

*THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY II:
ETHICS AS LIBERATION CRITICISM*

...and He died under Pontius Pilate.
Apostles. Creed

The Apostles' Creed, the oldest creed in the church, tells us that Jesus died under Pontius Pilate. Just before we come to this phrase in the creed, we read: "We believe ...in one Lord, Jesus Christ; ...by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary; ...he was crucified under Pontius Pilate [and] died."

I would like to show through this text how Jesus breaks through into the flesh, into the structures of sin, and blows them apart, being ground up nevertheless by the prince of this world.

I also would like to go into the thinking of Franz Rosenzweig, who was a German- Jewish theologian at the beginning of the century. I have studied the Jewish theologians in considerable depth because they give a good account of the way things were before the Incarnation; they have a keen insight into pre-Christian happenings that helps one understand the complementariness of the Old Testament to Christianity. Rosenzweig was an

extraordinary Jew who was very sick for many years and who, in spite of his constant pain, was able to write a unique book entitled *The Star of Redemption* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1971). In that book he laid down the fundamental categories that Emmanuel Levinas employs. Rosenzweig, commenting on the history of Moses and the exodus, says some beautiful things. I am indebted to his viewpoint in what follows.

DEAD FLESH: THE TOTALIZED SYSTEM

The flesh when closed up is dead and its death is sin. When the flesh closes up, it becomes totalized and says: "I am all there is because I have already killed Abel." Totalized flesh-this is the meaning of sin as death. This does not mean, of course, that sinners drop dead. They are alive with biological life, but they are dead as far as human life is concerned because they are subjugated, totalized. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "You must be born again." How? By detotalizing the self, getting out of the flesh, opening up the self. Baptism is the condition of possibility for this detotalization of the system. It is grace. Thus to "let the dead bury the dead" is to let them lose their lives in their concern for the system. The bourgeois person of our world today works in order to have more and more money. Such a person is a lackey of the devil, who goes about burying the dead. But Jesus says to us, "You, follow me."

Just as dead as totalized flesh is divinized totality because it believes itself to be God; it is the idol. It is that Totality that Otherness breaks into.

In the beginning we stated: "We believe in Jesus Christ who was born of the Holy Spirit." The Other is the *Holy One*. Poor people are holy ones inasmuch as they are outside the system; such persons are innocent of all the

sins of the system because they have not committed them but have been their victim. God is the Other, the Holy of holies, the Saint of saints.

From "outside" the totalization of sin and of the flesh, from the Spirit, the Word breaks into the world. But how can the Word seep into the flesh if the flesh remains closed up? If the flesh is totalized in sin because I am constantly watching to see how my stock-market investments are doing, the Word cannot enter. Only if I do not see myself as being all there is, only if I have a deep and constant respect for Abel can I then be open to Abel. In this case I am the Samaritan who takes the poor person off to be healed. This openness to the Other, which is always and in concrete instances openness to the poor and through them to God, is the giving of food to whoever asks me for food. There are not three possibilities but only two: Yes or no. "If you did not give food, to this poor person, you did not give me food. ...and therefore I do not know you"-this could be said to us at the Judgment. Those who open themselves to the Other say, like Mary, "Be it done unto me." This is perfect flesh, the perfect creature.

Quite suddenly we have tied in a mariological reflection with the entire European colonization of America – Mary is the *flesh* which opens up: "Be it done unto me according to your *Word*." She is the liberation Virgin, she is the Virgin of Guadalupe carried by the Indians at the vanguard of the army of Padre Hidalgo who fought, in 1809, against the Mexican oligarchy and Spanish power with the battlecry, "The land for those who work!" This is the Virgin who said: "He has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly." It can be said that she was in favor of subverting law and order! But was not her Son put to death for being a subversive? Without realizing that Jesus was put to death as a subver-

sive by the empire and the traitorous oligarchy of his country, we cannot understand what happened in what we call Holy Week.

"Be it done unto me, according to your Word." This means that the flesh becomes open and for that reason the Incarnation takes place. "In-carnation" (the process of taking on flesh) is something *within* the flesh.

