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Domination-Liberation : A New Approach

THIS article is divided into two parts. The first part consists of a detailed analysis of some of the themes currently prevailing in Latin American theology. This is followed, in Part II, by a methodological analysis to show the relevance of this theology not only for our Latin America, but for all "peripheral" cultures -in fact for theology throughout the world, beyond the bounds, that is, of strictly European theology.

I. DOMINATION-LIBERATION

In this first section we shall examine in detail the trends taken by Latin American theology, which always starts, not from a theological position, but from the state of affairs as they actually exist. We start, therefore, not with what theologians have said about the situation, but with the situation itself. As we can indicate only some of the themes possible, we shall consider the three which tradition suggests should be the most important. In Semitic thought Hammurabi declared quite clearly in his *Code*: "I have defended them with wisdom, so that the strong shall not oppress the weak, and that justice be done to the orphan and widow." These political, sexual and educational levels are also indicated in Isa. I. 17: "Correct oppression; defend the fatherless; plead for the widow." The same three levels are also indicated by Jesus: "Truly I say to you, there is no man who has left house, or wife or parents or children ..." (Lk. 18. 29). In the sixteenth century, Bartolomé de las Casas accused European

Christians of injustice because "the men-for in battles normally only children and women are left alive-are oppressed with the hardest, most horrible and harshest servitude."¹ The brother-to-brother aspect (male, oppressed, weak) is the political level; the man-woman aspect (home, wife, widow) is the sexual level; the father-son aspect (orphan, child) is the educational level. Let us see how, on these three levels, an argument can be constructed from the situation as it acutally exists.

I. *The Political Starting-Point*

The present world situation reveals in its structure an imbalance that is already five centuries old. Byzantine Christianity was destroyed in 1453 and, thanks to the experiences of Portugal in North Africa and the failure of its eastward expansion (the conquest movement of the crusades in the Middle Ages which tried to reach the Orient by way of the Arab world), Latin Christianity began to expand in the North Atlantic, which has remained, up to the present day, the centre of world history , politically speaking. First Spain, then Holland and England, followed by France and other European countries, worked out the framework of a truly world-wide oikumene, for until the fifteenth century the Latin, Byzantine Arab, Indian, Chinese, Aztec or Inca oikumenes were purely regional. The new oikumene had its centre in Europe and, since the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the present century, the United States, Russia, and more recently Japan. It also had a huge periphery -Latin America, the Arab world, Black Africa, South East Asia, India and China.

European man first said, through Spain and Portugal, with Pizarro and Cortés: "I conquer"-and he said it to the Indian. With Hobbes he stated more clearly still : "Homo homini lupus." With Nietzsche he called himself "the will to power". Thus the political and economic structure of the world was unified into

¹ *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (Buenos Aires, 1966), p. 36. For an historical insight into the argument of this present article, see my *Historia de la Iglesia en América Latina, Coloniaje y liberación (1492-1972)* (Barcelona, 1972); for the theological matter see *Caminos de liberación latino-americana*, two volumes (Buenos Aires, 1972-73); for the philosophical background, *Para una ética de la liberación latino-americana* three volumes (Buenos Aires, 1973-74).

one all-powerful international market. Here is an example to illustrate the profound moral injustice of this dehumanizing structure.

EXPORTS OF PRECIOUS METALS FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO EUROPE, WITH CORRESPONDING IMPORTS OF MERCHANDISE INTO LATIN AMERICA (In maravedis, the currency of the period).

Period	Exports from the private sector	Imported goods	Balance in Spain's favour
1561-1570	8,785 million	1,565 million	7,220 million
1581-1590	16,926 "	3,915 "	13,011 "
1621-1630	19,104 "	15,300 "	13,804 "

(Source: Works of Alvaro Jara, Pierre Chaunu, Osvaldo Sunkel.)

This dependence and colonial injustice was to last without interruption from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. Raul Prebisch tells us in 1964 that, between 1950 and 1961 in Latin America, "net remissions of foreign capital of all types reached the figure of 9,600 million dollars, while Latin American exports overseas amounted to 13,400 million dollars."² So far as the political situation is concerned (brother-to-brother) domination is now exercised by the centre over the periphery. This pattern is repeated when the capital city exploits the interior or the provinces,³ or where an upper-class minority dominates the

² *Nueva política comercial para el desarrollo* (Mexico, 1966). p. 30. If to this is added the deterioration in price-ratios between raw materials and manufactured products, the so-called under-developed countries have been simply exploited, expropriated and robbed. From this bulletin of CEPAL (UNESCO) came the so-called social economy of dependence based on the works of Celso Furtado, Jaguaribe, Cardoso, Faletto, Theotonio dos Santos, Gunter Frank or Hinkelammert in Latin America or of Samir Amin in Africa, with the European position given by Arghiri Emmanuel or Charles Bettelheim. See also a bibliography on the subject in *Desarrollo y revolución, Iglesia y liberación (Bibliografía)* produced by CEDIAI, Bogotá. Parts I & 2 (1971-3).

³ a In the presidential elections in Argentina on 23 Sept. 1973, the Federal Capital (Buenos Aires) awarded the working/peasant class candidate 42% of the votes, while the poorest provinces in the north-east awarded more

working classes, and where bureaucracy directs the fortunes of the masses.

