

## *PART ONE*

### A HERMENEUTICAL INTRODUCTION

Part One of this study proposes to clarify certain methodological norms and to enter fully into the current debate over the theology of liberation by giving the bases necessary for a constructive dialogue.<sup>1</sup> Frequently nowadays, references are made to liberation, faith, culture, praxis, and history, but the meaning of these terms is not always clear. In this limited study of Latin American culture and the history of the Latin American Church we cannot possibly deal in minutiae, but we do hope to address enough detail to provide the reader with an adequate outline. The reader who is not interested in the methodological questions may wish to proceed directly to Part Two, where the synthesis of the history and thinking of the Church in Spanish America actually begins.

## CHAPTER I

### DOMINATION - LIBERATION: A DIFFERENT KIND OF THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION

In this section the theological discussion proceeds on two levels. In the first place, there is a *methodical* discussion regarding some of the themes of theology as it is presently being done in Latin America. In the second place, there is a *methodological* discussion regarding contemporary theological development in Latin America to show that it applies not only to our sociocultural continent, but to all “peripheral” cultures; that is, it applies to *world* theology, the theology beyond the limited horizon of the Europeans.

#### I. DOMINATION-LIBERATION

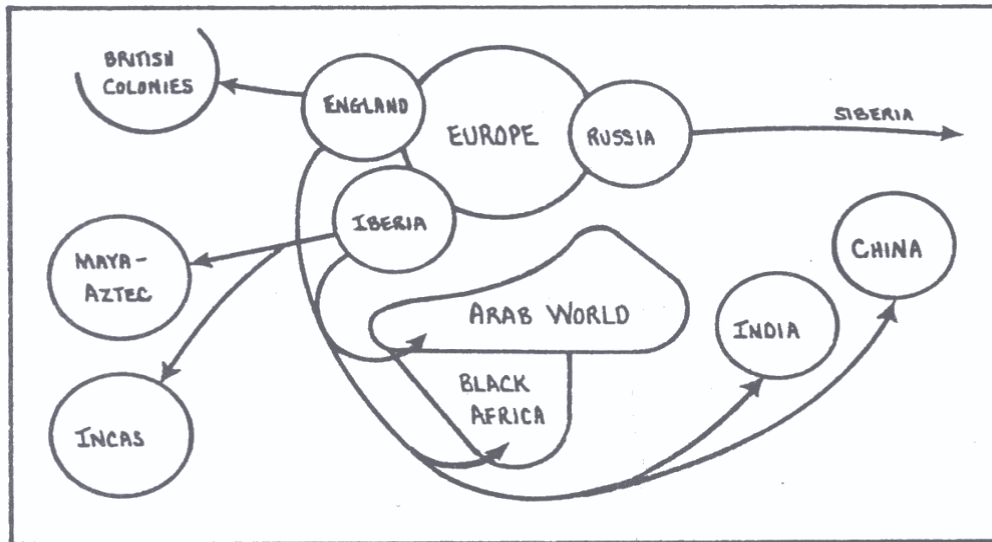
This first section includes a summary exposition of the direction that theological discussion in Latin America is taking, proceeding not from the *theological* status but rather from the *real* status of the situation. Our point of departure is not, therefore, what the theologians have said about the real situation, but rather what reality itself shows us. As we attempt to indicate some of the possible issues, we will address three of the more serious ones, those suggested to us by tradition. In ancient Semite thinking Hammurabi clearly enunciated in his *Code*: “I have defended them with wisdom, therefore the strong shall not oppress the weak, and justice shall be accorded the orphan and the widow.”<sup>2</sup> In Judeo-Christian revelation *political*, *eretical*, and *pedagogical* levels are indicated by Isaiah's words: “Pursue justice and champion the oppressed; give the orphan his rights, plead the widow's cause” (1:17 NEB). The same three levels are suggested by Jesus when he declares: “I tell you this: There is no one who has given up home, or wife, brothers, parents, or children ...” (Luke 18:29 NEB). In the middle of the sixteenth century, in 1552, Bartolomé de las Casas accused European Christian colonizers in the Americas of injustice because these “respected gentlemen ... imposed upon the indigenous peoples the most arduous, horrible, and bitter slavery.”<sup>3</sup> The relationship of brother to brother (man, oppressed, weak) is the *political* level; the relationship of man to woman (home, wife, widow) is the *eretical* level; and the relationship of parents to children (orphan, child) is the *pedagogical* level. In looking at these three levels, we will see how a discussion proceeding from *reality* originates and develops.

##### 1. *A Genetic-Political Beginning*

The present world reality manifests in its structure a lack of equilibrium that has existed for five hundred years. As a result of Portugal's experiences in North Africa,

and after the European nations' failure to expand to the East by means of the Crusades (whereby in the Middle Ages they dreamed of arriving in the East by crossing the Arab world), Western Christian nations began their expansion in the North Atlantic, which eventually became and remains until now the geopolitical center of world history. First Spain, then Holland and England, and later France and other European countries constituted the real ecumenical world, for until the fifteenth century the Latin, Byzantine, and Arab oecumenes, the world of India, of China, of the Aztec, and of the Inca were all regional. This new oecumene, which had Europe as its "center," expanded during the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth to include the United States and then Japan. An enormous "periphery," therefore, remains: Latin America, the Arab world, Black Africa, India, Southeast Asia, and China.

DIAGRAM 1. The Dialectical-Conquering Expansion of Europe During the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries



Europeans said — first it was Spain and Portugal through Pizarro and Cortéz— "I conquered the Indian." Then Thomas Hobbs enunciated even more clearly: "*Homo homini lupus.*" And then Nietzsche revealed man's insatiable "will to power." The politico-economic structure of the world continues to be unified by a single international system of domination. Two examples can be offered to show the profound ethical injustice of this dehumanizing system.

This colonial system of dependency and injustice continued uninterrupted from the sixteenth until the twentieth century, and according to Raúl Prebisch, the Argentine economist, between 1950 and 1961 the total investments of foreign capital in Latin America amounted to some 9.6 billion dollars while during the same period the amount expatriated from Latin America amounted to at least 13.4 billion dollars, meaning a net loss to the continent of nearly 4 billion dollars.<sup>5</sup>

On the political level (brother to brother), the domination today is of the "periphery" by the "center"; that is, the interior or provinces are exploited by the capital

Exportation of Precious Metals from the Private Sector  
and the Importations from Europe of Finished Products  
(In *maravedís*, Spanish currency of the period)<sup>4</sup>

Period	Exports from the Private Sector	Imports in Finished Products	Difference in Spain's Favor
1561- 1570	8,785,000,000	1,565,000,000	7,220,000,000
1581- 1590	16,926,000,000	3,915,000,000	13,011,000,000
1621- 1630	19,104,000,000	5,300,000,000	13,804,000,000

cities,<sup>6</sup> the working classes are dominated by the oligarchies, and the masses are directed by the bureaucrats. It is on this political level that our history of the Church is developed.

