the beauty of the Earth: A Christian vision for creation care* (Baker Academic).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

--- (2019), Earthkeeping and Character: Exploring a Christian Ecological Virtue Ethic (Baker Academic).
Bouteneff, Peter (2008), Beginnings : ancient Christian readings of the biblical creation narratives (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic).
Brown, Peter (2016), *Treasure in heaven: the holy poor in early Christianity* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press).
Brown, William P. (1999), *The ethos of the cosmos: the genesis of moral imagination in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich. ;: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.).
--- (2010), *The Seven Pillars of Creation: The Bible, Science, and the Ecology of Wonder* (1 edn.; New York: Oxford University Press).
Brueggemann, Walter (1982), *Genesis. Interpretation, a Bible commentary for teaching and preaching* (Atlanta: John Knox Press).
Burkhart, Ernst and López, Javier (2010 - 2013), *Vida cotidiana y santidad: en la enseñanza de San Josemaría*, 3 vols. (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp).
Bushblack, Thomas (2011), 'A New Heaven and a New Earth', in Tobias L Winright (ed.), *Green Discipleship: Catholic Theological Ethics and the Environment* (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic), 93-111.
Callicott, J Baird (1995), 'Intrinsic value in nature: a metaethical analysis', *Electronic Journal of Analytic Philosophy,* 3 (5), 1-8.
Campbell, Jennifer, Waliczek, T. M., and Zajicek, J. M. (1999), 'Relationship Between Environmental Knowledge and Environmental Attitude of High School Students', *The Journal of Environmental Education,* 30(3), 17-21.
Cano, Luis '"Camino" (Josemaría Escrivá) y "El alma victoriosa de la pasión dominante" (Francisco Javier Hernández)', <https://opusdei.org/es/article/camino-josemaria-escriva-alma-victoriosa-javier-fe/>, accessed July 2022.
--- (2020b), *Cartas (I). Edición crítica* (Madrid: Rialp).
--- (2022), *Cartas (II). Edición crítica* (Madrid: Rialp).
Cano, Luis and Castells, Francesc (2017), *En el Dialogo con el Señor. Edición crítica* (Madrid: Rialp).
Carr, David McLain (2020), *The formation of Genesis 1-11 : biblical and other precursors* (New York: Oxford University Press).
Carroll, John (2020), 'Is the vocation paradigm under threat?', *Journal of Sociology,* 56 (3), 282-96.
Carson, Rachel (1998), *The Sense of Wonder* (Harper: New York. Original from 1963).
Castillo, Daniel Patrick (2019), *An ecological theology of liberation: Salvation and political ecology* (Maryknowll, NY: Orbis Books).
Castillo, J.M. (1978), 'La "Imitación de Cristo" y "Camino"', *Concilium,* 14, 539-51.
Cattaneo, Arturo (2002a), 'Alma sacerdotal y mentalidad laical: La relevancia eclesiológica de una expresión del Beato Josemaría Escrivá', *Romana,* 34, 164-82.
--- (2002b), 'Tracce per una spiritualità laicale offerte dall'Omelia «amare il mondo appassionatamente»', *Annales theologici,* 16 (1), 111-34.
CBCEW (2001), *A spirituality of work* (London: Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, Committee for the World of Work, Catholic Media Trust).
Chadwick, Henry (1980), *Origen: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge University Press).
Chatterton, Tim, et al. (2009), 'Understanding how transport choices are affected by the environment and health: views expressed in a study on the use of carbon calculators', *Public health,* 123 (1), e45-e49.
Chauhan, Sheila, et al. (2012), 'Awareness vs intentionality: Exploring education for sustainable development in a British Hindu community', *Sustainable Development,* 20 (6), 361-71.
Chenu, Marie-Dominique (1965), *Hacia una Teología del Trabajo* (French original: *Pour une théologie du travail*, 1955) (Barcelona: Estela).
Chesterton, Gilbert K. (1925), *The everlasting man* (New York (State): Hendrickson Dodd, Mead & Co.).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Chica, Fernando and Granados, Carlos (2015), *Loado seas, mi Señor. Comentario a la encíclica Laudato si' del papa Francisco* (Madrid: BAC).
Chryssavgis, John (2010), 'Icons, Liturgy, Saints: Ecological insights from Orthodox spirituality 1', *International Review of Mission,* 99 (2), 181-89.
--- (2019), Creation as sacrament : reflections on ecology and spirituality (New York: T&T Clark).
Chryssavgis, John and Asproulis, Nikolaos (2021), *Priests of Creation: John Zizioulas on Discerning an Ecological Ethos* (London: T&T Clark).
Chuvieco, Emilio (2012), 'Religious approaches to water management and environmental conservation', *Water Policy,* 14, 9-20.
--- (2017), 'La" conversión ecológica" en la *Laudato si'* y en la tradición cristiana', *La Albolafia: Revista de Humanidades y Cultura,* (10), 27-42.
--- (2023), 'La belleza en la Laudato si': fundamento de la conversión ecológica', in Dolores Jara Flores (ed.), *La belleza, camino de comunión* (Avila: CiTES, Universidad de la Mística), 71-105.
Chuvieco, Emilio, et al. (2021), 'Links between Climate Change Knowledge, Perception and Action: Impacts on Personal Carbon Footprint', *Sustainability,* 13 (14), 8088.
Chuvieco, Emilio, Burgui, Mario, and Gallego, Isabel (2016a), 'Impact of Religious Beliefs on Environmental Indicators. Is Christianity More Aggressive Than Other Religions?', *Worldviews,* 20, 251–71.
Chuvieco, Emilio and Martín, María Angeles (2023), *Cuidar la Tierra: Razones para conservar la Naturaleza* (Madrid, 2d Ed: Digital Reasons).
Chuvieco, Emilio, Sánchez-Sorondo, Marcelo, and Settele, Josef (2016b), 'Religion and science: boost sustainability', *Nature,* 538 (7626), 459-59.
Clayton, Philip (2014), 'Panentheism in the Tapestry of Traditions', in Loriliai Biernacki and Philip Clayton (eds.), *Panentheism across the world's traditions* (New York: Oxford University Press).
Clayton, Susan and Myers, Gene (2015), *Conservation psychology: Understanding and promoting human care for nature* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons).
Cloutier, David (2015), *Reading, Praying, Living Pope's Laudato si* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press).
--- (2021), 'The Workers' Paradise: Eternal Life, Economic Eschatology, and Good Work as the Keys to Social Ethics', *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America,* 75, 37-55.
Cobb, John B (2021), *Is it too late?: A Theology of Ecology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press).
Collins, Paul (1995), *God's Earth: Religion as if matter really mattered* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan).
Congar, Yves (1954), *Jalons pour une théologie du laïcat* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf).
Conradie, Ernst M (2006), C*hristianity and ecological theology: Resources for further research* (Stellenbosch: SUN MeDIA).
Cooper, John W (2000), *Body, soul, and life everlasting: Biblical anthropology and the monism-dualism debate* (Leicester: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing).
Corcoran, Kevin (2006), *Rethinking human nature: A Christian materialist alternative to the soul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker academic).
Cosden, Darrell T. (2006), *A theology of work: Work and the new creation* (Wipf and Stock Publishers).
--- (2018), 'Work and the New Creation', in R. Keith Loftin and Trey Dimsdale (eds.), *Work : theological foundations and practical implications* (London: SCM Press), 165-78.
Coverdale, John F. (1964), 'Una respuesta a von Balthasar', *Nuestro Tiempo,* 117, 488-98.
Cowie, Robert H, Bouchet, Philippe, and Fontaine, Benoît (2022), 'The Sixth Mass Extinction: fact, fiction or speculation?', *Biological Reviews,* 97 (2), 640-63.
Cruz, Gemma Tulud (2021), 'Theology and (de) humanizing work in the twenty-first century', *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America,* 75, 1-17.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Curry, P. (2011), *Ecological Ethics: an introduction* (Cambridge (UK): Polity Press).
Dabin, Paul (1950), *Le sacerdoce royal des fidèles : dans la tradition ancienne et moderne* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer).
Daelemans, Bert (2016), 'Contemplar, celebrar, cuidar. Revisitar la sacramentalidad del mundo', in Enrique Sanz Giménez-Rico (ed.), *Cuidar de la Tierra, cuidar de los pobres* (Cantabria: SalTerrae), 87-103.
Dale, Eric S (1991), *Bringing heaven down to earth: A practical spirituality of work* (New York: Peter Lang).
Danielou, Jean (1967), *Mythes païens, mystère chrétien* (Paris: A. Fayard).
Dannenberg, Astrid and Zitzelsberger, Sonja (2019), 'Climate experts' views on geoengineering depend on their beliefs about climate change impacts', *Nature Climate Change,* 9 (10), 769-75.
De Pablo, Santiago (2017), 'Universidad y sociedad en la España de 1967: El contexto histórico de una homilía', *Scripta theologica,* 49 (2), 471-92.
Deane-Drummond, Celia (2008), *Eco-theology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd).
--- (2012), 'Joining in the dance: Catholic social teaching and ecology', *New Blackfriars,* 93 (1044), 193-212.
--- (2016), *Ecology in Jürgen Moltmann's Theology* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers).
--- (2017), *A primer in ecotheology : theology for a fragile earth* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, an imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers).
--- (2019), *Theological ethics through a multispecies lens: the evolution of wisdom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
Del Portillo, Alvaro (1997), 'By way of conclussion', in Manuel Belda, et al. (eds.), *Holiness and the world: studies in the teachings of blessed Josemaría Escrivá* (Princeton: Scepter Publ.), 279-96.
Derrick, Christopher (1972), *The Delicate Creation. Towards a Theology of the Environment* (London: Tom Stacey).
Derville, Guillaume (2015a), *Amor y desamor. La pureza liberadora* (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp).
Derville, Guillaume (2015b), '¿Ciudadanos en la tierra como en el cielo? Una aproximación a la encíclica Laudato sí y al mensaje de Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer', *Romana,* 60, 162-204.
Di Carlo, Giussepe (2013), 'Servire e custodire. Responsabilitá originaria (Gn 2, 15)', *Il servizio, «Parola Spirito e Vita»,* 68, 13-25.
Driscoll, Daniel (2019), 'Assessing Sociodemographic Predictors of Climate Change Concern, 1994–2016', *Social Science Quarterly,* 100 (5), 1699-708.
Dussel, Enrique D (1974), *El dualismo en la antropología de la cristiandad* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Guadalupe).
Edwards, Denis (2001), 'For your immortal Spirit is in all things', in Denis Edwards (ed.), *Earth Revealing--Earth Healing: Ecology and Christian Theology* (Liturgical Press), 45-66.
--- (2014), *Ecology at the Heart of Faith* (Orbis Books).
--- (2016), '"Sublime Communion": The Theology of the Natural World in Laudato Si', *Theological studies (Baltimore),* 77 (2), 377-91.
--- (2019), *Deep Incarnation: God's Redemptive Suffering with Creatures* (Orbis Books).
--- (2020), 'Key Issues in Ecological Theology: Incarnation, Evolution, Communion', in Celia Deane-Drummond and Rebecca Artinian-Kaiser (eds.), *Theology and ecology across the disciplines: on care for our common home* (5: Bloomsbury Publishing), 65-76.
Edwards, Mark (2017), 'The Gnostic Myth', in James C. Paget and Judith Lieu (eds.), *Christianity in the Second Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 137-50.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Fabro, Cornelio (1980), 'Josemaria Escrivá de Balaguer, teacher of Christian freedom', *The Irish theological quarterly,* 47 (1), 56-60.