2. *The Sexual Starting-Point*

Interpersonal relations show that in the relationship of man to woman, injustice has existed for thousands of years-an injustice which reached its highest level in modern Europe. If it is true, as Freud so brilliantly revealed, that, in our male-dominated society, "the *libido* is generally masculine in nature",⁴ it was not so clearly seen that the colonizer was usually male and his victim in our case was the Indian woman. Bishop Juan Ramírez of Guatemala, wrote on March 10th, 1603: "The worst forms of force and violence, unheard of in other nations and kingdoms, are perpetrated upon the Indian women. The wives of Indian men are raped forcibly by order of the authorities and they are obliged to work in the homes of planters, on farms and in labour camps where they live in sin with the master of the house, with mestizos, mulattos, blacks, or with other cruel men".⁵ The colonial male who lies illegally with the Indian woman is the father of the mestizo, and the Indian woman is the mother. The male conquistador-first the planters and colonial bureaucracy, later the native-born creole minority and finally the bourgeoisie of the dependent territories-sexually oppressed and alienated the Indian, the mestizo or the poor woman. The male from the national higher-class minority seized the local girl from the hands of the poor working man living on the outskirts of the big cities-a theme sung in the Tango "Margot" 1918, by Celedonio Flores-while demanding of his own high-born wife both purity and chastity. This particular piece of hypocrisy was pointed out by W. Reich and it can be observed extensively in the Third World.

than 75% (Jujuy, Salta, Tucumán, Santiago del Estero, Catamarca, La Rioja). The big Latin American capitals provide evidence of internal dependence.

⁴ *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*, III, 4. Freud's error consists in confusing "the reality of masculine domination in our society with the "reality of sexuality" as such. See my "Para una erótica latinoamericana" (chapter VII in *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*, III, pp. 42-7).

⁵ *Archivo General de Indias* (Seville), Audiencia de Guatemala 156.

The everyday "I conquer", the ontological *ego cogito*, comes from the oppressor male, who, as we see by psychoanalysis of Descartes, denies his mother, his lover and his daughter. To borrow an expression from Maryse Choisy and Lacan, we might say that these days "phallocracy goes hand-in-hand with plutocracy".

3. *The Educational Starting-Point*

Political and sexual domination is completed through *education*: the child is conditioned within the family, and youth in society is moulded through the media. Since Aristotle⁶ educators have maintained that "parents love their children because they regard them as they regard themselves (*heatous*), for they are in some sense one's self (*tauto*), yet divided into separate individuals" (*Et. Nic.* VIII, 12, 1161 b 27-34). Cultural conquest of other peoples is equally an expansion of the self. The conquistador or the propagandist achieves his aim by force of arms or by violently imposing on the other (the Indian, African, Asian, the community, the worker, the oppressed) so-called civilization, or his religion, or by exalting his own cultural system (the ideological closed system). Educational domination is dialectical (from the Greek *dia* = through)-a movement whereby the cultural boundaries of the father, the imperialist or the oligarchy extend so as to embrace the other (the son) within its self. The process of conquest and cultural assimilation in America, Africa and Asia and the education of the son into the self (as Socrates proposed in his *mayeutica* as a means of "being delivered of one's ideas") is a kind of inverted Passover, an ideological dialectic whereby the new being (the other, the young person) is eclipsed and domination made complete. Further, it is projected into the personal and social ego, so that the son or the oppressed culture even begins to sing the praises of his oppressor: "two different civilizations can be seen side by side-the one belonging to the country itself and the other to European civilization."⁷ Sarmiento spurns the culture of the periphery, the dependent nation, the

⁶ See my *Para una ética de la liberación*, *op.cit.*, pp. 137 ff.

⁷ Domingo F. Sarmiento, *Facundo* (English trans.)

gaucho and the poor; instead he exalts the culture of the "centre", which is a minority culture, élitist and oppressive.

4. *Face-to-Face Encounter-the Closed System and the Outside*

Starting-point of our argument was the "actual situation" or (reality) considered at three levels. But reality can have two different basic meanings. Anything within the world is real as having existence in the world⁸ and in this sense the Indian was a real being assigned to a master and the Black was a real being, who was enslaved. On the other hand, something can also be real from a universal point of view⁹ as constituted by its essential physical structure.¹⁰ The political, sexual and educational points we have made are events taking place within various situations, with men playing different roles, whether as dependent under developed countries, as woman or as child. These situations are, however, distortions or denials of that very basic human (one might even say, sacred) quality-face-to-face encounter. The real situation of men *within* circumstances of oppression is a denial of the real nature of man as "another being", -which is the meta-physical meaning of reality .

Encounter face-to-face (Hebrew *pnîm'el pnim* of Ex. 33. II), person-to-person encounter (Greek *prosopon pros prosopon*, I Cor. 13. 12), is a linguistic reduplication, common in Hebrew, used to convey the greatest nearness of comparison-the very closest in this case: closeness, the immediacy of contact between two mysteries each equally aware of meeting another. In sexual activity this encounter is mouth-to-mouth-i.e. the kiss: "Oh that you would kiss me with the kisses of your mouth!" (Song

⁸ This is the meaning of reality for Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York, 1962).

⁹ Expression used by the older Schelling (*Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie*, XXIV); *Werke*, V (Munich, 1959), p. 748; *trans-mundan*, though not with the same meaning. Beyond being and beyond the world, is the Lord of being (*ibid.*).

¹⁰ Xavier Zubiri, *Sobre la escencia* (Madid, 1963), p. 395 : "Reality is the object as something in its own right. The object is actualized in the mind and presents itself to us intellectually as existing in its own right before (*prius*) we actually see it." In the same sense the other for Levinas is the reality beyond the closed system and beyond being (cf. *Totalité et Infini*, The Hague, 1961). See also my *La Dialectica hegeliana* (Mendoza, 1972), pp. 141 ff.

of Songs I. I). This is a fundamental truth, a *veritas prima*-to see the face of someone without oneself losing the quality of someone; to see the face of the other, and yet to remain oneself; to encounter the mystery which opens out, incomprehensible and sacred beyond the eyes that I actually see and which actually see me in the closeness of encounter.