### 2. *A Genetic-Erotic Point of Departure*

The contemporary interpersonal situation perpetuates the injustices of the ancient male-female relationship that has existed for millennia but is still practiced by European moderns. If it is true, as Freud suggested, that in our male-oriented society “the *libido* is commonly masculine in nature (*mannlicher Natur*),”<sup>7</sup> has it not been clearly demonstrated in Latin America that the conqueror was a man of respectability, while the most alienated was the Indian woman? Bishop Juan Ramírez of Guatemala wrote on March 10, 1603, that the worst “forms of violence never before heard of in other nations were being practiced against the Indian women, and they were compelled against their will by order of the authorities to serve in the houses of the *encomenderos*,<sup>8</sup> on their plantations and in their shops; they were kept as concubines by the owners along with the mestizos, mulattoes, and blacks — those soulless ones.”<sup>9</sup> The conqueror who cohabited illegally with an Indian woman was the father of the mestizo while the Indian woman was the mother. The conqueror, the *encomendero* —first a colonial bureaucrat, afterwards a Creole oligarch, and finally a subordinate bourgeois— is the one who oppressed and sexually alienated the Indian, the mestiza, the poor woman of the society. The man of the subordinate national oligarchy continues to seduce and otherwise take advantage of the girl from the poor working section on the periphery of the large cities —the theme of the tango “Margot” written by Celedonio Flores in 1918— while at the same time demanding that his aristocratic lady remain pure and chaste— a form of hypocrisy described by W. Reich but which may be studied much more radically from the perspective of the Third World.

The practical “I conquered,” the ontological *ego cogito*, is that of the male oppressor and can be psychoanalytically observed in Descartes' denying his mother, his mistress, and his daughter. In the words of Maryse Choisy y de Lacan, we could say that the phallocracy of today is the concomitant of the plutocracy of yesterday. In our history of the Church, however, we will not consider this aspect.

### 3. *A Genetic-Pedagogical Point of Departure*

Political or erotic oppression is personified in the *pedagogical* domination of a child domesticated and made submissive by his parent(s), or the young person “massified” and manipulated in society by the communications media. Political oppression is seen primarily in government and economic structures, while erotic domination is manifested

primarily in various forms of sexual discrimination. Since the time of Aristotle<sup>10</sup> the pedagogy of domination has insisted that parents “love their children as themselves (for their issue are by virtue of their separate existence a sort of other selves) ... [and] are, therefore, in a sense the same thing, though in separate individuals” (*Nic. Ethics*, VIII, 12, 1161 b27- 34). The cultural conquest of other peoples has likewise been represented as the extension of “the Self.” The conqueror or the pedagogical dominator controls by force of arms, and then by violence imposes upon another human being (such as the Indian, the African, the Asian, the masses, the worker, or the defenseless) the conqueror’s civilization, religion, and deified cultural system in its ideological Totality. Pedagogical domination is dialectical (from the Greek *diá-*, i.e., by means of), for it is the means by which the cultural Totality of the father, the empire, or the oligarchy establishes dominion over another by controlling his or her analytical horizon.

The conquest and colonization of America, of Africa, and of Asia, the education of the child in knowing himself—as Socrates proposed by his dialectical method—is a kind of negative celebration of oppression. The ideological dialectic *continually* conceals oppression from the oppressed, and dominates completely by permeating the total being of individuals and societies. Paradoxically, the time comes when the oppressed child or culture begins to sing the praises of the oppressor. At one time there were in Latin America two distinct civilizations, one indigenous and the other alien, that is, European.<sup>11</sup> In Argentina, Domingo F. Sarmiento—to cite but one example—depreciated the dependent national culture of the *gaucho* and of the economically impoverished “periphery” while at the same time glorifying the oligarchic, elitist, oppressive culture of the “center”.

#### 4. “Face to Face”: Totality and Exteriority

The point of departure in the discussion thus far has been “reality” as seen on three anthropological levels. Reality, however, can have two very different meanings. The real can be something intraworldly, that is, a physical entity.<sup>12</sup> In this sense the Indian was real as an *encomendado* and the Negro was real as a slave. But the real can also be something otherworldly,<sup>13</sup> that is, an entity whose reality is constituted by non-physical categories.<sup>14</sup> The political, erotic, and pedagogical conditions that have been cited thus far are merely aspects of the structures of diverse totalities in which beings function in different internal roles—such as dependent, underdeveloped nations or as dependent women and children. These dependent roles are, nonetheless, distortions and sometimes obliterations of their original and intended roles as “face to face” beings. In oppressive systems, the metaphysical reality of a human being as exteriority is denied; and it is this exteriority that conveys the metaphysical meaning of reality.

“Face to face” is a repetition in Hebrew and Greek signifying the ultimate, supreme confrontation. It represents a proximity, an immediacy of two mysteries confronting each other as exteriority. An example can be seen in Exodus 33:11, “Yahweh would speak with Moses face to face (Hebrew *pnim el-pnim*), as a man speaks with his friend,” and in I Corinthians 13:12, “For now we are seeing a dim reflection in a mirror; but then we shall be seeing face to face (*prósopon pros prósopon*).” On the erotic level, “face to face” can represent a gentle or passionate touching of the lips, an example of which is found in Song of Solomon 1:1, “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.” It is a primary experience, *veritas prima*: the experience of being confronted by the face of Someone as someone, of an Other as other, a mystery that

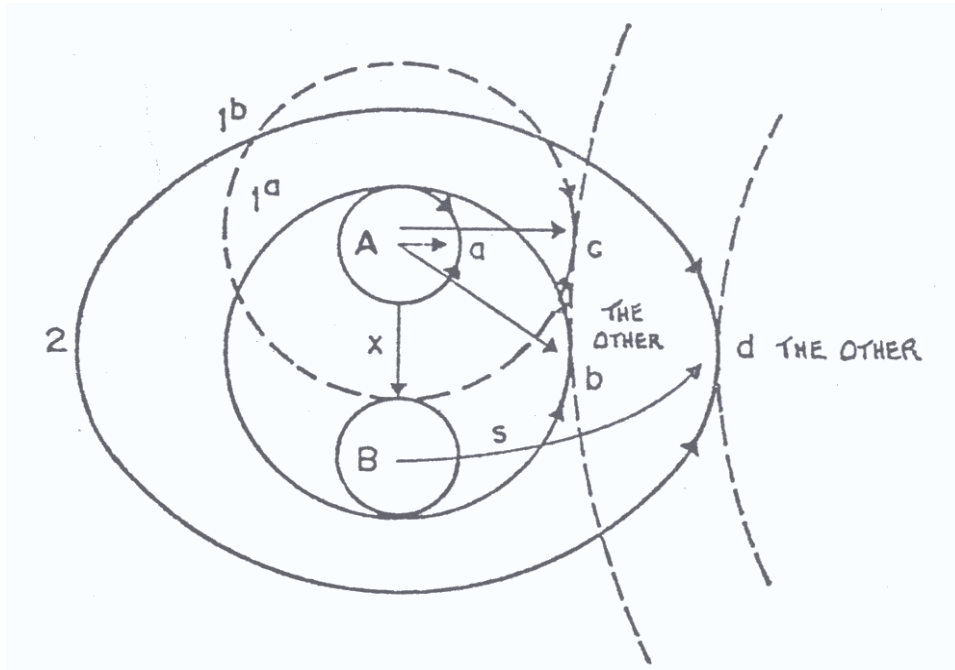
opens an incomprehensible and sacred *beyond* which I see not with my eyes and which sees me in my innermost being.