All that I have said is strictly technical; I am not using symbolic approximations but a method. It is a matter of categories, it is the theology of Jesus. In the Incarnation the Eternal Word was in-humanized in the humanity that is totality as flesh. In order for Jesus to become incarnate, to become in-totalized, to enter into this human world, someone had to open the self. Here is where the young girl of Nazareth enters; by the power of the Holy Spirit (strictly and essentially this means that Christ is from absolute Otherness) she conceives Christ in her womb. The Otherness of the Word is absolute and cannot be Incarnated through human mediation. From absolute Otherness the Word breaks into the totality of the flesh, and therefore the Incarnation is also the summons of the poor as otherness in the world as a system.

INCARNATION AS THE "DEATH OF DEATH"

The Other as "exteriority" is definitively God. Whenever we respect the Other as other, we live our lives as we should. Evil enters our lives when we do not respect the Other but use the Other as a *thing*. When I kill Abel I sin; I see him as a thing. If I respect Abel as other, I am the Samaritan who helps, serves, heals, and puts him back on the road to life. The Virgin Mary was so accustomed to respecting the Other as other that when the Absolute Other called upon her, she said, "Be it done unto me." She did not see herself as God; she was an

atheist in regard to herself. She never wished to eat of the tree of life because she never wanted to be God. She knew that God was the Other and thus it was easy for her to *open herself* Jesus is the mysterious *bringing together* of the divine Otherness and the human Totality. This mystery of a bringing together is the first thing the Bible talks about when it reveals to us that "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." This is to say that the Other created the totality, the flesh. For this reason John begins his Gospel in the same way but at another level. Because John was Jewish, he intended to begin his Gospel with praise to the Word of God and thus he was inspired to turn to the prophets. In the beginning it was the creative Word, but now it is the re-creative Word: " In the beginning was the Word (*logos*). ...The Word was made *flesh*."

Not only did God create everything but he re-created it. This re-creation is Jesus. Jesus, the countenance of God, is a person of God. He is the divine person who manifests himself in history; being of flesh, of the world, he reconciles everything. He is the *countenance* that is born of the Virgin by the power of the Holy Spirit. He is the Word of God who can now speak for the poor of the world from flesh and to flesh (the system). The Word on becoming flesh, that is, on gaining entry into the system, upset the totalized totality. He, as a divine Person, essentially Other, Other beyond any system, will always remain within the system and also, like a breach, outside it. The kingdom will now be a "within" with no "outside," since in the outside there is a future and the kingdom is the ultimate (in Greek: *eschatos*, whence comes the word "eschatology"). The kingdom rises up like a historic invasion of the eschatological-which means that Christ permeates the whole system to thrust everything forward. Christ unhinges the hinge of the system where

everyone treads the usual path of sin. The Word is infleshed in order to blow apart the hinge. He unhinges everything in order to set up new hinges. From old hinges to new hinges (which are new totalizations of sin) to new liberations, there are new systems and new sins needing continual liberation until the end of time. It is the death of death.

THE PASCHAL INCARNATION OF LIBERATION

The Incarnation is the invasion of the Otherness of God who is always Other, an eschatological invasion because it is the ultimate thrust that puts into liberating motion all systematization. But Jesus invades totality in a determined place, not just anywhere. We are told: "Having the divine condition, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave." The better word, of course, is servant, but not in the sense we think of when the Hebrew refers to the "servant" of Yahweh. The "servant" here is the one who carries out the provident plan of God; it is *service* in regard to the poor; it is work in regard to the needy and to God. In fact we can say that work for God is nothing more than work for the poor. "Service" is the same thing. The priests of the temple performed the "services," the divine rites. They would take an animal and sacrifice it solely to God. As for the poor, they would bake a chicken in the oven and give it to whoever was hungry. If I dismember an animal and burn it in the name of God, I perform a divine sacrifice. Work in service of the poor is *worship* of the poor and a prime condition for the acceptance of worship of God. I must first serve the poor and in them God. The second step is unacceptable without the first. "I desire mercy and not sacrifices." This means that if I exploit the Indian, I cannot very well take part in the Mass later on. If I sell

African slaves, the same is true because the poor are the epiphany of the living God.

Jesus took the "form of a servant," a poor person. The rich are the rulers and the poor are always the ruled. Again, let there be no doubt that Jesus took the form of the poor person. We ought now to explicate a question that is heavily debated among us.