There was a day when the conquistador stood face-to-face with the Indian, the African and the Asian. The boss stood face-to-face with the unemployed who came to seek work. The man was face-to-face with the helpless woman begging for mercy. The father stood before his new-born son, face-to-face, as a man talking to his intimate friend. With its closed system (the ontological), Europe opened itself as the male and the father was open to the otherness (the metaphysical if *physics* is "being" in the sense of the world's horizons) of the peripheral cultures, to the woman and child, or, we might say, to the "stranger, the widow and the orphan", as the prophets had it.

The other is primary (the parents Who beget the son, the society which admits us into its traditions or the Creator Who gives us real being). Man, rather than relate to nature (the economic level), chooses to expose himself to another man. We are born in the womb of a someone (our mother); in our first waking moments we eat that someone (we suckle at the breasts of our mother). We ardently want to remain face-to-face ever afterwards. After the closeness of face-to-face relationship the separation necessitated by economic dealings is a painful alternative

5. The Oppressor Praxis-Sin and the Poor

Biblical symbolism shows us through the prophetic tradition an argument or line of thought which we shall here set out briefly. In the first place "Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him" (Gen. 4. 8), and Jesus adds the comment "innocent Abel" (Mt. 23. 25). To say "no" to my neighbour is the only possible sin, it is the "sin of the world" or the fundamental sin. The same "no" to my neighbour is said by the priest and the levite in the parable of the Samaritan (Lk. 10. 31-2). Augustine, in his political interpretation of original sin, says clearly that "Cain founded a city, while Abel the wanderer did

not".¹¹ Historically and actually sin since the fifteenth century has taken the form of a "no" on the part of the North Atlantic centre to the Indian, the African, the Asian and to the worker, the peasant and the outcast. It has been a "no" to the woman in patriarchal families, and a "no" to the child in the oppressor's educational system.

"No" to my neighbour (anthropologically speaking) or fratricide leads to maximizing the reign of the "flesh" (*basar* in Hebrew; *sarx* in Greek). The device of temptation (and not of Prometheus bound to the *ananke*) is the one proposed by the closed system in the words, "You shall be as gods" (Gen. 3. 5). Sin, beginning as "no" to my neighbour, takes the form of self-deification, the exalting of self as an object of worship, and leads to idolatry-"no" to the Creator. To be able to say with Nietzsche "God is dead" it was necessary first of all to kill his manifestation of himself to the Indian, the African and the Asian.

Idoltrous exaltation of the *flesh*, in this case as seen in the modern structure of European Christianity, produces within the closed system a separation between the one who dominates "the world" (a new term for "flesh", but now completely deified) and the oppressed. On the one side stand "the rulers.. (*archontes*) of the nations (who) lord it over them (*katakryieousin*) and the great men (who) exercise authority" (Mt. 20. 25). These are the "angels" (sent by) the "Prince of this world" and the Pilates who "ask for water and wash their hands" (Mt. 27. 24). The present world order (economic, cultural, sexual and aesthetic) is the prevailing rule of sin, inasmuch as it oppresses the poor. The "rulers" have their group projection which they objectivize as the projection of the whole system and which expands as an imperialist projection by means of conquest in Latin America, Africa and Asia. The "self" remains the "self". The "praxis of domination" of those who usurp the position of God and exalt themselves is sin in a very real and strict sense. This is the praxis of "no" to my neighbour, spoken to the op-

¹¹ *Civ. Dei, XV, I. Cic. Dei* expounds the two basic biblical categories: the "closed-shop" founded on self-seeking love (*libido*), and openness which lies open to the future in loving concern for others (*caritas*). See *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*. Chap. IV. §§ 20-23. and Chap. V. §§ 26-8, volume II. pp. 13-88

pressed brother, to woman as a sexual object, to the child as the unthinking reproducer of traditional ways of life.

The oppressed one is Job. He suffers because sin (the praxis of the great one acting as *oppressor*) alienates him, but he is not aware of having committed any sin at all. The wise men in his situation, speaking for the system (Bildad and Sophar), try to convince the oppressed one in the name of Satan, that he is a sinner. By so doing they maintain the innocence of the real sinner-of the oppressors.

The oppressed one humanly speaking is not the poor (the oppressed as an other). The "poor" in the words "Blessed are the poor" (*ptochoi*) (Lk. 6. 20), or better still in the words "The poor you shall have with you always" (Mt. 26. II) is the other in that he does not share the supreme value of the socio~political system. The "poor" are just as much a category-they are the oppressed nation, class, person or woman in that these are outside the structure of the oppressor. In this sense the "poor" (in the biblical sense) are not the same as the alienated oppressed living *within* the system, but they do share many of the characteristics of the poor socially and economically speaking.

6. *The Praxis of Liberation-Redemption and the Prophet*

To make the contrast with the "praxis of sin" set out in the previous section, we can now look at the praxis of liberation, of anti-sin or the direct opposite of the negation of the other.¹² The Bible speaks, in the story of Moses (Ex. 3 ff.) or in the parable of the Samaritan, of a direct "yes" to my neighbour when he is still oppressed within the system. The prophetic light of faith permits us to see through the outward surface of the oppressed and to see the other within. Behind the slave of Egypt lies man, liberated. Behind the beaten, robbed traveller lying at the roadside

¹² In Hegel this is the negation of distinction and the object, which for its part has been the negation of Being in itself or Totality taken as the originating and divine Identity. On the other hand, in our case it is a matter of denying the alienation of the other (reduced to the level of an object), that is to say, to affirm (say "yes" to) the other who is distinct. (See my *Para una ética de la liberación*, chap. III, § 16, vol. I, pp. 118 ff.; chap. IV, § 23, and Chap. V, §§ 29-31, vol. II, pp. 42-127); thus this is a negation of what Hegel affirmed coming from an Outside unknown to him.