“Face to face” is the Conqueror standing before the Indian, the African, or the Asian. It is the *patrón* standing before the peasant who comes begging for work. It is the man standing before his abandoned and pleading wife. It is the father standing before his newborn, totally dependent child. But “face to face” can also be the man who “speaks with his friend.” And from the Totality of the world, this ontological world, Europe, the man and father opens to the Exteriority, the metaphysical exteriority (if the *physis* represents a being that constitutes the horizon of the world) of peripheral cultures, of women and children, or better said, of the peripheral “foreigner, widow, and orphan” proclaimed by the Prophets.

The Other is the first, the progenitor of the child, the society that maintains us in its tradition. The Other is the Creator who confers upon us real being. A person, however, is exposed to another person before establishing a relationship with nature — in this case with the economic order. We are conceived in the womb of another, our mother's. We originally are fed by another, that is, we nurse from another's breasts. And we long to remain in this “face to face” relationship. But the proximity of this “face to face” and the remoteness of the economic order entails a painful detour.

A: the Dominator; a: the project of the dominating group; b: the project *a*: imposed on Totality; c: in the conquest the project *a* is imposed on Other human beings; 1a: Totality dominated by A; 1b: the new order, the conquered empire; B: the dominated without their own established project; d: the project of liberation; 2: the *new* country or the “new” order emerging as service to the Other; arrow *X*: domination; arrow *S*: “service.”

DIAGRAM 2. The Different Moments in the Process of Total Alienation and of Alternative Liberation



### 5. *The dominating praxis: sin and the "poor"*

Permit me to diagram the movement of the discussion in order that we not lose in the resumé the exposition that we have begun. The following diagram represents the different areas in the process of a complete alienation and of an alternative liberation.

The biblical symbolism set forth in the prophetic tradition can be outlined very briefly. First, "Cain set on his brother Abel and killed him" (Gen. 4:8). Jesus indicated that Abel was the first of many innocent people who have been slain (Matt. 23:35). This No-to-the-Other is the worst possible sin; it is the "sin of the world," that is, the original sin. The no-to-Abel as Other was likewise the offense of the priest and Levite in the parable of "the good Samaritan" (Luke 10:31-32). In his discussion of original sin, Augustine clearly asserted that Cain "built a city, while Abel, as though he were merely a pilgrim on earth, built none"<sup>15</sup> (*The City of God*, XV, 1). Historically as well as actually, beginning in the fifteenth century, sin reappeared in concrete form as the *No* of the North Atlantic "center" to the marginalized Indian, African, Asian, laborer, and peasant. It has been and is the *No* to the women in a patriarchally controlled household and the *No* to the child made compliant by a pedagogy of domination.

This No-to-the-anthropologically-Other (fratricide) is the epitome of the totalization of the "flesh" (*basar* in Hebrew and *sarx* in Greek). The appeal of this structured temptation, however, is not that of a Prometheus chained to the *anángke* but rather the promise of the Totality or the "system" that "you will be like gods" (Gen.3:5). Sin, which begins as a No-to-the-Other, a self-deification, and an autofetishism, culminates in idolatry, in a No-to-the-creative-Other. Thus, in order for the North Atlantic conqueror to be able to say with Nietzsche that "God is dead," it was necessary to slay God's epiphany, namely, the Indian, the African, and the Asian.

This absolute idolatry of the *flesh* as seen in the modern European system of Christendom produced within the Totality (circle 1a in Diagram 2) a schism between the one who dominated the "world" (a new manifestation of the *flesh* that was totally deified) and the one dominated. "You know that among the pagans the rulers (*árkhontes*) lord (*katakryieuóusin*) it over them, and their great men make their authority felt" (Matt. 20:25). In Diagram 2 these "rulers" are symbolized by A. They are the "angels" or emissaries of "the Prince of this world." They are the Pilates who ask for water to wash their hands and disclaim all responsibility for wrongdoing (Matt. 27:24). They are the current economical, cultural, sexual, and aesthetic "systems" of the world within the specific structure of sin that now oppress the poor. The "principalities" (A) are an element in the plan of the group (a) which is objectified as part of the total system (b) which in turn expands as an imperialist project for the domination (c) of Latin America, Africa, and Asia. It is the "Self" (1a) continuing as "Self" (1b). The "praxis of domination" in a system that usurps the place of God and proceeds to deify itself is sin in the most blatant and contemporary sense. It is the "praxis" of a No-to-Abel, to the oppressed brother, to the woman valued only as a sexual object, or to the child who is regarded as nothing more than a servile dependent.

The "oppressed as oppressed" is like Job. He suffers because of the sin (the "praxis of the powerful who dominate him") that alienates him while the wise men of the "system" (Bildad and Zofar) attempt to convince him that he, Job, is the sinner—and in so doing, they exonerate the real oppressors.

The "oppressed as oppressed" is not the "poor" (the "oppressed as *Exteriority*"). The "poor" as in "How happy are you who are poor" (*ptokhoi*) (Luke 6:40) or "you

have the poor with you always” (Matt. 26:11), is the Other. In Diagram 2 they are symbolized by the Other in that they represent the supreme value in any sociopolitical, economic or cultural system. The “poor” are reality and at the same time a “category”. They are the nation, class, or person, the oppressed woman, or the domesticated child controlled by the structures of domination. The “poor” in the biblical sense are not identified as the “oppressed *alienated*” by the system, but, nevertheless, they possess many of the characteristics of the poor, socioeconomically speaking.

#### 6. *The Liberating Praxis: Redemption and the “Prophet”*

Regarding the “logic of sin” described above (Section 5), we propose the “logic of Liberation,” the antisin or the negation of the negation of the Other.<sup>16</sup> Instead of a No-to-the-Other, we propose the biblical symbol of Moses in Exodus 3 or of the Samaritan in the parable of Jesus. Both represent an explicit *Yes-to-the-Other* as Other while still being nothing more than oppressed as oppressed *within* the system. The prophetic insight of faith allows us to see, behind the mask of oppression and alienation, the *face* of the Other, —to see, for example, a free person in the Egyptian slave or the Exteriority of a human being in the stripped, beaten, and half-dead victim by the side of the road. What we propose then is not aversion (*aversio*) to the Other, but rather conversion (*conversio*) to the Other as a citizen of the City of God. Bartolomé de las Casas, the seventeenth-century evangelizing anticolonialist who strenuously and over a prolonged period opposed the enslavement of the Indians in the Caribbean and in Central and South America, discovered the Other as other. He wrote that “God created these simple people, the Indians, free from the iniquities and duplicities ... without the resentments and treacheries and contentiousness, the animosities, hatreds and vindictiveness so characteristic of the civilized world.”<sup>17</sup>