Fee, Gordon D. (2019), *Offer yourselves to God : vocation, work, and ministry in Paul's epistles* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books).

Fernández-García, María Socorro (2004), 'Materialismo cristiano: Audacia y licitud', Trabajo y espíritu: sobre el sentido del trabajo desde las enseñanzas de Jose María Escrivá en el contexto del pensamiento contemporáneo (IV; Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra. EUNSA), 249-58.

Fernández Montes, Jose Mario, Diaz, Onésimo, and Requena, Federico (2008a), 'Bibliografía general de Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer: Obras sobre san Josemaría (I)', *Studia et Documenta: rivista dell'Istituto Storico San Josemaría Escrivá,* (2), 425-79.

--- (2008b), 'Bibliografía general de Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer: Obras sobre san Josemaría (II)', *Studia et Documenta: rivista dell'Istituto Storico San Josemaría Escrivá,* (3), 497-538.

Figueroa Clemente, Enrique (2016), *La ecología del papa Francisco: un mensaje para un planeta y un mundo en crisis* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos).

Fitte, Hernán (2003), 'Algunos estudios teológicos sobre el trabajo en la primera mitad del siglo XX. Elementos para contextualizar la doctrina del Beato J. Escrivá', *La grandezza della vita quotidiana* (IV; Roma: Edizioni Università della Santa Croce), 39-57.

Foltz, Richard C. , Denny, Frederick M. , and Baharuddin, Azizan (eds.) (2003), *Islam and Ecology. A Bestowed Trust* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

Fox, Patricia A. (2001), 'God's Shattering Otherness', in Denis Edwards (ed.), *Earth Revealing--Earth Healing: Ecology and Christian Theology* (Liturgical Press), 85-103.

Fuenmayor, Amadeo de, Gómez-Iglesias, Vicente, and Illanes, José Luis (1989), *El itinerario jurídico del Opus Dei. Historia y defensa de un carisma* (Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra).