is the otherness of the human persona. This is not a turning aside (*aversio*) from the other, but a turning towards (*conversio*) the other as a fellow citizen of the City of God. As we see in the case of Bartolomé de las Casas, that ardent anti-conquistador and modern European, the righteous man discovers the other as he really is: "God made these people (the Indians) the simplest of men, without guile or cunning, not quarrelsome, riotous or rowdy. They bear no ill-will or hatred, and they seek no revenge."¹³

To say "yes" to my neighbour, the system first has to be broken into, opened up. We have, in other words, to cease to believe in the system. The Virgin of Nazareth, the flesh, opens us to the spirit (otherness). Jesus said that we should "render to Caesar that which is Caesar's, and to God that which is God's (Mt. 22. 21). Like the prophets before him, he thus did not believe in Caesar, the flesh and the closed system. When Feuerbach and Marx said they did not believe in the "god" of Hegel and of the European bourgeoisie (the only god they knew), they set out along the correct and orthodox path.¹⁴

To achieve the breakdown of the closed system of sin, otherness has to attack it subversively. The ana-lectic (what is outside the system), the absolute Other, the Word (in Hebrew *dabhar*, which has nothing to do with the Greek *logos*) breaks into the closed system and becomes flesh: ". . .in the form of God ... he emptied himself (*ekenosen*) and took the form of a servant"

¹³ *Brevísima relación*, p. 33.

¹⁴ See my paper "Atheism of the prophets and Marx," delivered to the 2nd Argentine Theologians Week, Guadalupe (Buenos Aires, 1973), and "Historia de la fe cristiana y cambio social en América latina," in *América latina, dependencia y liberación* (Buenos Aires, 1973), pp. 193 ff. There I show that the prophets begin their attack on the system of sin with a criticism of the idolatry and fetishism of that system. Would it not be both truly Christian to attack the fetishism of money (Marx, *Das Kapital*, I, chap. XXIV, I: "Das Geheimnis der ursprünglichen Akkumulation")? Is it perhaps not correct that Hegelian theology should be denied in order to affirm instead an anthropology of the Thou (Feuerbach, *Grundsätze, der Philosophie der Zukunft*), especially if we remember that Christ is the Other made man and mediator with God the Father and Creator? We might say that Latin American theology of liberation is non-believing; when it comes to the religion of oppressionist Europe (not to confuse religion with Christianity: see my article, "From Secularization to Secularism", in *Concilium*, September 1969 (American edn., Vol. 47).

(*doulou*) (Phil. 2. 6-7). Christ, the Church, the prophet must assume within the system the position of the oppressed. The servant (*ebhedh* in Hebrew, *doulos* or *pais* in Greek) really assumes the position of the oppressed, whether socially, politically, culturally or economically. In their alienated position they become like the Indian, African or Asian, the worn-out woman, the educationally manipulated child. They immerse themselves in the prison of sin (the system), but do not obey its rules.

The servant, the prophet or the poor in spirit¹⁵ acting from amongst the ranks of and together with the oppressed, carry out the praxis of liberation (Hebrew *`abôdhâh*; Greek-*diakonia*) which is a work of righteousness and worship performed by the saving God. This service performed by the Samaritan or by Moses for the sake of the poor or the slaves as members of the outside, is a subversive praxis, both historical (and hence socio-political, cultural, economic and sexual) and eschatological. To this end he is called (Lk. 4. 18; 1s. 61. 1) to undermine the system and direct history along a new path¹⁶ and to liberate the poor in a year of festival or rejoicing.¹⁷

The liberator or the servant prophet, by responding to the cry of the poor (as other), discloses himself as the herald of the new system over against the old system of sin, imperialism and oppression, whether international or national, economic, political, cultural or sexual. Hence he announces the dispossession of the ruler and the end of him as an oppressor. The closed system or the flesh transforms mere domination into repression, violence and persecution. So the liberating servant is the first to die: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem! killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you!" (Mt. 23. 37). In such a case the liberator

¹⁵ I may be permitted this translation of *hoi ptokhoi to pneumati* (Mt. 5. 3), to distinguish between the "poor" as the outsider (the sense in which I use it in § 5), and the "poor in spirit", i.e. the actively involved liberator, the prophet. See in my *El humanismo semita* (Buenos Aires, 1969), the footnote on "Universalismo y misión en los poemas del Siervo de Yahveh". (pp. 127 ff.).

¹⁶ "He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away.. (Lk. I. 52-3). *Sub-vertere* in Latin is to make low what was high and vice versa.

¹⁷ Lev. 25. 8-12 "Jubilee" comes from the Hebrew *yôbhêl*, the horn-shaped trumpet which announced the liberation of the slaves (Ex. 21 2-6).

becomes a redeemer-the one who, by a truly expiatory sacrifice (Hebrew-*kibburim*), pays in his own flesh for the liberation of the other: "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant (*diakonos*), and he who would be first among you must be your slave (*doulos*); even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve (*diakonesai*) and to give his life as a ransom for many" (*luton anti pollon*-Mt. 20. 26-8).

There are many examples of this praxis of liberation-the prophets and Jesus, the Christians persecuted under the Roman Empire, Bishop Valdivieso (murdered in 1550 by the governor for defending the Indians in Nicaragua), Pereira Neto in Brazil in 1969 or Mahatma Gandhi or Patrice Lumumba in the non-Christian Third World-we see how the liberator, when he announces the end of the old system, is assassinated violently and in cold blood by the angels of the Prince of this World, that is, by the conquistadors, the imperialist armies, the capitalist bankers or the "herodian" governments of the dependent nations themselves. The closed system spells death for itself. The death of the liberator is, on the other hand, the death of death and the beginning of a new birth (Jn. 3. 5-8)¹⁸.