Before affirming a Yes-to-the-Other, however, it is first necessary to deabsolutize the system, to expose its underside; it is necessary to be atheistic regarding the system. The Virgin of Nazareth while in the flesh opened herself to the Spirit (to Otherness). Jesus himself said that it is necessary “to give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar—and to God what belongs to God” (Matt. 22:21), thereby standing with the Prophets in the refusal to acknowledge Caesar as God of the flesh or of the Totality. When Feuerbach and Marx declared themselves atheists in regard to the “god” of Hegel and of the European bourgeoisie—which was the only god Feuerbach and Marx knew—they introduced a needed corrective into Christian theology.<sup>18</sup>

To deabsolutize the Totality of sin, one must—subversively—break into the absolute Otherness. The analectic—that which is beyond the system—the absolute Other (the Other in Diagram 2), the Word (the Hebrew *dabár*, which is unrelated to the Greek *lógos*), becomes en-Totalized, incarnate. Christ Jesus’ “state was divine, ... but [he] emptied (*ekénosen*) himself to assume the condition of a slave (*doúlou*)” (Phil. 2:6-7). Christ, the Church, and the prophet must therefore assume within the system the place of the oppressed as oppressed (position B in Diagram 2). The servant (*hebed* in Hebrew and *doulos* or *pais* in Greek) actually assumes the sociopolitical, cultural, and economic condition of the alienated, emulating and experiencing the alienation of the Indian, the African, the Asian, the exploited woman, and the pedagogically oppressed child, and becomes incarcerated in the prison of sin—the system.

The servant, the prophet, and the “poor in Spirit”<sup>19</sup> will, with the oppressed, fulfill the liberating praxis (in Hebrew *habodáh*, in Greek *diakonía*) that not only is a labor of justice but at the same time is a liturgy to God the Savior. This act of service (represented by the arrow *S* in Diagram 2) of the Samaritan or Moses in behalf of



the poor and the enslaved as Exteriority is a kind of subversive historical praxis and is, therefore, sociopolitical, cultural, economic, sexual, and eschatological. For this reason the servant is dedicated (Luke 4:18 and Isa.61:1) to subvert the system, to redirect history,<sup>20</sup> and to liberate the poor as in the sabbatical year or the year of Jubilee.<sup>21</sup>

The liberator, this prophetic servant, by responding to the cry of the poor as Exteriority exposes the system of sin as an empire of international, national, economic, political, cultural, and sexual oppression, and announces the advent of a *new system* (represented by circle 2 in Diagram 2), proclaiming the dispossession of the powerful and the end of their domination. In response, the system, the Totality or the *flesh*, converts what was before simple domination (represented by the arrow *X* in Diagram 2) into systematic repression, violence, and persecution, and the liberating servant is its first victim, that is, the first to die. Our Lord cries out, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you!” (Matt. 23:37). Yet by his death the liberator is transformed into the redeemer, the authentic sacrifice of atonement (from the Hebrew *kipper* of Leviticus 16), purchasing with his own flesh the freedom of the Other. Again Jesus says:

Anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant (*diákonos*), and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave (*doulos*), just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve (*diakonesai*), and to give his life as a ransom for many (*litron anti pollon*, the Hebrew eschatological *rabim*) (Matt. 20:26- 28).

It is easy to grasp the significance of the *praxis of liberation* if one studies with care the lives of the prophets and Jesus, of the harried and persecuted Christians in the Roman Empire, of Bishop Antonio de Valdivieso who —because of his defense of the Indians in Nicaragua— was assassinated at the behest of the governor in 1550, of Father Antonio Pereira Neto in Brazil in 1969, or of Mahatma Gandhi and Patrice Lumumba in the non-Christian Third World. The deaths of all these indicate that by announcing the end of the system the liberator is himself violently eliminated by the “angels” of the “Prince of this world,” that is, by the conquerors, the imperialistic forces, the capitalist bankers, and the unscrupulous Herodian politicians of the dependent nations. The system as Totality is tautological, repetitious death. The death of the liberator, however, signals the death of death and of a people being born anew (John 3:5-8).<sup>22</sup>

### 7. *Toward an Ecclesiology of Redemptive Liberation*

All that has been described exists concretely and historically as a part of the experience of the community or the people of God, the Church, or simply as a part of world history.

In effect, since the liberating and redemptive death of Christ, world history has a new *royal* protocol namely, that all people of good will are recipients of grace sufficient for their salvation. Because of sin, the historical, sociopolitical, economic, sexual, and pedagogical systems tend to become closed, fixed, and eternalized. The task of the servant is, therefore, to redirect, to deabsolutize, and to make these systems more dialectically flexible and self-correcting, and to move them toward the Parousia. God, from the Exteriority of creation, called out the Church from the very heart of the flesh and of the world, from the Totality or *kenotic* environment of “alienation.” The Church as God's gift is the incarnation, the en-Totalization of the Spirit. Through baptism the believer is received into the Christian community and consecrated for the

service of liberation in the world. The visible Church, the institutionalized Christian community, began geopolitically in the eastern Mediterranean world. It spread to the West and to the North, and flourished in Latin-Germanic Christendom, which subsequently with that of the United States and Russia became the geopolitical center of the world. Ironically, the Church began among the sociopolitically oppressed of the Roman Empire, but today it is part and parcel of the nations that oppress the dependent, "peripheral" countries. Frequently the Church is allied with the dominating culture, especially on the national level.

The Church that was incarnated in the world as the seed in Jesus' parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:1-9) became identified with the flesh or the Totality of the system; that is, the Church adopted position A in Diagram 2. This identification with the "Prince of this world" is the sin in the Church today. The sanctioning and even the sacralizing of the sociopolitical and economic system has continued from the time of the Holy Roman Empire until the present as a part of the Christian civilization of the West.

Now if the Church is to realize its true purpose and mission in the world as a liberating community and institution, it will have to identify with the oppressed, that is, move to position B in Diagram 2, in order to "break down the wall" (arrow *S*) of the system that has been absolutized by national and international, economic, and social, cultural and sexual sin and injustice. The "sign" (the *semeion* of John's Gospel) of the Church and its mission of evangelization can only be realized by means of a historical commitment to the process and the pilgrimage of liberation. In Hebrew *pesah* signifies "pilgrimage," "march," or "flight" (arrow *S*). Liberation involves the movement from a system that attempts to oppress (b in Diagram 2) toward a new system that attempts to liberate (d in Diagram 2). Liberation is for the Church the "sign" of the eschatological mission of the Kingdom. The Eucharist anticipates this "pilgrimage" of the Kingdom and celebrates the complete liberation from sin (from Egyptian slavery). The liberation of Latin America, therefore, is for the Church in Latin America (as part of the dependent, oppressed Church in the world) the arena of her evangelization. And evangelization in this case implies the liberation of the oppressed classes, of women, of children, and of today's poor.