The "poor" in one sense are the oppressed. But there are three meanings to the word "poor ." "Poor" is the servant as dominated, ruled./Jesus was not an "intellectual" who had studied in a school of theology or in the temple of Jerusalem as did Paul. The poor Jesus was a man of the land, of the people. How is it that he knows so many things if he has had no teachers? object those who despise him. But Jesus, not only through infused knowledge but also through the education that he received in the synagogue at Nazareth, learned the theological categories of his people and brought them to their culmination, because his intellect was not encumbered with the limitations of sin. He thought more clearly than anyone. Therefore when he was a child of twelve and the priests asked him about the traditions of his people to see if he was ready to take his place as an adult in the community, he surprised them because he put things in a way that disconcerted them. It was as if a boy today in catechism class would say that the unjust sale of raw materials was a sin. Jesus saw the deep and mysterious relationships of sin and the historical liberation of his people in relation to the history of all other peoples. They were amazed because, having taken the radical stance of a poor man among his people, he had understood the mystery. He not only took on the "condition of a servant" but accepted that condition unreservedly-accepting death itself (Phil. 2:5).

Why did Jesus die on the cross? Was it because the

heavenly Father was a sadist? This is a gross error. Jesus did not come to pay a debt, nor by any means did he come to compensate for the sufferings that the Father would have experienced. On the other hand, the Father accepted that he would live the logic of sin, and, living this logic within himself, he would bring about the definitive destruction of the system of sin, that is, he would conquer with his death the death of sin and thus arrive at Resurrection.

The "passage from death to life" also means the passage from one system to another more just, the greatest of all-the kingdom of heaven. It is the passage from oppression to liberation: "I have seen my people enslaved in Egypt," and God tells Moses, "Free them."

This passage from death to life is a movement of conquest. The word "passage" means pasch. Before the final pasch comes there is to be a historical passage-the passage from Egypt (which is also called the "departure from Egypt," and departure is exodus: *ex* [from], *hodos* [road]), like a departure from prison. In prison I am a slave; upon my departure I am free. "Exodus" is another way of saying liberation. In Isaiah 61 we read: "The spirit [the Spirit of Otherness] ...has been given to me; he has sent me to bring good news to the poor, ...to proclaim a year of favor from Yahweh, ...to proclaim liberty to captives."

The word "liberation," so upsetting to many people, is perfectly biblical and Christian: "Father, deliver, liberate them from the Evil One. ..."

The pasch is the passage that is celebrated as a feast of joy-the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the feast of the liberation from Egypt; it is the feast of the Paschal Lamb before the deliverance, it is what people feel when they see they have been freed from slavery; it is redemption; it is salvation. Jesus redeems; it is like getting out of prison.

Redeemers are those who hand themselves over so that the prisoners can go free. Redemption is exactly the work of the servant: it is a service by which the Samaritan helps the poor man to become a new person: He takes him out of slavery, he frees him.

THE THREE MEANINGS OF "POOR"

There are three meanings to the word "poor." In the first place, poor means oppressed-Jesus took the position of the oppressed.

In the second place, the poor are the prophets who bear the lot of the poor, "the servants of Yahweh." The prophets are poor because when they speak to totality in the name of the poor they stand alone. Because the prophets advocate an order that will be more just for the poor, they are killed. Witnesses to a future order are saying that the present order is dying, because if there is to be a new order, the old must disappear. The Devil, who is "the prince of this world," cannot tolerate the death of death (that is, the death of the fossilized totality) . Before the system dies, the system kills the witness. Therefore the martyrs die; and therefore John writes the book of Revelation to show that the martyrs of the Roman empire are the builders of the heavenly Jerusalem, and that their blood is the building material. The martyrs' blood is the same as the blood of Jesus. Those who give witness to the future affirm the death of the present order and become a sign of contradiction for the system. The sign is at one and the same time historical and eschatological. Historically, to pass from one order to another, it has been necessary for the subjugators to cease subjugating; without their wealth, they could even stop sinning. But before being dispossessed

the subjugators would rather give up their lives, so identified are they with the Devil, who will do anything to avoid ceding power. The salvation of the subjugators, of the sinners, is brought about by the liberation of the poor, because once the former lose the instruments of subjugation, they are no longer capable of sin. "The rich" who lost their wealth during political upheavals and were reduced to being office workers, poor laborers, very likely were saved by what was done to them. So let us not be scandalized by those who take away private property; they may well represent the hand of God reaching out to save the subjugators.