Gampel, Eric H (2009), 'A framework for moral reasoning', in Peggy Connolly, et al. (eds.), *Ethics in action: A case-based approach* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons), 50-77.

García-Suárez, Alfredo (1970), 'Existencia secular cristiana. Notas a propósito de un libro reciente', *Scripta Theologica,* 10, 145-64.

Gergersen, Niels Henrik (2001), 'The cross of Christ in an evolutionary world', *Dialog,* 40 (3), 192-207.

Gifford, Robert and Nilsson, Andreas (2014), 'Personal and social factors that influence pro-environmental concern and behaviour: A review', *International Journal of Psychology,* 49 (3), 141-57.

Gil Sáenz, Jesús (2014), 'La biblioteca de trabajo de san Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer en Roma', (Pontificia Universidad de la Santa Cruz).

Gomez, Jose H (2006), 'All you who labor: Towards a spirituality of work for the 21st century', *Notre Dame JL Ethics & Pub. Policy,* 20, 791-814.

González Gullón, José Luis (2018), *Escondidos: El Opus Dei en la zona republicana durante la Guerra Civil (1936-1939)* (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp).

González Gullón, José Luis and Coverdale, John F. (2021), *Historia del Opus Dei* (Madrid: Rialp).

Goosen, Gideon (1976), *The Theology of Work* (Dublin: The Mercier Press).

Grave, SA and Hibbert, Giles (1970), 'Christian Materialism Reconsidered: An Exchange', *New Blackfriars*, 35-38.

Green, Karen (1996), 'Two Distinctions in Environmental Goodness', *Environmental Values,* 5 (1), 31-46.

Groppe, Elizabeth T. (2017), '"The love that moves the sun and the stars": A theology of creation', in Vincent J Miller (ed.), *The theological and ecological vision of Laudato Si': everything is connected* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing), 77-94.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Gschwandtner, Christina M. (2013), '"All Creation Rejoices in You": Creation in the Liturgies for the Feasts of the Theotokos', in John Chryssavgis and Bruce V. Foltz (eds.), *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation* (New York: Fordham University Press), 34-45.

Gudynas, Eduardo (2014), *Derechos de la Naturaleza y políticas ambientales* (La Paz: Plural Editores).

Guerra, Francois-Xavier (2003), 'Josemaría Escrivá, Christians and the Temporal City', in Mariano Fazio (ed.), *La grandezza della vita quotidiana.* (II; Roma: Edusc), 69-91.

Guerra Sancho, Santiago (1987), 'La ecología, una pregunta a la teología cristiana', *Revista de espiritualidad,* 46 (182), 83-108.

Guess, Deborah (2020), 'Reverencing Matter: An Ecotheological Reading of John Damascene's Three Treatises on the Divine Images', *Colloquium: The Australian & New Zealand Theological Review,* 52 (1), 34-50.

Guitián, Gregorio (2018), 'Pope Francis and Catholic Social Teaching on Ecology: Implications for Christians Involved in Business', *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology,* 22 (2), 163-86.

Guitián, Gregorio and González, Ana-Marta (2022), 'Theology of Work: New Perspectives', *Scripta Theologica,* 54 (3), 757-87.

Habel, Norman C. (2011), *The birth, the curse and the greening of earth: an ecological reading of Genesis 1-11* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press).

Habib, Maki K. and Martín-Gómez, César (2021), *Biomimetics* (London: IntechOpen).

Hackett, Conrad, et al. (2015), *The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center).

Hahn, Scott (2006), *Ordinary work, extraordinary grace. My spiritual journey in Opus Dei* (New York: Doubleday).

Hamilton, Victor P. (1990), *The book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans).

Hanchin, Timothy and Hearlson, Christy Lang (2020), 'Educating for Ecological Conversion: An Ecstatic Pedagogy for Christian Higher Education amid Climate Crisis', *Religious Education,* 115 (3), 255-68.

Hanson, Jeffrey (2022), *Philosophies of Work in the Platonic Tradition: A History of Labor and Human Flourishing* (London: Bloomsbury Academic).

Hanson, Richard P. C. (1967), *The Acts, in the Revised standard version* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Harrison, Peter (1999), 'Subduing the Earth: Genesis 1, Early Modern Science, and the Exploitation of Nature', *The Journal of Religion,* 79, 86-109.

Hart, J. (1984), *The spirit of the earth. A theology of the land* (New York: Paulist Press).

Hayes, Bernadette G and Marangudakis, Manussos (2001), 'Religion and attitudes towards nature in Britain', *The British Journal of Sociology,* 52 (1), 139-55.

Hayes, Mark G. (2020), 'Creation and Creativity', in Celia Deane-Drummond and Rebecca Artinian-Kaiser (eds.), *Theology and ecology across the disciplines: on care for our common home* (5: Bloomsbury Publishing), 79-92.

Hernández-Urigüen, Rafael (2003), '"Devolver a la materia su noble y original sentido". Apuntes para una teología ecológica desde las enseñanzas de Josemaría Escrivá', *Actas Simposio de Teologia* (Universidad de Navarra), 203-28.

Herrando, Ramón (2002), *Los años del seminario de Josemaría Escrivá en Zaragoza (1920-1925). El seminario de San Francisco de Paula* (Madrid: Rialp).

Herranz-Casado, Julián (2011), *En las afueras de Jericó* (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp).

Hessel, Dieter T. and Ruether, Rosemary Radford (eds.) (2000), *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-being of Earth and Humans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

Hibbert, Giles (1969), 'Christian Materialism', *New Blackfriars*, 419-31.