17. Towards an Ecclesiology of Redemptive Liberation

All the foregoing is constantly lived out in the actual historical context of the community of the "called", that is the Church or even world history itself.

Since the liberating and redemptive death of Christ, world history has been living under a new order of reality, since any man of good will receives enough grace for salvation. However, because of sin, historical institutions (social, political, economic, sexual and educational) tend to close in on themselves, petrify and become self-perpetuating. They have to be given new impetus, be opened to new influence and be given dialectical flexibility in the direction of the parousia. God, from the creative outside, has founded the Church at the very heart of the flesh, of the world, of the closed system (an alienating or kenotic movement). The Church, his gift, is the becoming flesh of the spirit.

¹⁸ That which is born of the flesh (the closed system) is flesh. That which is born of the spirit (the other, the outsider) is spirit" (*ibid.*).

By baptism, the Christian is consecrated to the liberating service of the world, and received into the community. The earthly phenomenon of the Church, an institutional community, was born, geo-politically speaking, in the western Mediterranean and reached maturity in Latin and Germanic Christianity, in other words in Europe, which together with the United States and Russia is the geo-political centre of our modern world. On the other hand, since it was born, socially speaking, among the oppressed people of the Roman Empire, it today finds itself part of those nations that oppress the dependent peripheral nations and frequently finds itself compromised with the ruling classes (at national level) or with the ruling culture.

Thus, the Church which has become flesh in the world (like the leaven in the dough in the parable) comes to be identified with the flesh and the closed system. This self-identification with the Prince of this World is the sin of the Church, which petrifies the system and even sanctifies it. The terms *Holy Roman Empire*, *Christian countries*, *Western Christian civilization*, and so on, bear witness to this.

But the essential nature of the Church as the liberating community and institution requires it to identify itself with the oppressed so as to "break down the barriers" of the systems which have become closed by the work of sin, or by injustice, whether political-at national or international level-economic, social, cultural or sexual. The sign (*semeion* of St John's Gospel) of the Church, its proclamation, can only be effected by involving the community in the movement of liberation (Hebrew-*pāsāh* means moving, march or flight), to move a system which acts oppressively towards becoming a new system which acts to liberate. And this, in its turn, is, so far as the Church is concerned, the sign of the eschatological forward movement of the Kingdom. The Eucharist is a foretaste, in the forward movement of the Kingdom; it is a feast of liberation from sin (from slavery in Egypt). The liberation of Latin America is, therefore, the compelling call to the Church in Latin America (a dependent and to some extent oppressed sector of the world Church). At the same time, liberation of oppressed classes-women, children and the poor-is also the basis of evangelization.

II. APPLICATION OF THE THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

We must now turn our attention to the theological argument itself, first of all as we see it in Europe. (We shall therefore be looking at what might be called the white theology of North America.) This may lead us to define the theology that emerges as a theology of oppression-whether applicable on a world-wide scale (coming from the peripheral nations), a national scale (coming from the oppressed classes), to sex (a theology of woman) or to education (from the point of view of the younger generation).

I. *Conditioning of Theological Thinking*

It is widely accepted by critical thinkers in Latin America today that all political expansion soon comes to be based on an ontology of domination (an *ad hoc* philosophy or theology). Modern European expansion had as its ontological foundation the *ego cogito*¹⁹ preceded by the actual fact of "I conquer". For Spinoza, in his *Ethics*, the *ego* is a fragment of the unique substance of God—a position which the young Schelling and Hegel were to adopt later—the European *ego* had been deified. Fichte shows us that in the "I am that I am", the "I" is absolutely fixed²⁰. It is an "I" that is natural, infinite and absolute (and in Hegel definitely divine). In Nietzsche, the "I" becomes a creative power ("I" as the "will to power"), while in Husserl it becomes the most abstract *ego cogito cogitatum* of phenomenology.²¹ The most serious effect is that *the other* or the neighbour (the Indian, the African, the Asian or the woman) is reduced to the

¹⁹ "Je pense, donc je suis" was a statement so firm and confident that the most determined contradictions of the sceptics were not enough to shake it;" see *Discours de la méthode*, IV (Paris, 1953), pp. 147-8.

²⁰ "Ich bin Ich. Das Ich ist schlechthin gesetzt" (*Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* (1794), § I (Berlin, 1956), I, 96). He still says that ..the essence of critical philosophy is the absolute position of an .I', absolute and unconditioned, and not to be defined in terms of any higher order ." For the only translation in German: "Darin besteht nun das Wesen der kritischen Philosophie, dass ein absolutes Ich als schlechthin unbedingt und durch nichts Höheres bestimmbar aufgestellt werde". (*Ibid.* I, § 3; I, 119).

²¹ See my *La dialéctica hegeliana*, 4-9 (pp. 31-121) and *Para una destrucción de la historia de la ética*, §§ 11-21 (Mendoza, 1972), pp. 75-162.

level of an idea. The meaning of the other is formulated in terms of the "I" who dreamed it into existence. The other is made a separate entity, becomes a thing, is abstracted into a *cogitatum*.

Similarly, European theology or the theology of the centre cannot escape from this reduction. The expansion of Latin-German Christianity gave rise to its own theology of conquest. Semitic and Christian thought of the Old and New Testaments was reduced to a process of Indo-European Hellenization from the second century onwards. Medieval European theology was able to justify the feudal world and the *ius dominativum* of the lord over the serf. Tridentine and Protestant theology had nothing to say about the Indian, the African or the Asian (except the Salamanca School and that only for a few decades). Finally the expansion of capitalism and neo-capitalism allowed Christians of the centre to formulate a theology of the *status quo* and the ecumenism of peaceful co-existence between Russia, the United States and Europe so as to dominate the "periphery" more effectively. The other-the poor-was once again defined in terms of the European "I" : *Ego cogito theologatum*. With the basis of theological thinking so reduced, a parallel reduction occurs in the whole field of theology. Sin is reduced so as to apply only to intra national injustice; it is exclusivized, allowed to have no political application, shown to have nothing to do with sex (or at other levels, shown to have an excessive relation to sex). But more seriously the limits and meaning of salvation and redemption are equally reduced to the narrow bounds of the Christian experience of the *centre*. We have an individual salvation, interiorized and other-worldly, resorting frequently to some painful masochistic experience at a given time and place, whereas the true cross of real history demands our life at the least expected moment.