The third meaning of poor is those who are outside the system, oppressed *and* outside the system. A poor man on a cold day walks by the window of a rich man and sees him and his wife and children sitting down in comfort to a nice steak dinner. The other is *outside* in the cold and saying, "God, how lucky *they* are!" He is viewing the system from outside; *they* are within and they view from within. Like gods they are living in a well-established order. The well-established and closed-off system is sin. That is, the poor man views from outside the order that is not his; he yearns for an order that he would be part of, a future order like the kingdom of heaven. Even those poor who are ignorant of Jesus want this. Whereas those who are well installed within the order want it to remain that way forever: "The kingdom is on earth." This is humanity's sin.

The Hebrew word for "work" and "worship" is the same. The work of liberation is the same as the service of the Servant; it is the same as the worship of God. The worship of God is a liberating praxis of the poor, but it is a praxis that does not arise from pure necessity, and it is not a praxis of domination.

TOWARD A CHRISTIAN ETHIC OF LIBERATION

The subjugators employ a praxis; it is an act by which they subjugate. The subjugators pay people just enough so they will not leave the factory. But let them unionize and declare a strike and they are fired. Today we rarely see management providing labor schools for their workers so that they will understand what their rights are. Even where this is done, it reeks of paternalism and is another form of subjugation.

There is, furthermore, a praxis of necessity: I do something because I need to do it. I go to the bakery to buy bread because I need to eat bread. But just as *service* is not a praxis of subjugation, neither is it of necessity. Rather, it is a praxis of gratuity; it occurs when I do something for the Other as other, not because I need to, since I already have food. It is the other who needs food. When I do something for the Other as other, that is the praxis of liberation. It has to do with liberating the Other as other because to eat bread is an equivocal act. The purpose of eating bread is to subsist; it is an act of possession. And thus I can eat bread so that later on I can go to the stock market and trade; or I can eat bread just to subsist, which is not good either, or I can eat in order to have enough energy to serve the Other, to give my life for the Other, and this is the only good human act. So the real question is not the eating of bread but the *why* of it. The only really good act is the act directed to the Other as other, and every other act is either indifferent or evil.

There were times when Christian ethics tried to tell us that the foundation of morality was the end-beatitude, happiness. The end is also the purpose of the established order. But if I fulfill the end of an established order of subjugation, I commit sin. The end of an established order is not, simply because it is established, the foun-

datation of a good act. I can live up to the constitution of a nation and end up in hell because the national constitution can be totally evil. It does me no good to cry out, "I have complied with the law," because laws can be unjust. Outlaws can really be good. This is what happened to Jesus and that is why he said, "The law was made for man and not man for the law." When people put themselves outside the law, they are out in the cold. Again, this happened to Jesus. When he proposed a new order, the old order became an unjust imposition.

At times, to be good we must flout the law, so that we may fulfill the law of loving the Other as other, a love that goes beyond all law. How risky it is to be a Christian! No wonder the prophet, understanding finally what his role was to be, cried out, "Cursed be the day I was born!" as if to say, "Why has such a dangerous calling been given to me? It will cost me my life, just as it did for Jesus." "The cross" is not a form of self-laceration I inflict upon myself because in my comfortable middle-class condition I don't have sufficient pain. This would be nothing more than masochism and would have nothing to do with sanctity. It is often a striving for perfection without renouncing the prince of this world. But if we put ourselves in the place of Jesus we will be lacerated, not by ourselves but by the sin of the world. Penitential practices can easily be a form of vice and this may very well have been the case in medieval monasteries. But when, like the saints, we try to subvert the reigning order, we will be beaten and the lashes will be administered by our own brothers, as happened in the case of St. Bernard, St. Francis, or St. John of the Cross.

Again, current laws cannot be the foundation of the good act, because laws are nothing more than the exigencies of the end. To achieve a certain end, well-defined means are necessary. The end is the foundation of law;

but if the end is bad, the law is unjust, and if I comply with an unjust law, my act is bad, it is a sin. I would be better off not complying with the law.