## II. THE PROTOCOL OF THEOLOGICAL DISCOURSE

In this second section we want to return to the discussion of theology itself, first to a consideration of European and North American theology or what may be called "White Theology," in order to define subsequently the theology that will be developed as a discourse on oppression, namely, the theology of the Third World: on a world level from the peripheral nations, on a national level from the oppressed classes, on an erotic level from the exploited woman, and on a pedagogical level from the coming generations, the young people, and the children.

### 1. *The Conditioning of Theological Thinking*

Contemporary critical Latin American thinkers recognize that all geopolitical expansion is based on an "ontology of domination," either philosophical or theological depending on the case being considered. Modern European expansion, for example, had its ontological formulation in the *ego cogito*,<sup>23</sup> which had as its historical antecedent the "I conquered." In Spinoza's *Ethics*, the *ego* was an extension of the unique substance of God, a conclusion later accepted by Schelling in his youth and by Hegel who deified the European "I." Fichte believed the "I" in the declaration "I am I" to be

absolute and unconditioned.<sup>24</sup> For Fichte it was ultimate, undetermined, infinite, absolute, and natural, while for Hegel the “I” was divine. With Nietzsche this “I” was transformed into creative power (the “I” became the “will to power”). For Husserl this “I” became the most discreet *ego cogito cogitatum* of phenomenology.<sup>25</sup> The travesty in all this reasoning was that the Other such as the Indian, the African, the Asian, or the woman was reduced to nothing more than an idea, an object whose meaning was determined by the “originally constituted ‘I,’” and the Other was thereby designated, classified, and alienated as a mere *cogitatum*.

European theology, however, this theology of the “center,” could not escape this same kind of reductionism. The dominating expansion of Latin-Germanic Christianity was followed by an equally “dominating theology.” The Semitic-Christian thinking of the Old and New Testaments was therefore reduced to a process of Indoeuropeanized Hellenization beginning as early as the second century. Medieval European theologians justified the feudal world and the *ius dominativum* of the feudal lord over the serf. And neither the Roman Catholic nor Protestant theologians gave the slightest consideration to the Indian (with the exception of the School of Salamanca for a few decades), the African, or the Asian. Finally, the expansion of capitalism and neocapitalism allowed the Christians of the “center” to develop a theology of the *status quo* and an ecumenism of peaceful coexistence between the Soviet Union, Europe, and the United States so that together they could dominate more effectively the “periphery.” The *Other*, the poor, were thus newly constituted from the perspective of the European “I”: *Ego cogito theologatum*. Reducing the subject of theological thought also reduces the scope of “the theological,” and sin is seen from a single perspective of intranational injustice. Sin is thereby privatized, depoliticized, and asexualized (or supersexualized at other levels). Even more serious, this reduces the meaning and scope of redemption and salvation to the narrow limits of the “Christian experience of the *center*.” Emphasis is given to individual salvation and interiorized, defleshed spirituality whose goal frequently is masochistic pain, which chooses its own time and place to suffer while avoiding the real Cross of authentic history which calls for unimagined sacrifices.

This theology of the “center” has been conditioned in multiple ways of which the European and North American theologians show little or no awareness. It has been conditioned by the religiosity of Mediterranean and Latin-Germanic Christianity, which assumed that to be Latin was to be Christian. It has been conditioned liturgically by the insistence that the forms of worship elaborated in the Mediterranean Church were the only genuinely Christian forms, while other cultures were prohibited from developing their own liturgies. It has been conditioned culturally by the fact that it has been developed by an intellectual elite, primarily university and seminary professors who are well paid and who enjoy a measure of security unknown by Tertullian or Augustine. It has been conditioned politically by accommodating itself to and being a part of the metropolitan seat of world power. It has been conditioned economically by the fact that for the most part it represents the value system of the oligarchy and the bourgeoisie of the neocapitalist world—though admittedly at times it has been produced by poor monks from rich orders. Finally, it is conditioned erotically by these monks or celibates who lacked the experience to fashion an authentic theology of sexuality, marriage, and family.

In short, modern European and North American theology is inadvertently implicated in the praxis of world political, pedagogical, and sexual domination. And it would not be an exaggeration to say that to a large degree this theology is really a “theological ideology,” one as incapable of seeing its own biases as the inhabitants of the earth are

incapable of seeing the other side of the moon. What is worse, there are in Latin America numerous so-called progressive theologians who simply repeat this theology of the “center,” and in so doing they become more culpable ideologists of oppression.

## 2. *Faith and Christian Praxis*

Existence as viewed from a pre-Christian perspective has many shades of meaning. Basically, it refers to the comprehension or understanding of being. This comprehension (from “capture” something next to something else [*cumprendere*], or “to grasp” something completely or in its totality, i.e., *circum-prendere*) is the primary way by which the world is opened to us.<sup>26</sup> If there is pre-Christian human existence, there is a correlative world; and if there is this perceived world, it is because there is a fundamental opening to it. This intellectual-practical opening is the basic experience of life. It has many philosophical ramifications that, because of limited space, cannot be elaborated here.<sup>27</sup> Concurrently, if there is such a thing as Christian existence, it is because there is a new world in which Christian transcendence can be experienced. Both pre-Christian and Christian existence depend ontologically upon an opening to the world in its totality, that is, it depends upon a supernatural comprehension of being, and this comprehension is gratuitously revealed by God and perceived by faith.

Moreover, this comprehension of being is initially and continually an ontic comprehension of things as they are in the world, though not necessarily comprehension that attempts to understand the world or being as such. An attempt to comprehend the world or being is an ontological endeavor. But we are referring to a day-to-day ontic, noumenal, and existential comprehension. Faith understood theologically can best be described as *supernatural and existential comprehension*.

Faith is not *essentially* a belief or blind trust. A psychological belief, opinion, or submission to the will of something or somebody, a lack of clarity or an uncertainty about something are all secondary elements of the intellectual-practical act of faith. Faith is a comprehensive act of intelligence, not intelligence functioning theoretically as theory divorced from praxis or deduced from praxis.<sup>28</sup> Faith is a practical act not learned theoretically as we sometimes assume in imparting oral or audiovisual catechism. Faith is learned existentially in the Christian community by the continual utilization of the tools of the Christian experience and by establishing a relationship with the Other. Faith in a practical sense is discovering in everything around us the new world, the world of Christian comprehension. The ultimate horizon that faith opens to us is necessarily non objective and non objectifiable. I should not make the light which permits me to see the object of my theoretical consideration. Moses did not see God in the theophany at Horeb. He only heard God's voice, and faith resulted from the hearing.<sup>29</sup> The Hebrew-Christian understanding of being is not theoretical comprehension; the Greeks thought of being as something permanent or eternal. Rather, being in the biblical sense is the hearing of the word spoken from the mystery of the Other as freedom. God as Three in One manifests himself through the revealed Word to those who know how to hear. But they cannot see God. If we can see God's economy manifested in human history, from this horizon of non objectified hearing, from this light that illumines, it will be by discerning, practically speaking, the signs of God in history. Moses did not see God, but he saw what God revealed to him, namely, “the miserable state” of his people in Egypt (Exod. 3:7). This existential, ontical seeing is essentially the historical function of faith. It is not credulity nor fidelity in spite of uncertainty. It is enlightened intelligence, informed interpretation, prophetic insight. For faith sets forth a new horizon for the pre-Christian event,

illuminating it with new light and comprehending it in a radically new way. For this reason one can employ a new hermeneutic or interpretation in order to understand pre-Christian historical events. It is the *meaning* of these events that changes, and this existential change of meaning is learned only from another Christian who is committed concretely day by day. This is not theory. It is the foundation of the practical order.

