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**GENDER, RELIGION, HUMAN RIGHTS
IN EUROPE**

edited by

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the evangelical ethics of love is grounded on the rule of asymmetry and transcends the demands of justice.

I am persuaded that the Beatitudes (*Matthew* 5, 3-12; *Luke* 6, 220-23) go beyond the Law, because of their being set on a different level. They express new justice: the kingdom of God is "gift and grace", an action through which God himself frees his people (the oppressed, the wretched and the people without rights)¹⁵. Read as expressions of eschatological ethics, the Beatitudes question worldly reality and make themselves an instrument of transformation and sanction of new rights. In fact they disturb fixed social rules¹⁶.

¹⁷Human beliefs springing from the reflection on the Beatitudes (the defence of the oppressed people, for instance) and on Revelation (our being the image of God; the call to responsibility; the announcement of Salvation which has to be brought to everybody without distinction; and so on...) urge us to carry out dynamic research, to find concrete modalities of practicing such announced values.

The Holy Texts reflect the dynamism of life, and Scriptural interpretation becomes viable according to the dynamism of the Spirit. This signifies that the search for the meaning of life is endless. For Christians there is a triple attention according to the theological virtues. The roots are found in the Holy Texts (faith); the present is the place of salvation within the historical contingency (charity); the future refers to the heavenly Jerusalem (hope).

The heavenly Jerusalem does not mean a return to Paradise: man and woman leave Eden and do not go back to it anymore. It is not the reproduction of a previous ideal situation. It is novelty. It is unedited.

Therefore, Christians are called to dismantle the historical order, so that women, as bearers of a "moral of aspiration", become the critical factor in the recognition of human rights for both sexes. This development will confront a certain praxis of the Church which sanctions legal inequality between men and women and denies the latter the right to full religious citizenship.

¹⁵ Jacques Dupont, *Les Béatitudes*, Bruges, Abbaye de Saint-André, 1958-73.

¹⁶ Heinz-Dietrich Wendland, *Ethik des Neuen Testaments*. Eine Einführung, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht, 1970.

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