Furthermore, the prevailing virtues can be habits of subjugation, because those who subjugate everything determine what is virtuous. Thus the prevailing virtues do not serve us as a guide to what is a good action because they are the virtues of subjugation and not of liberation. The prevailing values, all told, are only the prevailing values of the subjugating group.

Liberating praxis has its origin from the Other as other. It is service to the poor who are outside the system, who are beyond the ends and the laws of the system. Today it means serving the peoples on the periphery, wanting the liberation of those peoples. When we want, and commit ourselves to, the liberation of the peoples of Latin America, we enter into salvation history. Thus when the Chinese people broke out of their dependence on the Russians, they put themselves on this road, the road of service to the poor. Jesus fulfills this service when he commits himself to the poor and says, "Blessed are you," which was to announce their liberation from all systems. Among the Hindus the poor are the pariahs, the lowest of the castes; they are those who do not comply with the order. The Rig Veda so arranged things as to immobilize the system, the flesh. In the same way, Confucius ingeniously established an order that lasted from his time—the seventh century before Christ—until the Chinese revolutions of 1912 and 1949. In India and China there was no one who could budge the established order because it was understood that to defy the order was wrong. The Devil imposes an unjust order and judges anyone who violates it to be evil. But Jesus turns this completely around. Jesus says that the pariahs are the blessed ones, the highest caste, well beyond the law.

He thus becomes a subversive in regard to the unjust order because he sacralizes the poor, whereas Confucius sacralized the order. Jesus proposes a kingdom that is beyond all historical order, because it is an eschatological kingdom. Thus, without having drawn a sword, he makes every subjugator tremble, beginning with Herod. This is why Herod wanted to kill the infant Jesus. Jesus was born as one already crucified. They persecuted him from birth because he came to announce a kingdom in which the poor would be blessed.

If the order is sacralized, there is no one who can touch it; therefore, if there is no possibility of a new historical order in the future, God the Creator is denied, the kingdom of heaven is denied, the Spirit is denied.

THE LOGIC OF SIN

Only now can we understand the statement, "He died under Pontius Pilate." He died "crushed like a grape in the wine press." Why did Herod want to kill the infant Jesus? Why did the Roman soldiers torture and mistreat him and gouge his side with a lance? Did the oppressed make those lances? No. Arms are made in armament factories. They are the only arms that torture and rip open the heart of Jesus. Frightening though it is, there is a logic of sin, a logic of totality, a logic of the flesh. It is the realm of human will as the realm of sin. It is the logic of the realm of this world that inevitably had to kill Jesus, because Jesus, being the Son of God and of Mary, was such a clear sign that the structure of sin had no doubt that he had to be eliminated. We are sinners and in the half light of our wrongdoing sin does not see us as clearly its opposite and therefore it leaves us with our life. But if we were clearly anti-sin, we would be so intolerable for the order of sin that it would destroy us.

The logic of sin is this: The Other, who is Abel, is killed or treated as a thing: subjugated. If the victim is unaware of this subjugation, there is peace, as in the Soviet-American peaceful coexistence. If a people that is subjugated believes that this subjugation is by eternal decree and that God is in favor of it, all goes well for the established order. But if all of a sudden someone preaches to the poor that they are blessed, that the kingdom of heaven is theirs, that they have dignity, that they can be free, that there is an order in which they can be fully humans and they believe the preacher, the subjugators tremble. If the subjugators were to free the poor, they would die as subjugators but would be reborn as saved people. Thus we don't have to kill the brothers or sisters as persons but the subjugators as subjugators. The subjugators become identified with sin when the oppressed start out on the freedom trail toward a new order. So we have to dispossess the subjugators in order to save them.

The prophet starts the process by saying to the poor, "You are poor but free and of great value; you are blessed and yours is the kingdom of heaven." When the poor rise up, they no longer cry out as did Martin Fierro, "Because of my ignorance I know that I am worthless." The subjugators made the poor believe they were worthless; and as long as they believed this, all went well with the established order; but as soon as they rose up and realized their true worth, the subjugators began to tremble. The poor lift themselves up in rebellion because the prophet has told them that they are destined to be free. When a people rise up and begin their march to freedom subjugation suddenly becomes repression, the hidden violence comes out in the open.