Faith, then, as non objectified existential comprehension, is *concrete*. It is not abstract nor reducible. Rather, it is fulfilled in the historical worldly order and is a part of the ambiguities and complexities of human life.

Faith is the practical understanding of what it means to be Christian, of divine Being, of being a part of the mystery of salvation that establishes a relationship between creation and history. It is the comprehension of the interpersonal Mystery of God that establishes a new order between human beings and history through the Covenant, the Church, and the Kingdom. This Christian being is not an abstraction. It is *my* being Christian and *our* being Christian in this age. It is not a universal command that applies to everyone. It is *my* being Christian or *our* being Christian. We will not, of course, be completely Christian, for our being as such is never totally complete. There is always the possibility of being that lies before us. History has not stopped and will never stop until God wills it. Faith, therefore, is the concrete, existential comprehension of the Christian being and of the possibility of being. This possibility of being, moreover, is what opens the future, a future that is moving toward us and which draws us expectantly toward it. We move toward that which is coming. We journey on in the hope that Christ is coming (the *Parousia*, the Advent). This understanding of Christian being as that which is coming indicates that our being is always out there before us. Its essence precedes us as the horizon of the pampa precedes the *gaucho* galloping toward it. There is always an "eschatological remainder" before us, a kind of projected future. This is, therefore, analectic comprehension (*aná*: beyond + *logos*, horizon or comprehension),<sup>30</sup> comprehension that is revealed from beyond the horizon.

In summary, then, faith is the fundamental, supernatural, ontological comprehension of history operating in an existential, concrete, analectical, and progressive way. It opens to us the meaning of historical events so that they become Sacred History, *Heilsgeschichte*.

Faith reveals to us a concrete historical yet supernatural project that allows us to discover the environment (Sartre would call it a *nothingness*) of worldly possibilities. Between what we actually are and what we understand by the light of faith that we can become there opens before us, like a fissure, a world of freedom, responsibility, and choice that is essentially and fundamentally a world of *praxis*. This praxis or human action is the same thing as being in the world. Or to put it another way, it is Christian praxis in a world—a Christian world—which has been opened to us by faith in contrast to praxis in a closed pre-Christian world. I am in the world as a Christian to the degree that I act. Praxis is humanity's worldly present. I act because I am not yet what I understand that I can become. If I were ultimate being (God), I would not act practically; pure actuality needs no mode of expression for it is in itself sufficient. But because I am not everything I can be eschatologically, I must act. Praxis is, therefore, based ontologically, not coincidentally, on what I am and on what I can be. What impells me to act, to move toward the coincidence (which alone is total and irreversible in Christ and in the Kingdom) is the same Being which calls me to be unequivocally involved in my Christian project. Christian praxis, therefore, is the medium, the bridge, that unites the sinful situation of humanity with the Christian project yet to be completed. It links the inherently unjust conditions of the present with the eschatological

possibilities of the future.

Praxis is based on faith in two ways. First, faith opens to us the possibility of being Christian, of moving toward what we can become, and of being involved in the Christian project that is founded on and wrapped in praxis. Second, praxis is based on faith in that faith is the interpretative light that enables us to discover here and now the meaning of historical events and their possibilities. Praxis is, in reality, the grasping of a possibility. It permits us to utilize a hermeneutic that reveals a hidden meaning of what was previously obscure in the history of the pre-Christian world and which now by the light of faith becomes clear. This kind of understanding or interpretation is not scientific, universal, or theoretical. It is concrete, historical, and adapted to everyday living. It is what the classicists would call “judicious.”

Faith is rooted in praxis. It is comprehension functioning by, being nourished by, and constantly reoriented by praxis. Egoistic or self-serving praxis inhibits faith, while a self-giving or heroic praxis allows faith to open even greater horizons of understanding. Faith, therefore, is the integral foundation of Christian praxis. And praxis is Christian ( as contrasted with pre-Christian or anti-Christian ) to the degree that a new world is actually opened to us by faith.<sup>31</sup>

### 3. *Revelation and Faith:* *The Anthropological Epiphany*

Western theology has for centuries accepted a certain kind of philosophy: the ontology of Kant which postulates faith as something rational, that of Hegel which includes faith within the scope of reason, or that of Heidegger which sees faith as the understanding of Being. Each of these ontologies prescribes the Totality of being as the only limit to thinking. “Being-in-the-world,” however, is the fundamental, primary, original fact,<sup>32</sup> and existential theology parts company with rationalists who view the world as a Totality. A more objectionable feature of Western philosophy, however, is the assumption that Totality is mine, ours, the Europeans’ —Totality which belongs to the “center .” The unrecognized conclusion of this kind of thinking is that I negate other Christian worlds or totalities and other equally valid experiences, and I negate the anthropological Other as my point of departure for thinking theologically.<sup>33</sup>

For F. W.J. Schelling in his *Philosophie der Offenbarung (Philosophy of Revelation, 1858)*, faith in the word of the Other is beyond ontological reasoning. It is equivalent to Hegel's *Sein* (Being), a definition with which Kierkegaard takes issue in his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Faith comes from the revelation of the Other, and revelation is nothing more than God's altering or disturbing pronouncement, existential or worldly pronouncement, which sets forth the hermeneutical norms or categories of Christianity. In existential history God reveals what is obscure, such as the fact of world redemption and salvation in Christ, by means of an interpretative or normative light which is accessible to all human beings and valid for all history. God does not merely reveal something as a concrete event. Rather, he reveals the categories or norms by which I can interpret the event.<sup>35</sup> In a sense revelation was completed with the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, but the potentialities of the Incarnation unfold throughout all of history. What is significant in this context is the recognition that revelation is not manifested only *in* history by means of human pronouncements, but also by means of human beings as flesh and blood exteriority. Revelation comes through the poor, the Christ-person.