Hiebert, Theodore (2000), 'Creation, the Fall, and Humanity's Role in the Ecosystem', in Calvin Wall Redekop (ed.), *Creation & the environment an Anabaptist perspective on a sustainable world* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Higgs, Eric S (1997), 'What is Good Ecological Restoration?', *Conservation biology*, 11 (2), 338-48.
Hill, Brennan R (1998), *Christian faith and the environment. Making vital connections* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books).
Houghton, J. (2006), 'Stewardship for the Twenty-first Century', in R.J. Berry (ed.), *Environmental Stewardship* (London: T&T Clark International), 315-17.
Hughes, John (2007), *The end of work : theological critiques of capitalism* (Oxford: Blackwell).
Illanes, José Luis (1982), *On the theology of work : aspects of the teaching of the founder of Opus Dei* (Dublin: Four Courts Press).
--- (2001), *La santificación del trabajo. El trabajo en la historia de la espiritualidad* (Madrid Palabra, 10 Ed. Original from 1979).
--- (2017), 'La homilía de 1967 en el contexto de los escritos de san Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer', *Scripta Theologica*, 49, 455-70.
Illanes, José Luis and Méndiz, Alfredo (2012), *Conversaciones con Monseñor Escrivá de Balaguer. Edición crítica* (Madrid: Rialp).
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2022), *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Working Group II Contribution to the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report* (Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press.).
Inwagen, Peter van (1995), 'Dualism and materialism: Athens and Jerusalem?', *Faith and Philosophy*, 12 (4), 475-88.
Ivanova, Diana, et al. (2017), 'Mapping the carbon footprint of EU regions', *Environmental Research Letters* (12), 1-13.
Jackson, Stephen T. and Hobbs, Richard J. (2009), 'Ecological Restoration in the Light of Ecological History', *Science*, 325 (5940), 567-69.
Jenkins, Willis (2009), 'After Lynn White: Religious ethics and environmental problems', *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 37 (2), 283-309.
--- (2013), *The future of ethics: sustainability, social justice, and religious creativity* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press).
Jensen, David Hadley (2006), *Responsive labor: A theology of work* (Louisville, KT: Westminster John Knox Press).
John Paul II (1981), *Laborem Exercens* (Vatican: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html).
--- (1988), *Christifideles laici* (Vatican: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici.html).
--- (1990), *Message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace* (Vatican: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19891208_xxiii-world-day-for-peace.html).
--- (1991), *Centessimus annus* (Vatican: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html).
--- (1995), *Apostolic Letter Orientale lumen* (Vaticano: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1995/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19950502_orientale-lumen.html).
--- (2001), *General Audience 17.01.2001* (Vatican: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/audiences/2001/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_20010117.html).
--- (2003), *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Pastores Gregis* (Vatican: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_20031016_pastores-gregis.html).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Join-Lambert, Arnaud (2014), 'Attempt to systematize the spirituality of Josemaria Escriva about a recent publication', *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses*, 90 (3), 569-78.
Jonas, Hans (1972), *The gnostic religion: the message of the alien God and the beginnings of Christianity* (Boston: Beacon Press).
Jones, Christopher M. and Kammen, Daniel M. (2011), 'Quantifying Carbon Footprint Reduction Opportunities for U.S. Households and Communities', *Environmental Science & Technology*, 45 (9), 4088-95.
Juan Pablo II (1982), *El celibato apostólico. Catequesis sobre la resurrección de la carne y la virginidad cristiana* (Madrid: Palabra).
Kaiser, Edwin G. (1966), *Theology of work* (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press).
Kardong, Terrence G. (1994), 'Ecological Resources in the Benedictine Rule ', in John E Carroll and Albert J LaChance (eds.), *Embracing earth: Catholic approaches to ecology* (New York: Maryknoll), 163-73.
Keen, Sam (1969), *Apology for wonder* (New York: Harper and Row).
Keller, Catherine (2017), 'Tingles of Matter, Tangles of Theology: Bodies of the New(ish) Materialism', *Intercarnations: Exercises in Theological Possibility* (New York: Fordham University Press), 60-82.
Keller, David R. (2010), *Environmental ethics: the big questions* (New Jersey (USA): Wiley-Blackwell).
Keller, Robert John (1993), 'Toward a contemporary Roman Catholic theology of work', (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing).
Kellert, Stephen R. (2005), *Building for Life: Designing and Understanding the human-nature connection* (Washington, DC: Island Press).
Kelly, Anthony (2016), *Laudato Si: An Integral Ecology and the Catholic Vision* (Adelaide: AFT Theology).
Khan, Mahreen (2022), 'The environmental impacts of war and conflict', *Institute of Development Studies*.
King, Karen (2017), '‘The Gnostic Myth’: How Does Its Demise Impact Twenty-first Century Historiography of Christianity’s Second Century?', in James C. Paget and Judith Lieu (eds.), *Christianity in the Second Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 122-36.
King, Martin Luther (1965), 'Facing the Challenge of a New Age', *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York, 1986: HarperCollins), 139.
Knuths, Elliot (2018), 'A problem for Christian materialism', *European journal for philosophy of religion*, 10 (3), 205-13.
Koehrsen, J. (2015), 'Does Religion Promote Environmental Sustainability? Exploring the Role of Religion in Local Energy Transitions.', *Social Compass*, 62, 296–310.
Krause, G (1982), 'Does matter matter? ', *Crux* 18:2, 2-5.
Kureethadam, Joshtrom Isaac (2014), *Creation in Crisis: Science, Ethics, Theology* (Maryknool, NY: Orbis Books).
--- (2016), 'Ecological Virtues in Laudato Si'', *Ethics in Progress*, 7 (1), 44-66.
--- (2017), *The Philosophical Roots of the Ecological Crisis: Descartes and the Modern Worldview* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing).
--- (2019), *The ten green commandments of Laudato Si'* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press).
Lakhan, Calvin (2018), 'The garbage gospel: Using the theory of planned behavior to explain the role of religious institutions in affecting pro-environmental behavior among ethnic minorities', *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 49 (1), 43-58.
Le Goff, Jacques (1980), *Time, work & culture in the Middle Ages* (Chicago ; London: University of Chicago Press).
Le Joly, Edward and Chaliha, Jaya (2002), 'Mother Teresa’s reaching out in love', (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble Books).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Leidenhag, Mikael (2017), 'Christian Materialism and the Quest for Human Personhood', *Perichoresis. The Theological Journal of Emanuel University,* 15 (2), 83-100.