When Jesus announces the liberation of the people, he comes forward as a witness to a new kingdom. Then Pilate "washes his hands" because he has no need to sit in

judgment; that thankless task is better left to the sanhedrin or Herod. Herod represents the oligarchy of the dependent homeland. We thus have this arrangement: The empire (Pilate) is on top, then comes Herod and the Herodians, dominated by Rome but in turn dominating and exploiting the people. We see these three levels in operation at the time of the crucifixion. All Pilate has to do is wash his hands because he knows that the dependent oligarchy under him wishes the death of Jesus. It is the same as saying that a Latin American is going to take care of the death of the Brazilian priest Pereira Neto. The ones who kill him will act in the name of the dependent oligarchy which is exploiting the people in the name of those of the "center ." It is really Herod, dependent on the center, who kills Jesus. Sin can do nothing else but kill life because, if life conquers, death dies. If Jesus, who is life, is allowed to live, the system, which is death, dies. Here precisely is the dialectic between death and life. Jesus dies as he must because repression brings about the disappearance of the witness to the kingdom to come.

THE VIOLENCE OF SIN

As long as the oppressed accept subjugation, sin (whether erotic, pedagogical, ideological, or political) is considered to be a natural fact, a sacred fact. There is no need, then, for any kind of violent repression. Subjugating violence needs no claws, like the lion who plays with the mouse. But when the oppressed people lift up their heads, with a will to freedom and love for the future, not hatred, war begins. In war not all are corrupt. Unjust indeed will be the army of the subjugators and just the army that defends itself in war and fights for liberation. San Martin and his grenadiers were violent, but just; he was a just liberator, a true hero. It is the "realists" who

want to save the empire who wage unjust war, war in exactly its demonic sense. In war there are two sides: The one helps and defends the poor, the other wants to keep on subjugating them. The question of where sin is can be answered. Jesus accepts that the claws of sin's logic will tear him to pieces. Jesus witnesses to the future order. He does not kill anyone. The subjugators are the first to kill; and the first to die are the ones who witness to the future order—the martyrs, the prophets, the Christians.

The prophet has to become poor in order to hear the poor. Therefore Jesus is poor as a prophet, poor as one of the oppressed, and poor as exteriority. The poor person as the prophet of the eschatological poor acts on behalf of the oppressed poor to liberate them. Jesus is identified with the poor, and, listening to the poor who ask a new kingdom of him, he acts on behalf of those poor. In doing so, he subverts the established order. Therefore the order kills him.

Of the three meanings of the word "poor," the strongest is that of prophet, the poor according to the Spirit, consecrated by the Spirit. These are not the poor "in spirit," for whom it is acceptable to be subjugators or rich because their "hearts" are poor. These are subterfuges we use that allow us to align ourselves with the "prince of this world." The poor according to the Spirit are the servants of Yahweh and commit themselves historically, pedagogically, and economically. They are poor according to the Spirit, according to the otherness of the system. The Spirit is God, who comes to us if we are open, and stays away if we remain closed. We are never spiritual by nature; if we are spiritual, it is because the Spirit is within us, as St. Paul teaches.

Jesus is the poor man; Jesus is the martyr because he witnesses to the future kingdom; Jesus is the prophet because he speaks to the system and says, "Cursed be you

Pharisees! ...Give to Caesar what is Caesar's." What? Money, of course. "Give to God what is God's." What? Adoration. Caesar is a mortal, he is not God; but to say that he is not is a sacrilege against the empire. This man is dangerous because he is witnessing to the subversion of the empire. For this reason "he died *under* Pontius Pilate."

I have read many commentaries on the creed. The latest I have seen is that of Karl Barth. Commenting on the words "he died under Pontius Pilate," the exegete puts himself in the place of Jesus, as do all the others. He considers the sufferings of Jesus, his resistance to them, but he fails to look from the other side- Who is killing Jesus? Why? What is his motivation? On learning that Jesus was to be killed, the apostles said, "No, this can't be!" But Jesus said, "We are going up to Jerusalem!" Because Jesus sees that "they" are closing in on him, the only solution is either to betray his mission or to die. "We are going up to Jerusalem."

There are moments in our life when we are not aware of being on the road to Jerusalem, but if we do not go to Jerusalem, we betray our faith. It happens at times that our Jerusalems are of minor consequence. Still the moment can come when our Jerusalem would be that of the Lord. We have already undergone much in Latin America and the same may well be in store for us many times over. It is hard to remain a Christian under torture, but we must be prepared for this. In Brazil nuns are being tortured because they want a more just order. Since the present order is "sacred," they are being killed in the name of the order.