Faith is the acceptance of the word of the Other as other. And faith is Christian when it accepts the divine Word in Christ as it is mediated through the historical, the

concrete, the real poor. The authentic epiphany of the Word of God is that word spoken by the poor man who says, "I am hungry!" And only the person who hears this cry of the poor and who is in effect a nonbeliever, a negator of the system, can hear the genuine Word of God. God has not died, but God's epiphany has been assassinated in the Indian, the African, and the Asian. Therefore God can no longer reveal himself. Abel died in the deification of Europe, of the "center," and God is now hidden. The norm of interpretation that has been revealed is: "I was hungry and you never gave me food. ...Then it will be their turn to ask, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry ...?' "(Matt. 25:42-44).<sup>36</sup> Now by the death of the deification of Europe faith can be born in the breast of the "peripheral" poor. Faith in God mediated by the poor is the new manifestation of God in history, and faith becomes reality not by the writing of theological or theoretical treatises on "the death of God," but by means of applied justice.<sup>37</sup>

#### 4. *Theology and History*

Theology is not faith. Theology is theoretical thinking that emerges from praxis grounded in existential, supernatural comprehension, that is, in faith. At this level of existential comprehension the Christian being, who has real validity as light that illumines, has not been discerned explicitly. The ontic is interpreted, but the ontological actuality is not systematized. The practical function of theology is the systematization and elucidation of what is already validated in existential, day-by-day faith. Theology is the epistemological conceptualization of what is revealed in the empirical experiences of the Christian life. This passage from factual, historical, daily experience of Christian living to conceptualization cannot, however, be achieved without risk. In fact, theology develops in stages, and perceiving this development is of utmost importance for understanding our present Latin American situation.

Semitic thinking in general and Hebrew thinking in particular had a certain way of categorizing historical experience theoretically. It was expressed not only by poetry such as the Psalms, and by historical interpretation such as the narrative passages in Genesis 12-50, but also by mythical expressions such as Genesis 1-11, and the Wisdom literature such as the book of Job. One can affirm, nevertheless, that this incipient theology of the Old and New Testaments is intrinsically and fundamentally *historical*. The prehistorical myths of Adam, Cain, and the Tower of Babel are historicized, that is, they are set forth by Israel as a means of counteracting the nonhistorical myths that circulated continually among Israel's neighbors. But history as an event (*Geschehen* or *Ereignis*) is the basis, the point of departure in the preaching of the Prophets, Jesus, Paul, and the Apostle John.<sup>38</sup> Their reasoning is always the same: it is in Abraham, an historical person, that we are saved by the Covenant and the Promise. And as our fathers crossed the desert, so today we are pilgrims. The structure of the Gospels and of the Acts of the Apostles—that is, from Bethlehem through Galilee, Jerusalem, Samaria, Antioch, Greece, and culminating in Rome in John's Apocalypse—is that of a "theology of history," for all of these represent an historical interpretation of the experience of salvation completed in Christ Jesus. Historical-interpretation is the foundation of Judeo-Christian theology (as Jean Daniélou asserts), and other postapostolic writings, including Augustine's *City of God*.

Nevertheless, soon after the apostles—beginning with the apologists in the second century—the epistemological and syllogistic conceptualization of the Hellenists was superimposed upon Christian history as can be seen clearly in the works of Clement and Origen of Alexandria toward the close of the second century, of Irenaeus of Lyon,

and of those who were slowly developing theology —first the Greek then the Latin Fathers, and finally the Scholastics of the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries. This syllogistic reasoning was superimposed on theology by a second wave of Spanish and Trentine Scholastics and again by the third Scholastic wave toward the end of the nineteenth century. In its theological conceptualization, that is, in the transition from the historical experience of the Christian life to an explicitly scientific-thematic expression, Western theologians abandoned the original historical method of the Old and New Testament writers.

It is now common knowledge that through the influence of the Tübingen School—as much by the Protestant faculty who were indebted to Hegel as by the Roman Catholic faculty who were influenced by the work of Moehler —there began a rethinking of Christian reality as a history of salvation (*Heilsgeschehen* or *Heilsgeschichte*). This theological schematization slowly continues to recover a clear historical character. Today, a century after the initial efforts at Tübingen, it is possible to affirm that theology and the systematized history of salvation are identical. Furthermore, one can also affirm that the history of the Church is but one indivisible moment or segment of this unique theology.

The history of salvation as an existential event (*geschehen*) should, however, be distinguished from systematized history (*Historie*), but this methodical and scientific systematizing has as its only theme the Trinitarian God who is manifesting himself in the one historically unfolding salvation. Existential history, then, is not only a locus but is the *unique* locus of all Christian theology. Other areas of theological reflection such as the Scriptures rest as it were on history as their foundation.

This issue, which appears to be merely a question of methodology, is of crucial importance for Latin American theology. Having utilized the syllogistic-scientific method of Aristotle's *Organon*, and having considered the structure developed in the Mediterranean world as unique and universal—the environment not only of Greek philosophy but also of Patristic Christianity and of the three periods of Scholasticism—the European experience was assumed to be universally applicable, and the whole system was transplanted in Latin America as the only valid historical experience.

We now know that history cannot be retold by a single method, that in Latin America the diversities in history were not noted, and that the non-Europeans proceeded to copy and repeat the only theology they knew, namely, the Hellenistic-Christian theology that was essentially the conceptualization of the European historical experience. Upon discovering the history of salvation as the locus of theology and the same history as an indivisible segment of the one theology, the differences between European and Latin American histories became evident, and Latin American theologians could not help but take these differences into account. It was then that a new theology began to emerge. The differences in the two histories had been sensed for decades; by 1964 they became evident, and after 1968 they were undeniable.

Temporality, as the understanding of being, is an existential part of the ontological nature of humanity. A human being is never complete in a closed present, past, or future. One's existence includes a uniquely historical-traditional past that opens the future from which spring the possibilities of the present. This having-been posits the power-to-be in which being itself is grounded—all indicating the *factum* of temporality. One of its modes is historicity. The historical is written evidence for having-been in a has-been-world, inscribed by the hand of a person in-the-world.<sup>39</sup> If a human being can be historical, then a Christian human being can also be historical, and he or she can be historical as a part of salvation history. The theological method which begins



by interpreting history is the best interpretation of the implicit on the existential level. If the historical significance of the Christian human being is not considered, then history becomes an abstraction and dissolves into the universal. Failure to take into account the historical importance of the Christian human being in Latin America allows the uniqueness of our salvation history to evaporate into insignificance.

It is because Latin America was not taken into account by European ecclesiastical historians from the sixteenth century until the latter half of the twentieth century that Latin Americans felt cut off from themselves. They felt they were alienated, nonauthentic beings, for they had been annihilated by the process of Europeanization. In order to recover their being, therefore, it is essential that the Christian history of Latin America be interpreted —this moment in salvation history that proceeds toward completion on our continent, this indivisible moment of our unique theology —if we are to think of ourselves as being a part of Christian history.

Theological thinking emerges from praxis, and our praxis is Latin American. As the theology of history (not one theology among many but *our* theology) methodically proposes a sacrament or an institution in history as a key for seeing its essential structure (for example, from the Old to the New Testament, and within primitive, conciliar, and European traditions), it is necessary in all matters —even in the discussions of such dogmas as the Trinity, the Church, or the sacraments —to continue this dialectical movement in our Latin American ecclesial history: in the missionary praxis of the sixteenth century, in the councils and synods, in the concrete decisions, in the institutional traditions, and even in “folk Catholicism.” All should proceed by receiving in this moment in our Latin American salvation history its own tonality, which Latin American Christian praxis has been impressing upon it little by little.