Leonard, André-Mutien (2003), 'Le matérialisme chrétien de Josemaría Escrivá: Réflexions autour du livre Entretiens avec Mgr Escrivá', *Annales theologici,* 17 (1), 167-84.
Leopold, Aldo (1949), *A Sand County Almanac. And sketches here and there* (New York: Oxford University Press).
Levering, Matthew (2017), *Engaging the Doctrine of Creation: Cosmos, Creatures, and the Wise and Good Creator* (Baker Academic).
Liu, Jin Hui (2021), *La santificación del trabajo en el Magisterio de la Iglesia y en las enseñanzas de los santos del siglo XX* (Theology; Roma: EDUSC).
Loftin, R. Keith and Dimsdale, Trey (2018a), 'Work in Christian perspective: an introduction', in R. Keith Loftin and Trey Dimsdale (eds.), *Work: theological foundations and practical implications* (London: SCM Press), 1-8.
--- (2018b), *Work: theological foundations and practical implications* (London: SCM Press).
Lorentzen, Louis Ann (2001), *Etica Ambiental* (Puebla: Universidad Iberoamericana Puebla).
Lowes, Anthony (2001), 'Up close and personal: In the end, matter matters', in Denis Edwards (ed.), *Earth revealing, earth healing: Ecology and Christian theology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press), 125-44.
Luciani, Albino (1978), 'Cercando Dio nel lavoro quotidiano', *Il Gazzettino di Venezia, 25-VII-1978*, 9.
Mallarach, Josep Maria (2012), *Spiritual Values of Protected Areas of Europe. Workshop Proceedings* (Bonn: Federal Agency for Nature Conservation).
Mallarach, Josep Maria, Corcó, Josep, and Papayannis, Thymio (2014), 'Christian monastic communities living in harmony with the environment: an overview of positive trends and best practices', *Studia monastica,* 56 (2), 353-91.
Marcos, Alfredo (2001), *Ética Ambiental* (Valladolid. Serie Filosofia. Colección "Acceso al saber": Universidad de Valladolid).
Marcos, Alfredo and Pérez Marcos, Moisés (2018), *Meditación de la naturaleza humana* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos).
Maritain, Jacques (2012), *Integral humanism* (Notre Dame, IN (original 1936): University of Notre Dame Press).
Marsh, George Perkins (1864), *Man and Nature* (Cambridge (Edition from 1965): Harvard University Press).
Maspero, Giulio (2021), 'The Bible and the Fathers of the Church on Work', in Martin Schlag (ed.), *Holiness through work: commemorating the encyclical Laborem exercens* (South Bend, IN St. Augustine's Press), 6-33.
Mateo Seco, Lucas F (2005), *Dios Uno y Trino* (Pamplona, 2nd Ed.: EUNSA).
McDonagh, Sean (1986), *To care for the earth: a call to a new theology* (London: Geoffrey Chapman).
McFague, Salie (1993), *The body of God: An ecological theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress).
McGuckin, John Anthony (2013), 'The Beauty of the World and Its Significance in St. Gregory the Theologian', in John Chryssavgis and Bruce V. Foltz (eds.), *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation* (New York: Fordham University Press), 34-45.
Méndiz, Alfredo (2019), *Salvador Canals: una biografía (1920-1975)* (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp).
Metteer, Charles J (1999), '"Mary needs Martha": the purposes of manual labor in early Egyptian monasticism', *St. Vladimir's theological quarterly,* 43 (2), 163-207.
Meyer, John R. (1997), 'Striving for Personal Sanctity through Work', *Thomist: a Speculative Quarterly Review,* 61 (1), 85.
Miller, David W (2007), *God at work: The history and promise of the faith at work movement* (New York: Oxford University Press).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Minns, Denis (2009), 'Irenaeus', *Expository times,* 120 (4), 157-66.
Molina, M Carmen and Pérez-Garrido, Magui (2022), 'LAUDATO SI' and its influence on sustainable development five years later: A first LOOK at the academic productivity associated to this encyclical', *Environmental Development,* 43, 100726.
Moltmann, Jürgen (1993), G*od in creation: A new theology of creation and the Spirit of God* (Fortress Press).
Moo, Douglas J. and Moo, Jonathan A. (2018), *Creation care : a biblical theology of the natural world* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan).
Morris, Kevin L. (2007), *The truest fairy tale: a religious anthology of G.K. Chesterton* (Cambridge: Lutterworth).
Morrow, Jeffrey L (2009), 'Creation as Temple-Building and Work as Liturgy in Genesis 1-31', *Journal of the Orthodox Center for the Advancement of Biblical Studies,* 2 (1).
Munteanu, Daniel (2010), 'Cosmic Liturgy: The Theological Dignity of Creation as a Basis of an Orthodox Ecotheology', *International Journal of Public Theology,* 4 (3), 332-44.
Murphy, James (2012), 'Opus Dei: prayer or labor? The spirituality of work in Saints Benedict and Escrivá', in Luigino Bruni and Barbara Sena (eds.), *The charismatic principle in social life* (United Kingdom: Routledge), 94-111.
Nash, James A. (1991), *Loving nature: ecological integrity and Christian responsibility* (Nashville: Abingdon Press).
Nelson, Tom (2011), *Work matters: Connecting Sunday worship to Monday work* (Wheaton IL: Crossway).
Nggada, Philip Asura and Malgwi, Yunana I (2021), 'A Contextual Reading of Avad and Shamarin Genesis 2: 15 within Environmental Protection and Degradation', *JOS Journal of Religion and Philosophy* 3(2), 75-83.
O'Callaghan, Paul (2022), *God's Gift of the Universe: An Introduction to Creation Theology* (Washington DC: CUA Press).
Ocáriz, Fernando (1997), 'The vocation to holiness in Christ and the Church', in Manuel Belda, et al. (eds.), *Holiness and the world: studies in the teachings of blessed Josemaría Escrivá* (Princeton: Scepter Publ.), 33-52.
--- (2000), 'El concepto de santificación del trabajo', *Naturaleza, Gracia y Gloria* (Pamplona: Eunsa), 261-71.
--- (2013), '¿Qué impulso puede recibir la teología de las enseñanzas de san Josemaría?', *Romana,* 57, 356-70.
Orellano, Anabel and Chuvieco, Emilio (2022), 'Examining the Relationships between Religious Affiliation, External and Internal Behavioural Factors, and Personal Carbon Footprint', *Religions,* 13 (5), 416.
Orellano, Anabel, Valor, Carmen, and Chuvieco, Emilio (2020), 'The Influence of Religion on Sustainable Consumption: A Systematic Review and Future Research Agenda', *Sustainability,* 12 (19), 7901: doi:10.3390/su12197901.
Ormerod, Neil and Vanin, Cristina (2016), 'Ecological Conversion: What Does it Mean?', *Theological Studies,* 77 (2), 328-52.
Orwell, George (1960), *Animal farm : a fairy story* (London: Longmans).
Osborn, Lawrence (1993), *Guardians of creation: nature in theology and the Christian life* (Leicester: Apollos).
Ostring, Elizabeth Ellen and Davidson, Richard M. (2016), *Be a blessing : the theology of work in the narrative of Genesis* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock).
Paffhausen, Metropolitan Jonah (2013), 'Natural Contemplation in St. Maximus the Confessor and St. Isaac the Syrian', in John Chryssavgis and Bruce V. Foltz (eds.), *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation* (Fordham University Press), 46-58.
Palmer, Claire (2006), 'Stewardship: A Case study in Environmental Ethics', in Robert J. Berry (ed.), *Environmental Stewardship* (London: T&T Clark International), 63-75.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Papa Francisco (2020), *Soñemos juntos. El camino a un mundo futuro mejor* (Barcelona: Penguin Random House).