This theology suffers from many unconscious limitations. Firstly, the limitations of the religiosity of German-Latin-Mediterranean Christianity which was accepted without hesitation as real simply because it was Latin. Then there are liturgical limitations, in which the Latin-type liturgy is regarded as the only one acceptable for the Christian religion and which still prevents other cultures having their own liturgies. There are also cultural

limitations, in that theology is the province of an intellectual , élite, university professors in well-paid and secure posts, a situation far removed from, and unhelpful to the study of Tertullian and St Augustine. There are political limitations, for it is a theology adjusted and compromised by its closeness to the metropolitan power of the world. There are also economic limitations, for this theology finds favour for the most part among upper-class minorities in the bourgeoisie and in the neo-capitalist world (although sometimes there may be poor monks, they belong to "rich" orders). Finally, there are sexual limitations, because those who think theologically are celibates and have been unable to . formulate an authentic theology of sexuality, marriage and the family. For all these reasons, modern. European theology from the sixteenth. to the twentieth centuries is unconsciously compromised by its connection with the praxis of oppression in the political, educational and sexual fields.

It would be no exaggeration to say that in many respects it is really a theological ideology in that many facets of it remain unseen by virtue of its origins, just as we are unable to see the further side of the moon simply because we are inhabitants of planet earth. And what is still worse, in Latin America there are many progressive theologians who simply repeat the theology of the centre and by so doing they obscure their own message and, to their shame, become just as much advocates of oppression.

2. Revelation and Faith-the Anthropological Epiphany

Western theology has for centuries taken certain presuppositions for granted as unquestionably correct. Kant's ontology (which postulates a rational faith), Hegel's (which sees faith as within the bounds of reason) or Heidegger's (the comprehensiveness of Being) admit the Wholeness of being as the only frontier of thought. Being-in-the-world is the fundamental fact, original and primary.²² Existential theology starts from the basis of the

²² The theology of Karl Rahner comes from Heidegger's philosophy (also influenced by Maréchal) and is set out in *Spirit in the World* (London and Sydney, 1968), or in *Hearers of the Word* (London and Sydney, 1969). Quite rightly Eberhard Simons, *Philosophie der Offenbarung. Auseinandersetzung mit K. Rahner* (Stuttgart, 1966), demonstrates that the *Mil-Sein*

world as the Whole. The fault lies in that, in fact, the Whole is always mine, ours, the European's or the centre's. What passes unnoticed is that I am thereby denying other Christian worlds and other equally valid experiences. I am denying anthropological otherness as a possible starting-point for theological thought.²³

As the older Schelling so clearly saw in his *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, faith in the Word of the Other lies beyond ontological reason (the Hegelian *Sein*), an argument that Kierkegaard carried forward (e.g. in the *Postscriptum*). Faith stands upon the revelation of the Other. Revelation is only the out-going message of God, existentially speaking, which sets out the guidelines for interpreting the reality of Christ. In everyday life (existentially),²⁴ God manifests the hidden secret (the fact of redemption in Christ) by means of an interpreting light (a classicist would put it: *ratio sub qua*), or by supplying guidelines (categories) for all mankind and for all history. God gives not only a specific revelation, but more importantly, the categories²⁵

has not been brought out sufficiently in Rahner's thinking. It is not a matter of mentioning the other as a mere aside, but of making it the starting-point of theological argument, but not merely of the *divine* Other

²³ For a philosophical point of view see the works of Levinas (*op. cit.*), and Michael Theunissen, *Der Andere* (Berlin, 1965), and chap. III of my *Para una ética de la liberación*, vol. I, pp. 97 ff.

²⁴ As Yves Congar so well shows, the locus theologicus is everyday events (.the history of the Church, in a certain sense, embraces all of it", see his "Church History as a Branch of Theology" in *Concilium*, September 1970 (American edn., Vol. 57). Revelation is mediated by historical otherness-God reveals himself in history. In the same sense Edward Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology* (London and Melbourne, 1967), offers us the "Word as the medium of revelation". However, in both cases, as with Schelling and Kierkegaard, the mediatory function of the anthropological outsider is not grasped. It is not enough to say that revelation is possibly effected in the form of human speech, as Rahner does in his *Hearers of the Word I* but we must go on to say that the poor, like the metaphysical other is the mediator chosen by God for his revelation. As a fact of history (not just of myth as in Exodus 3) Moses heard the word of God through the mediation of the poor (Ex. 2. 11-15), as Schillebeeckx says in his *Revelation and Theology*.

²⁵ These categories are flesh (Totality), the poor (the human outsider), God as creator and redeemer, the Word, the Spirit (outreaching modes of the divine in face-to-face encounter") and service (*abhôdhâh* or *diakonia*). See my *Caminos de liberación latinoamericana* II. VI. The category is what is revealed in Christ as essential revelation. What is interpreted by these categories is the Christian meaning of event, the fruit of faith.

which permit us to interpret it. Revelation comes to a peak in Christ with the New Covenant, but it unfolds its potentialities throughout the course of history. What we are trying to stress here is that this revelation is not effected in history by human words alone, but through man himself (as exterior to the flesh or the system), the poor and the Christ-man.