This means that, for witnessing to the eschatological kingdom, Jesus, the Life of life, dies in the claws of death. "He died under Pontius Pilate." The same is happening today also; but only the great saints are capable of dis-

playing clearly their opposition to the system even though they know they will be ground up by it. We stand in awe of their sanctity, their heroism, their spiritual struggles; but we tend to overlook the meaning of their challenge to their times. When Don Bosco rounded up all those orphans and gave them an education, the industrialists of Turin and northern Italy tipped their hand when they said, "This priest is going too far; he's becoming a bother ." He was giving dignity to a poor people; but }when those technical schools were taken over by influential urban groups, their prophetic contribution came to an end.

THE ETHOS OF LIBERATION

In the praxis of liberation there are liberating virtues. First among them is the love of justice; it is the love of the Other as *other--charity*. Justice means giving to all people what is due them. But to give to the Other what is due them as other, and not as part of an unjust system, I must love them as other. Thus only in loving the Other as other will I go on to give them their due as persons and not as part of the system.

I cannot love people effectively as other if I do not *trust* their word. They cry out to me, "I'm hungry!" I answer , "Bums, you're hungry because you won't work." Since they shall make no further appeal to me, I have denied them as other. To trust is to have faith in the other; it means accepting their word out of a concrete praxis of commitment-this is the meaning of St. Thomas's *ex voluntate*. My intellect accepts what they say because they say it, even though I do not understand what they say.

The third position is *hope*. Hope means desiring that those who have appealed to me and told me of their hunger achieve their liberation, because I love them as

other, that is, I "hope" they will no longer be hungry. These three fundamental positions-to love the Other as other, to believe their word, and to hope for their liberation, their salvation-these are the three alternative or theological virtues. The rest are subordinate.

Prudence knows how to listen to the voice of the Other; it knows how to orchestrate tactically its service. *Justice* is not merely the offer of bread but of more just laws; it could mean risking one's life so that one day there might be a more just order. Prudence and justice come into play in planning for the liberation of the poor. Anger, too, is involved, which is a manifestation of the virtue of *fortitude*. Being valiant is the capacity to commit oneself to the point of death, and this is the most difficult of all. To do so one must be poor. *Poverty* is an attitude. Poverty is not a question of having nothing but of a willingness to give up one's life for the poor. If I give up all my goods and join twenty people who have nothing, I will frequently have more than I had before: This is wealth and not poverty. The individual poverty of the monk many times comes to be wealth among many; it is security for the future.

The strength of Jesus evidenced itself when he pardoned those who were torturing him. He looked upon them as persons. He who did the nailing looked upon him as a mere thing, and not a person. But Jesus looked at *him* as a person, face-to-face, and forgave his torturer-the noblest act a person is capable of. A school teacher in Argentina just a few years ago was able to forgive the police who were torturing her with electric shock treatments. When we know that the torturer is not sin but only the instrument of sin, we win out over death by treating him or her as a person.

But bravery and fortitude are not enough; we need *temperance* also. Today the opposite of temperance is

comfort, or socially acceptable pleasure. People today sell their lives in order not to lose their comfort. They watch what they say or do for fear of losing their jobs, and herefore no one is afraid of them. But those who have no fear of losing all they have bear watching. There is no point in telling Jesus that "we are going to take everything from you" when he had not even a place to lay his head. Jesus was unencumbered by things; he was poor and had no fear of losing anything. So there was no way to shut him up. He was a man to be feared. The only way to shut him up was to kill him. And this is precisely what they did.

Thus the *ethos* of liberation is all the virtues put to the service of liberation.

MORE ABOUT VIOLENCE

The violence that killed Jesus was the violence of the conquistador, repressive violence designed to nullify the authentic gesture of liberation. There is, on the other hand, the liberating violence of the liberator, for example, San Martin and his army of the Andes. Furthermore, there is the pedagogical violence of the prophet, the kind we see in Jesus. He organized a church and not a state. The function of the church will always be that of pedagogue and prophet, and not one of armed violence, not even in the cause of liberation. As a prophetic institution its function is eschatological-preaching what is to come. It takes a critical look at the fixation and anti-historicity of the totalized system, which is sin. The system would have wished that the Word of God had never come to this world. Nothing arouses greater anger in it than that God would have become man and placed himself *within* the system. Jesus Christ is now present until the end of time, continuously supplying Christians with the voca-

tion of commitment to the poor. Having done away with the old order, these Christians work toward a new order . But they will have to do this over and over again. The function of the Christian is to deinstitutionalize the institutions of sin and, like Jesus in his identification with the poor, turn history toward eschatology.