Pasnau, Robert (2002), Thomas Aquinas on human nature: A philosophical study of Summa Theologiae, 75-89 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
Pasqua, Hervé (2013), 'Mundo', *Diccionario de San Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer*, (Burgos: Monte Carmelo - Instituto Histórico Josemaría Escrivá), 868-75.
Peña Vial, Jorge (2002), 'Mística ojalatera y realismo en la santidad de la vida ordinaria', *Pensamiento y Cultura,* 5 (1), 21-32.
Peppard, Christiana Z (2016), 'Hydrology, Theology, and Laudato Si'', *Theological Studies,* 77 (2), 416-35.
Pérez-Gondar, Diego (2023), 'La antropología del trabajo desde la teología bíblica. Una nueva consideración de Gn 2, 4b-25', *Scripta Theologica,* 55 (1), 9-37.
Pew Research Centre (2017), *The Changing Global Religious Landscape* (https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/04/05/the-changing-global-religious-landscape/: Accessed in May 2022).
Philips, Gérard (1956), *Misión de los seglares en la Iglesia* (French original: 'Le role du laicant dans L'Eglise') (San Sebastián: Dinor).
--- (1966), *El laicado en la época del Concilio* (San Sebastián: Dinor).
--- (1968), 'Publicationes nouvelles', *Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses,* XLIV (44), 675.
Pia Chirinos, María (2012), 'Materia y materialismos en el contexto cultural contemporáneo: más allá de una dicotomía', in Catalina María Bermúdez Merizalde (ed.), *Materialismos y "materialismo cristiano": propuestas y retos en diálogo con la teología* (Bogotá: Universidad de La Sabana-Serie Memorias 02), 109-29.
Pigem, Jordi (2006), 'El mito del Cosmos desencantado', in A. López Tobajas and M. Tabuyo (eds.), *La naturaleza y el espíritu* (Palma de Mallorca: J.J. de Olañeta), 106.
Plantinga, Alvin (2007), 'Materialism and Christian belief', in Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman (eds.), *Persons: Human and divine* (New York: Oxford University Press), 99-141.
Poortinga, Wouter, et al. (2019), 'Climate change perceptions and their individual-level determinants: A cross-European analysis', *Global Environmental Change,* 55, 25-35.
Pope Francis (2013), *General audience: Wednesday 5 June* (Vaticano: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/audiences/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130605_udienza-generale.html).
--- (2015), *Encyclical Letter Laudato Si'. On care for our common home* (Vatican: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html).
Primrose, S. B. (2020), *Biomimetics: nature-inspired design and innovation* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell).
Puigbó, Armando Pego (2005), 'El ignacianismo de S. Josemaría Escrivá', *Ciudad de Dios* 218 (3), 713-34.
Quesada-Béjar, Luis R (2015), *La Teología espiritual del trabajo alrededor del Concilio Vaticano II* (PhD Theology; Pamplona: Navarra).
Quinn, Benjamin T. and Strickland Ii, Walter R. (2016), *Every waking hour: an introduction to work and vocation for Christians* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press).
Rae, Scott B. (2018), 'Work and Sanctification', in R. Keith Loftin and Trey Dimsdale (eds.), *Work : theological foundations and practical implications* (London: SCM Press), 127-43.
Ratzinger, Joseph (2005), *El espíritu de la liturgia: una introducción* (Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad).
Rhonheimer, Martin (2006), *Transformación del mundo: la actualidad del Opus Dei* (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Rockström, Johan, et al. (2009), 'Planetary boundaries: exploring the safe operating space for humanity', *Ecology and society*, 14 (2).
Rodríguez, Pedro (1991/2), 'Omnia traham ad meipsum. El sentido de Juan 12,32 en la experiencia espiritual de Mons. Escrivá de Balaguer', *Romana*, 13, 331-52.
--- (1992), 'Vivir santamente la vida ordinaria', *Scripta Theologica*, 24, 397-418.
--- (2004), *Camino. Edición crítica* (Madrid: Rialp, 3ª Ed).
--- (2012), 'La expresión "materialismo cristiano" en San Josemaría. Teología y mensaje', in Catalina María Bermúdez Merizalde (ed.), *Materialismos y "materialismo cristiano": propuestas y retos en diálogo con la teología* (Bogotá: Universidad de La Sabana-Serie Memorias 02), 31-48.
--- (2017), 'Santificación del mundo y «materialismo cristiano»', *Scripta Theologica*, 49 (2), 431-54.
Rodríguez, Pedro, Anchel, Constantino, and Sesé, Javier (2010), *Santo Rosario. Edición crítica* (Madrid: Rialp).
Rudolph, Kurt (2001), *Gnosis: the nature and history of gnosticism* (Edinburgh: T&T Black).
Ruijs, Wilhelmina L. M., et al. (2013), 'The role of religious leaders in promoting acceptance of vaccination within a minority group: a qualitative study', *BMC Public Health*, 13 (1), 511.
Saint Irenaeus (180), *Against Heresies* (Aeterna Press, 2016).
Saint John of Damascus (726-730), *Apologetic Treatises against those Decrying the Holy Images*, ed. 1898 Translated by Thomas Baker (1st edn.; Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library. (http://www.ccel.org/ccel/damascus/icons.html)).
Saint Thomas Aquinas (1265-1274), *Summa Theologica. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 1947* (Benziger Bros. https://www.ccel.org/a/aquinas/summa/home.html).
Sala, Serenella and Castellani, Valentina (2019), 'The consumer footprint: Monitoring sustainable development goal 12 with process-based life cycle assessment', *Journal of Cleaner Production* (240), 1-16.
Salo, M., Mattinen-Yuryev, M. K., and Nissinen, A. (2019), 'Opportunities and limitations of carbon footprint calculators to steer sustainable household consumption – Analysis of Nordic calculator features', *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 207, 658-66.
Sandler, Ronald (2012), 'Intrinsic Value, Ecology, and Conservation', *Nature Education Knowledge*, 3(10), 1-4.
Santmire, H. Paul (1985), *The travail of nature: the ambiguous ecological promise of Christian theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press).
Sanz-Sánchez, Santiago (2018), 'Lavoro, creazione e redenzione', in J. López Díaz and F. M. Requena (eds.), *Verso una spiritualità del lavoro professionale: teologia, antropologia e storia a 500 anni dalla Riforma* (3; Rome: EDUSC), 17-69.
--- (2019), '¿Cómo conectar el domingo con el lunes? Trabajo, creación y redención', *Annales theologici*, 33 (1), 153-72.
Sanz Giménez-Rico, Enrique (2016), *Cuidar de la Tierra, cuidar de los pobres* (Cantabria: SalTerrae).
Saranyana, Josep Ignasi (2017), 'La Facultad de Teología de la Universidad de Navarra en su contexto (1966-1972)', *Scripta Theologica*, 49 (3), 557-94.
--- (2018), 'El debate teológico sobre la secularidad cristiana (1930-1990)', *Anuario de historia de la Iglesia*, 13, 151-76.
Savino, Sister Damien Marie (2018), 'Proposing an Examen for Living the Ecology of Daily Life and Building a Culture of Care', *Trumpeter (Victoria)*, 34 (1), 103-30.
Sayers, Dorothy (1940), 'Why Work?', *Creed or Chaos* (Sophia Institute Press), 63-84.
Schaefer, Jame (2009), *Theological foundations for environmental ethics: Reconstructing patristic and medieval concepts* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press).
Schlag, Martin (2021a), 'Contemplation at Work: A theological conversation between John Paul II and Josemaría Escrivá', in Martin Schlag (ed.), *Holiness through*