Faith, which accepts the Word of the Other, becomes Christian faith when the divine Word in Christ is accepted through the mediation of the poor man in history, who actually lives in concrete situation. The true showing forth of the Word of God is the word of the poor man who cries "I hunger". Only the man who hears the word of the poor (beyond the system, and therefore ana-lectic, which presupposes that he does not believe in the system) can hear it as the Word of God. God is not dead. What has been assassinated is his self-manifestation-the Indian, the African and the Asian-and because of this God cannot reveal himself any more. Abel died in the self-deification of Europe and the centre, and therefore God has hidden his face. The revealed category is clear enough: "I was hungry and you gave me no food... They also shall ask, Lord, when did we see you hungry?" (Mt. 25. 42-4).²⁶ Following the death of the "divine" Europe, there can rise the faith in the poor of the periphery, faith in God as mediated by the poor. The new manifestation of God in history (not a resurrection, for he never died) will be brought about by righteousness and not by endless theological treatises on the death of God.²⁷

3. The Praxis of Liberation and Theology

Given the data of revelation and by virtue of living faith, theology is a reflection of reality. Recently there has been much talk of theologies of earthly realities or doubt, leading eventually

²⁶ In *Concilium*, February 1973 (American edn. vol. 82), much was said about liturgy, Scripture, poetry, but almost nothing about the privileged place of faith in the other-the poor; without him faith becomes ideology, mere doctrine, obscurity.

²⁷ See *Caminos de liberación latinoamericana* I, § § 1-7; *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*, §§ 31 and 36.

to a theology of revolution²⁸ or development.²⁹ In European circles, to take just the term political theology³⁰ the matter has sterner implications. But Latin America detects in the theologico-political argument an attempt to restrict the prophetic voice of protest to the narrow national sphere. From this narrow viewpoint the fact of international, imperialist injustice passes unnoticed. But eschatological, indiscriminating protest must reach out not only to the constituent parts of the system, but to the system as a whole.³¹

In the same way the provocative theology of hope³² betrays the limitations of the critical theory of the Frankfurt School (which influences Metz) and the works of Ernst Bloch (who inspires Moltmann). Both these philosophical hypotheses have failed to overcome ontology and dialectic, and they consider the future as a development of the Self. Although Moltmann understands the future as otherness, he still has difficulty in finding beyond the projection of the system (but this side of the *eschaton*) an historical projection of political, economic, cultural and sexual liberation.

²⁸ From Latin America see Hugo Assmann, *Teología desde la praxis de la liberación* (Salamanca, 1973), pp. 76 ff. A bibliography on *Desarrollo y revolución*, CECIAL, II, pp. 73-95. This idea and the one that follows are inspired in part by the Christian praxis in Latin America.

²⁹ Cf. Bibliography in CECIAL (*op. cit.*), II, 31-47.

³⁰ The works of Johann Baptist Metz is of importance: starting with "Friede und Gerechtigkeit. Ueberlegungen zu einer politischen Theologie". ...in *Civitas* VI, (1967), pp. 13 ff.; then *Theology of the World* (London, 1969), and «The Problem of a Political Theology», in *Concilium* June, 1968 (American edn., Vol. 36); and finally the colourless "Erlösung und Emanzipation", in *Stimmen der Zeit* 3 (1973), pp. 171 ff. (where the word "Befreiung" is avoided in its ambivalent sense of "cross". The "cross" of the murdered prophet is not the same as the "pain" of the oppressed poor.

³¹ Liberation protest as a function of the Church (see J. B. Metz, *Theology of the World*, *op. cit.*) is very different if it concerned with international political protest (pointing out the unjust acquisitiveness of the centre), and with social protest (pointing out the oppression of the ruling classes). In this situation we still look for a concrete programme of action to make the protest really mean anything. Theology is essentially an ethic, and most important, a political ethic.

³² Cf. Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (London, 1969); *idem Perspektiven der Theologie* (Mainz, 1968) and *Diskussion über die 'Theologie Hoffnung'* (Munich, 1967).

Hope extends as far as an historical change in the pattern of life,³³ but not to a radical renewal of the present system with a view to an historical liberation movement as a true sign of eschatological advance. Without this concrete mediation their hopes reaffirm the status quo and constitute a false dream.

On the other hand, a European theology of liberation will bring out clearly the question of Christianity and the class struggle,³⁴ but within the limits of a national Marxism and before moving on to the theory of dependence. It has not yet seen that the struggle of the proletariat within the centre itself, that is, in the metropolitan powers, can be oppressive in terms of the colonial proletariat of the periphery. Classes have been thinking double and may often oppose their own interests at international level. National liberation of the dominated countries goes hand in hand with the social liberation of oppressed classes. Hence the category known as the people takes on a special significance as opposed to the category of class.³⁵

Latin American theology derives, by contrast, from the thinking of many politically involved Christians about the praxis for liberating the oppressed. This theology-ethic is a product of the periphery, coming from the outsiders, from the *lumpen* of this world. Their inspiration is not only sheer necessity (the existence within the system of matters needing attention), but also the } desire to liberate (Hebrew *ʾabhôdhâh*; Greek-*diakonia*), that is a ministry of liberation beyond the limits of ontology. And the sphere of liberation is not only political, but also sexual and educational. In fact, this is a theology of the poor, woman as a sexual object and the child.

4. *Towards a Theology of Liberation*

After the great theology of Christianity from the fourth to

³³ See J. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, op. cit. Something in the nature of a reactionary professional ethic, but not a subversive movement to oppose the closed nature of the system, and which knows it has to initiate a programme of historical liberation as a sign of the coming Kingdom.

³⁴ Cf. Jules Girardi, *Christianisme, libération humaine et lutte des classes* (Paris, 1972).