"BEING-IN-THE-MONEY"

At one point in their history people said that being rich was all that mattered. Then the Christians came along and said that people have a natural right to private property. And this is true if we are talking about what a person needs according to individual human nature: a car, a house, clothing, food. But a piece of land measuring a thousand square miles cannot be *natural* private property, but only juridically so. That kind of property has a social function. If I am able to make institutions work for the good of the poor, I am complying with the demands of the gospel. Excessive private property leads to an economic system of subjugation. In the time of the monarchy there were Christians who fought for democracy and they made out badly. Now, in a time of capitalist democracy and private enterprise, there are Christians who are fighting for a more perfect society that would be socialized. They are faring badly, too. It frequently happens also that the church aligns itself with the subjugators, and this is its sin. Only by identifying itself with the poor can the church liberate the world from an unjust system.

Natural private property is not contrary to socialistic principles because I have a natural right to whatever I need to live-things like calories, protein, clothing, housing, etc. There is no socialist system that quarrels with this. But the excessive and unjust accumulation of juridi-

cal private property is an offshoot of original sin, of the death of Abel, of the disobedience of Adam. It is at the root of the subjugation of peoples in Latin America. If Jesus had respected the law, the Jewish "constitution" of the Sanhedrin, the reigning order and the socially acceptable virtues, he would have died an old man within the confines of the city. But he died *outside* the city—crucified.

On Palm Sunday the people celebrated the arrival of their king; the poor were quick to recognize his kingship. One week later, the great ones, the subjugators killed him. Jesus is the proclamation of the Parousia and the only ones who see him as king are the poor because he is one of them. The frenzy of Palm Sunday is the last straw; "he" will have to be killed because of the ugly situation *brewing—the people are following him*. His death a week later is a foregone conclusion.

His resurrection is the re-creation, the birth of the new person; it is death that has died and that which is born is new life, a new order. It is the new order that rises up unmerited in Christian history, a bonanza, the walking again of the paralytic. Jesus said, "You believe; well then, walk." The Christian today in Latin America says, "You, do you believe in Christ?" The other answers, "We'll wait and see." The prophets must risk themselves for the liberation of Latin America. It will believe if the paralytics walk again, if the people become free. Only in this way can we today give meaning to the kingdom of heaven.

We can no longer say, "We have no use for economics or politics; we believe only in the kingdom and nothing else because we reckon only with things of the spirit." What we would be doing in this instance, without realizing it, would be to consecrate the order, sin. Others can say, "We are betting everything on the historical king-

dom." They do so with such enthusiasm that history becomes a new religion. When the new order takes over, the poor end up being subjugated all over again and we have a new divinization of the order .

Christians, however, assert that there is an eschatological order and a historical order; working toward the historical future which they know is not absolute, they witness to the eschatological kingdom. The doctrine of the Incarnation allows us to say that we have to commit ourselves to a historical, pedagogical, political level, but only as a sign of the eschatological.

This is so very obvious, yet how often are there misunderstandings! How often do people say, "Watch out for Latin American messianism!" Messianism in the temporal order that becomes absolutized is bad; but if we temper it with a view to the eschatological, it is perfect. If we do nothing more than cry out against messianism in the temporal order, we eviscerate the Christian's critical contribution; we put ourselves on the side of the prevailing order and we make Christianity the opium of the people.

If we say, "Bear with your suffering because the king will come!" we are saying, " Accept the Devil!" In this case the kingdom of God will not come; the kingdom to come will be the kingdom of this world.

It is wrong to preach "resignation." On the contrary, we should preach a holy liberating Christian restlessness for the coming of the kingdom. Be resigned, yes, when it comes our turn to shoulder the cross. But in an active way. In the moment of our inevitable crucifixion, we shall have to resign ourselves. There is a difference.