We want to make it clear, therefore, from a hermeneutical or methodological perspective, that the history of the Latin American Church constitutes an essential part of the one authentic theology developed for Latin Americans. Because of this fact, our history is no longer a pre-Christian history (which is discussed in Chapters 4, 7, and 10, and especially in the final reflections appearing in Chapters 6, 9, and 12). This unique Latin American theology posits an ontological structure (dogmatics) completed in Christian praxis (moral) and historically concretized (exegesis in the first moment and history after the Church). The metaphysical structure of the Trinity is manifested prefiguratively in the history of the community of Israel and in Christ and the Church until the final completion in the Parousia.

##### *5. The Praxis of Liberation and Theology*

Using the data of revelation and the mediation of a practiced faith, theology can be said to be simply a reflection on reality. In recent years various theologies have arisen: “secular theology” the “theology of questioning,” the “theology of revolution,”<sup>40</sup> and the “theology of development.”<sup>41</sup> In Europe, however, only “political theology”<sup>42</sup> has attracted much attention. Contemporary Latin American theology regards European “political theology” as too limited, in that the impact of the critical and prophetic is reduced to a narrow national perspective. Consequently, the injustices of international imperialism continue unperceived and unexposed. Critical eschatological deprivatization should correct not only the internal inequities of a system but should also affect the entire world system.<sup>43</sup>

In the same sense, the more influential “theology of hope”<sup>44</sup> suffers from the same kind of limitation as the “critical theory” of the Frankfurt School, which influenced Johannes Metz, and the thought of Ernst Bloch, which inspired Jürgen Moltmann.

Neither of these philosophical hypotheses moves beyond the ontology and dialectic that considers the future as the unfolding of "the Self." And though Moltmann believes the future to be absolutely other, he nonetheless has difficulty in proposing something more or beyond the present system but less than eschatological potential; that is, he is reticent to suggest an historical plan of political, economic, cultural, or sexual liberation. Moltmann's hope envisions an "historic transformation of life,"<sup>45</sup> but not a radical change of the present system nor an historical project of liberation as the authentic sign of the eschatological possibility. Without this concrete mediation, however, hope merely reinforces the *status quo* and acts as an opiate.

On the other hand, a genuine European theology of liberation would address the real issue of "Christianity and the class struggle"<sup>46</sup> within the limits of a national Marxism and preceded by a "theory of dependence." Thus far it has not been made clear that the struggle of the proletariat of the North Atlantic "center" can be oppressive for the proletariat on the "periphery" or in the colony. The working classes have become equivocal and frequently undermine their own interests at the international level. The national liberation of the dominated countries is therefore necessary for the social liberation of the oppressed classes. And for this reason the term "masses" or "people" has a special significance today which the word "class" does not convey.<sup>47</sup>

Latin American theology is, therefore, a reflection on the praxis of the liberation of the oppressed by Christians who are politically committed. It is a theological ethic developed from the perspective of those on the periphery, the marginalized, the outcasts of the world. The praxis that undergirds this theological ethic is not merely a praxis meeting necessities (the ontic actuality of the system of present needs), but rather a praxis of liberation (in Hebrew *habodá* and in Greek *diakonia*). It is a liberating trans-ontological ministry. It is a reflection not only on political praxis, but likewise on sexual and pedagogical praxis. In a word, it is the theology of the *poor*, the *woman* as a sexual object, and the alienated *child*.

#### 6. *Toward a Theology of the Liberation of the Oppressed*

Following the great "theology of Christendom" (from the fourth to the fifteenth century) and "modern European theology" (from the sixteenth to the twentieth century), the "theology of the liberation" of the periphery and of the oppressed is all of traditional theology put in motion from the perspective of the poor. The "theology of Christendom" (past model) virtually identified the Christian faith with the Mediterranean (Latin-Byzantine) culture, establishing later the process (as the crisis regarding the use of Latin in the Second Vatican Council recently indicated). Modern privatized and imperial European theology was reproduced in the colonies as "progressive theology, but it was nothing more than an imitation by the national colonial oppressed oligarchy who benefitted from the system and took as a last resource a theology which in the final analysis is abstract and uncritical and which supports the *status quo*. In contrast, the "theology of liberation" (of which the "theology of revolution" merely concentrates on a point of departure, "political theology" concentrates on its scope and characteristics, and the "theology of hope" concerns itself with the future) reflects on praxis, or better said, it reflects on the praxis of liberation, that is, on the "pilgrimage" (*pascua*) or way through the desert of human history, from sin as systemic political sexual, and pedagogical domination toward the irreversible salvation in Jesus Christ and his Kingdom. This "pilgrimage" is made by every person, every people, every epoch, by all of human history. There are, however, certain crucial

times (*kairós*) in history, and Latin America<sup>48</sup> is experiencing one of those periods now in that complete eschatological liberation as clearly indicated by the prophets, the apostles, and the Church. Furthermore, this “theology of liberation” is emerging among the North American Blacks, Mexican-Americans, black Africans, and even among some Asians;<sup>49</sup> it is destined to become the universal theology of the oppressed.

The “theology of liberation” began in Latin America<sup>50</sup> when the dependence of our theology was discovered along with our economic and cultural dependence. This new theology has proceeded to develop its own method and analysis which I define as “analectical” and not merely dialectical.<sup>51</sup> The trans-ontological voice of the Other (*aná-*) is heard, and the interpretation of its content by “similarity” leaves aside the “distinction” of the Other as other inasmuch as the liberation practice does not permit us to invade the *other* world. This is a new anthropological dimension from the perspective of analogy.

For its part, the “theology of liberation” tends toward an interpretation of the voice of *the oppressed* in order, on the basis of praxis, to stake their liberation. This is no special moment of the univocal Total of universal abstract theology. Neither is it an equivocal or self-explanatory moment as such. From the unique distinction each Latin American theologian and theology reassumes the “appearance” of theology which the history of the discipline gives it but within the hermeneutical circle from the distinct *nothingness* of its freedom. The theology of the true theologian, the theology of the people such as the Latin Americans, is analogically similar and at the same time dissimilar. For this reason it is unique, original, and inimitable. When the “appearance” becomes univocal, the history of theology can only be European. When the “distinct” in a theology is absolutized, it becomes equivocal. It is not Hegelian identity nor Jasperinian equivocalness. It is analogy.

The theology of liberation, however, is a new moment in the history of theology, an analogical moment which emerged after European, Russia, and North American modernity, and which appeared first in Latin American, then in African and Asian, theology. The theology of the poor, the theology of the liberation of universal humankind, is not easily accepted in Europe. Europe is too proud of her univocal universality. Europe does not desire to hear *the voice of the Other*, of the “barbarians,” the “nonpersons,” if they do their own thinking. Consequently, the theology stemming from Latin America or from the Arab world, from the black African, the Indian, the Southeast Asian, or the Chinese is disregarded if not rejected outright. The voice of Latin American theology is not merely a repetition of European theology. It is a “barbaric theology” in the same sense that the apologists were barbarians in regard to the Greek intelligentsia. But we know that we are situated beyond the modern, dominating, European Totality and that we are struggling for the liberation of the poor toward a future, postmodern, liberated universal humanity.