³⁵ See my *De la dialéctica a la analéctica*, general conclusions (to be published in Salamanca, 1974).

the fifteenth centuries and modern European theology from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, the theology of liberation of the periphery and of the oppressed is in fact the whole of traditional theology set into redemptive motion from the point of view of the poor. The theology of Christianity (the old model) almost identified the Christian faith with Mediterranean Latin or Byzantine culture, subsequently halting progress. The argument over Latin in Vatican II itself is an obvious recent demonstration of this. Modern European theology, individualized and imperialistic, is reproduced in the colonies as progressive theology by those who operate as an oppressive colonial minority and take as the scheme of salvation a theology which for the periphery is meaningless and therefore uncritical. The *status quo* is once again supported. By contrast, the theology of liberation (where a theology of revolution is only a first stage, political theology is just one of the possible applications and the theology of hope looks to the future) is based on the praxis of liberation, or on the movement or way through the desert of human history, moving from sin as the dominating influence exerted by the various systems (political, sexual and educational) to irreversible salvation in Christ and his Kingdom (the *eschaton*). This movement is accomplished by everyman, all people and every age—in short, by the whole of human history. However, there are certain critical periods (*kairos*) in history and Latin America is living through one such period now,³⁶ when complete eschatological liberation can be more clearly indicated by the prophets, Christians or the Church. Thus the theology of liberation gradually becomes an African or black theology, though to date there has been no response from Asia,³⁷ and finally a theology of the whole world and of all the oppressed.

³⁶ Bear in mind that Latin America is the only continent, culturally speaking, which has been both Christian and colonial. Europe has been Christian, but was not colonized. Other colonial peoples have not been Christianized. This places Latin America in a unique position in world and ecclesiastical history. From our unique experience must come, of necessity, a theology which must be different to be authentic.

³⁷ In Africa, such authors as V. Mulango, A. Vanneste, H. Burkle; the "black theology" of J. Cone, A. Hargreaves, Th. Ogletree, Ch. Wesley point to this line of thought; see also J. Peters, "Black Theology as a Sign of Hope," *Concilium*, November 1970 (American edn., Vol. 59); G. D.

The theology of liberation which is coming from Latin American thinkers³⁸ can be distinguished when its dependence as a theology is realized in the same way as economy or culture is realized to be dependent (the culture of oppression as Salazar Bondy said in Peru in 1968). Gradually this theology discovers its own methods which I have defined as ana-lectic and not only dialectic,³⁹ in that it is listening to the trans-ontological voice of the other (*ana-*) and is interpreting its message by means of analogies. (The other, however, remains mysteriously distinct from us, until such time as the progress of the movement towards liberation allows us to enter upon its world). It adds an entirely new dimension to the question of analogies.

For its own part the theology of liberation favours the interpretation of the voice of the oppressed as the basis for its praxis. This is not a private departure within the unified Whole of universal abstract theology, neither is it an equivocal, self-explanatory theology.

Starting from a unique position of difference, each theologian, and indeed the whole of Latin American theology, takes a fresh

Fischer, "Theologie in Lateinamerika als 'Theologie der Befreiung'", in *Theologie und Glaube* (1971), pp. 161-78; R. Strunk, "Theologie und Revolution", in *Theologische Quartalschrift*, I (1973), pp. 44-53; and CEDIAL, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 58-72). Some European opinions, for example, Vancourt, "Théologie de la libération", in *Esprit et Vie* 28 (1972), pp. 433-440, & 657-62, who thinks that this theology is inspired solely by the Marxist method, are very biased.

³⁸ G. Gutiérrez wondered in his short work "Hacia una teología de la liberación" (Montevideo, 1969) whether beyond a theology of development we ought to formulate a specific theology of liberation. The previous year Rubem Alves in *Religión: opio o instrumento de liberación?* (Montevideo, 1968) had already gone some way with this idea. Also Methol Ferré in his article "Iglesia y sociedad opulenta. Una crítica á Suenens desde América latina", in *Vispera* 12 (1969), offprint, pp. 1-24, points to a "struggle of two theologies", since "all theology one way or another has political implications", and in fact, "within the Catholic Church itself there exists oppression by the richer local churches of the poorer ones". Thus there arose a new theological argument.

³⁹ See my *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*, § 36; vol. II, pp. 156 ff. I would define theology as "an analectic pedagogy of historical and eschological liberation". A pedagogy, for the theologian, is a teacher and not a politician, nor is he involved sexually; analectic because the method is neither purely epistemological nor dialectic. For this definition see my *Caminos de liberación* II, lecture XII.

look at traditional themes passed down through history, but enters the interpretative process from the distinct emptiness of his new found liberty (that is, with a blank sheet). The theology of a true theologian or a people like the Latin Americans is analogically similar, yet at the same time distinct, and hence unique, original and completely individual. If what is similar becomes univocal, the history of theology will remain European. On the other hand, if difference is made absolute, theologies become equivocal. The aim is not Hegelian identity, nor yet Jasperian equivocation, but analogy. The theology of liberation is a new focus in the history of theology, an analogical focus which has come to the fore after modern developments in Europe, Russia and the United States, and predating to some extent the most recent African and Asian theology. The theology of the poor nations, the theology of world-wide liberation is not easily acceptable to Europeans, who believe too passionately in their own invariable world-wide acceptance. They will not listen to the voice of the other (the barbarians, non-being if we define Being as the European way of thought), the voice of Latin America, the Arab World or South-East Asia and China. The voice of Latin America is no longer a mere echo of European theology. It is a barbarians' theology-as the apologists would say, making the contrast with the "wise according this world". But we know that we have taken up our stand on the further side of the modern, oppressive, European closed system. Our minds are set upon the liberation of the poor. We point towards the world-man of the future-man who shall be eternally free.

Translated by J. D. Mitchell