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

work: commemorating the encyclical Laborem exercens (South Bend, IN St. Augustine's Press), 110-33.
--- (2021b), *Holiness through work: commemorating the encyclical Laborem exercens* (South Bend, IN St. Augustine's Press).
Schlatter, Antonio (2017), *Trabajo del hombre, trabajo de Dios. La dignidad del trabajo manual en las enseñanzas de san Josemaría Escrivá* (Madrid: Rialp).
--- (2018), 'La homilía "Amar al mundo apasionadamente" y el valor del trabajo manual', in Javier Requena López Díaz, Federico M. (ed.), *Verso una spiritualità del lavoro professionale* (III/5; Roma: Pontificia Università della Santa Croce), 119-33.
Schmidtz, D. and Willott, E. (eds.) (2012), *Environmental Ethics. What Really Matters, What Really Works* (New York: Oxford University Press).
Schultz, P Wesley, et al. (2005), 'Values and their relationship to environmental concern and conservation behavior', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology,* 36 (4), 457-75.
Schultz, P Wesley, Zelezny, Lynnette, and Dalrymple, Nancy J (2000), 'A multinational perspective on the relation between Judeo-Christian religious beliefs and attitudes of environmental concern', *Environment and Behavior,* 32 (4), 576-91.
Schumacher, Ernst F. (1973), *Small is beautiful. Economics as if People Mattered* (New York: Harper and Row).
Second Vatican Council (1965), *Gaudium et Spes. Pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world* (Vatican: https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html).
Selman, Francis John (1994), *Saint Thomas Aquinas: teacher of truth* (Edimburg: Clark Ltd).
Sen, Amartya (1988), *The standard of living* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
Shakweer, W. M. E., et al. (2023), 'A review of transgenic animal techniques and their applications', *Journal of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology,* 21 (1), 55.
Sherrard, Philip (1992), *Human image: world image. The death and resurrection of sacred cosmology* (Ipswich: Golgonooza in association with Friends of the Centre).
Shiva, Vandana (1991), *The violence of the green revolution: third world agriculture, ecology and politics* (London: Zed Books).
Shott, Jeffrey (2022), 'The Cosmic Temple and the Priesthood of Man', (https://media.journoportfolio.com/users/306001/uploads/8da5bac1-7ae9-4199-abef-7d808dc2ab42.pdf: SCRPT 103).
Skinner, John (1956), *A critical and exegetical commentary on Genesis* (2nd edn.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark).
Smith, Randall (2011), 'Creation and the Environment in the Hebrew Scriptures', in Tobias L Winright (ed.), *Green Discipleship: Catholic Theological Ethics and the Environment* (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic), 74-92.
Sölle, Dorothee and with Cloyes, Shirley A. (1984), *To work and to love: a theology of creation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press).
Soskice, Janet Martin (1992), 'Love and Attention', *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement,* 32, 59-72.
Spaiser, V., et al. (2019), 'Consumption-based accounting of CO2 emissions in the sustainable development Goals Agenda', *International Journal of Sustainable Development & World Ecology,* 26 (4), 282-89.
Stapleford, Thomas A. (2018), 'Making and the Virtues', *The Ethics of Scientific Research,* 5 (1), 28-50.
Steffen, Will, et al. (2015), 'Planetary boundaries: Guiding human development on a changing planet', *science,* 347 (6223), 1259855.
Steffen, Will, et al. (2018), 'Trajectories of the Earth System in the Anthropocene', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences,* 115 (33), 8252-59.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Steg, Linda and de Groot, Judith IM (eds.) (2019), *Environmental Psychology: An Introduction, 2nd. edition* (Hooboken, NJ.: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.).
Strieder, Juliana, et al. (2017), 'Education level and income are important for good environmental awareness: a case study from south Brazil', *Ecología austral*, 27 (1), 39-44.
Surur, Feiruz and Kaba, Mirgissa (2000), 'The Role of Religious Leaders in HIV/AIDS Prevention, Control, and Patient Care and Support: A Pilot Project in Jimma Zone', *Northeast African Studies,* 7 (2), 59-79.
Swearer, D. K. and McGarry, S. L. (eds.) (2011), *Ecologies of Human Flourishing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
Swenson, Kristin M (2006), 'Care and keeping east of Eden: Gen 4: 1–16 in Light of Gen 2–3', *Interpretation,* 60 (4), 373-84.
Tal, Alon (2006), *Speaking of earth: Environmental speeches that moved the world* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press).
Tatay, Jaime (2017), 'De la cuestión social (RN) a la cuestión socio-ambiental (LS). La recepción católica del reto de la sostenibilidad: 1891-2015', (Pontificia Universidad de Comillas).
--- (2018), *Ecología integral: la recepción católica del reto de la sostenibilidad: 1891 (RN)-2015 (LS)* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos).
Taylor, Bron (2016), 'The Greening of Religion Hypothesis (Part One): From Lynn White, Jr and Claims That Religions Can Promote Environmentally Destructive Attitudes and Behaviors to Assertions They Are Becoming Environmentally Friendly', *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature & Culture,* 10 (3), 268-305.
Taylor, Bron, Van Wieren, Gretel, and Zaleha, Bernard (2016a), 'The greening of religion hypothesis (part two): Assessing the data from Lynn White, Jr, to Pope Francis', *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture,* 10 (3), 306-78.
Taylor, Bron, Van Wieren, Gretel, and Zaleha, Bernard Daley (2016b), 'Lynn White Jr. and the greening-of-religion hypothesis', *Conservation Biology,* 30 (5), 1000-09.
Taylor, Charles (1992), *Sources of the self: The making of the modern identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).
Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre (1960), *Le Milieu Divin. An Essay on the Interior Life* (London: Collins).
--- (1976), *The heart of matter* (London: Collins).
Theokritoff, Elizabeth (2009), *Living in God's creation: Orthodox perspectives on ecology* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press).
--- (2010), 'The Salvation of the World and Saving the Earth: An Orthodox Christian Approach', *Worldviews*, 141-56.
--- (2017), 'Green Patriarch, Green Patristics: Reclaiming the Deep Ecology of Christian Tradition', *Religions,* 8 (7), 116.
Therrien, Mark (2020), 'Ama et labora: Augustine's theology of work as a resource for Catholic Social Teaching', *Catholic Social Science Review,* 25, 69-85.
Thils, Gustave (1947), *Theologie des réalités terrestres. I Preludes* (Paris: Desclee de Brouwer).
--- (1949), *Théologie des réalités terrestres. II Théologie de l'historie* (Paris: Ediciones Desclée).
--- (1952), *Théologie et realité sociale* (Paris: Casterman).
Thoreau, H.D. (1854), *Walden or life in the woods* (New York: Dover Publications).
Tirosh-Samuelson, Hava (ed.), (2002), *Judaism and Ecology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
Todolí, Jose (1952), 'Teología del Trabajo', *Revista Española de Teología,* 12 (4), 559-80.
Toni-Uebari, Thelma K. and Inusa, Baba P. D. (2009), 'The role of religious leaders and faith organisations in haemoglobinopathies: a review', *BMC Hematology,* 9 (1), 6.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

Tormo-Ederra, Antonio (2022), *La libertad en el Opus Dei. Carta de Josemaría Escrivá a José Solís Ruiz ante la campaña de la prensa falangista contra el Opus Dei* (1966) (Madrid: Amazon).
Traffas, John R (1983), 'The Spirit of Community and the Spirituality of Work: A Note on Laborem Exercens', *Communio,* 10, 407-11.
Tucker, Mary Evelyn and Williams, Duncan Ryuken (eds.) (1997), *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deed* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
Turkson, Peter Kodwo (2019), 'The Evolution of the Concept of Integral Ecology in Papal Teaching', in Dennis O´Hara, Matthew Eaton, and Michael T. Ross (eds.), *Integral Ecology for a More Sustainable World: Dialogues with Laudato Si'* (Lanham, MA: Lexington Books), xi-xxiv.
Van Dyke, Christina (2009), 'Not properly a person: The rational soul and 'thomistic substance dualism'', *Faith and Philosophy,* 26 (2), 186-204.
Vazquez de Prada, Andrés (2001-2005), *The Founder of Opus Dei: The Life of Josemaría Escrivá, 3 volumes* (New York: Scepter Publishers).
Vázquez de Prada, Andrés (1997-2003), *El Fundador del Opus Dei*, 3 vols. (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp).
Velayos, C. (2008), *Etica y cambio climático* (Bilbao: Desclée de Brouwer).
Vilkka, Leena (1997), *The intrinsic value of nature* (Amsterdam: Rodopi).
Volf, Miroslav (1991), *Work in the spirit: toward a theology of work* (New York: Oxford University Press).
von Balthasar, Hans Urs (1963), 'Integralism', *Neue Zürcher Nachrichten' (Zürich)*
--- (2003), Cosmic Liturgy. The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press).
Wallace-Hadrill, David Sutherland (1968), *The Greek patristic view of nature* (Manchester University Press).
Waltke, Bruce K. (2001), *Genesis : a commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan).
Warner, Keith Douglass, Brook, Amara, and Shaw, Krista (2012), 'Facilitating religious environmentalism: ethnology plus conservation psychology tools can assess an interfaith environmental intervention', *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology,* 16 (2), 111-34.
Weber, Max (2001), *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Routledge, original from 1930).
Weil, Simone (1952), *The need for roots : prelude to a declaration of duties towards mankind* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press).
--- (1962), *Pensées sans ordre concernant l'amour de Dieu* (Paris: Gallimard).
Weinberg, Heinrich (2022), 'Ecología en el 'De Genesi ad litteram libri XII'', *Augustinus: revista trimestral publicada por los Padres Agustinos Recoletos,* 67, Nº. 264-265, 35-177.
Westermann, Claus and Scullion, John (1984), *Genesis 1-11 : a commentary* (London: SPCK).
White, Lynn T. (1967), 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis', *Science,* 155 (3767), 1203-07.
Wiedmann, Thomas, et al. (2020), 'Scientists' warning on affluence', *Nature Communications,* 11 (1), 3107.
Wildiers, Norbertus Maximiliaan (1968), *An introduction to Teilhard de Chardin* (London: Fontana Books).
Wilson, Jonathan R. (2013), *God's good world : reclaiming the doctrine of creation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic).
Wirzba, Norman (2003a), 'The Character of Creation', *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age* (New York: New York: Oxford University Press), 23-70.
--- (2003b), 'Humanity's Place in Creation', *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age* (New York: New York: Oxford University Press).

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei

--- (2003c), *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age* (New York: New York: Oxford University Press).
--- (2011), 'A Priestly Approach to Environmental Theology: Learning to Receive and Give Again the Gifts of Creation', *Dialog: a journal of theology,* 50 (4), 354-62.
Wolfenson, J. D. (2003), 'Foreword', in M. Palmer and V. Finlay (eds.), *Faith in Conservation. New Approaches to Religions and the Environment* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank), xi.
Woodrum, Eric and Hoban, Thomas (1994), 'Theology and religiosity effects on environmentalism', *Review of Religious Research*, 193-206.
Wyszynski, Stefan (1960), *Work* (Chicago: Scepter).
Zaehner, R. C. (1971), *Dialectical Christianity and Christian materialism: the Riddell memorial lectures, fortieth series, delivered at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne on 25, 26, and 27 February 1969* (London: Oxford University Press).
Zizioulas, John (2006), 'Priest of Creation', in R.J. Berry (ed.), *Environmental Stewardship* (London: T&T Clark International), 273-90.
--- (2010), 'Relational ontology: Insights from patristic thought', in John Polkinghorne (ed.), *The Trinity and an entangled world: Relationality in physical science and theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 146-56.
--- (2013), 'Proprietors or Priests of Creation?', in John Chryssavgis and Bruce V. Foltz (eds.), *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation* (New York: Fordham University Press), 163-72.
--- (2021a), 'Creation theology. An orthodox perspective', in John Chryssavgis and Nikolaos Asproulis (eds.), *Priests of Creation: John Zizioulas on Discerning an Ecological Ethos* (London: T&T Clark), 38-52.
--- (2021b), 'Orthodoxy and the ecological crisis', in John Chryssavgis and Nikolaos Asproulis (eds.), *Priests of Creation: John Zizioulas on Discerning an Ecological Ethos* (London: T&T Clark), 55-60.
--- (2021c), 'Preserving God's Creation: Three Lectures on Theology and Ecology ', in John Chryssavgis and Nikolaos Asproulis (eds.), *Priests of Creation: John Zizioulas on Discerning an Ecological Ethos* (London: T&T Clark), 93-132.
--- (2021d), 'A Theological Approach to the Ecological Problem ', in John Chryssavgis and Nikolaos Asproulis (eds.), *Priests of Creation: John Zizioulas on Discerning an Ecological Ethos* (London: T&T Clark), 61-72.

Biblioteca Virtual Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer y Opus Dei