

PART I

*TEN FUNDAMENTAL
THEMES*

Chapter 1

PRAXIS AND THE REIGN OF GOD

1.1 STATE OF THE QUESTION

Our first topic constitutes the horizon of understanding for this entire work. It may appear abstract, or very simple, but it is extremely concrete and vital.

Every day we read newspaper accounts of meetings, large demonstrations, and so on—all of them face-to-face encounters, and among the widest variety of persons, groups, and classes. The encounter among persons is the most universal of phenomena, and the least noticed.

In holy scripture we read:

They devoted themselves to the apostles' instruction and the *communal life* [or "community"-*koinonia*], to the breaking of *bread* and the prayers. A reverent fear overtook them all, for many wonders and *signs* were performed by the apostles. Those who believed lived at one [*epi to auto*], and shared all things in common [*koina*]; they would sell their property and goods, dividing everything on the basis of each one's *need*. They went to the temple area together every day, while *in their homes* they broke bread. With *exultant* and sincere hearts they took their meals *in common*, praising God and winning the approval of all the *people* [*laos*] [Acts 2:42-47].

"Acts of the Apostles" is the expression we use to translate the Greek *Praxeis Apostolon*, or deeds of the apostles. Thus we should call that biblical book the "Praxis of the Apostles." This text recalls for us that the essence of the Christian life is *community*: being together with others. This is also the essence of the reign of God: to

be together with God, face-to-face with God in community.

1.2 PRAXIS AS ACT AND RELATIONSHIP

"Praxis" or "practice" means many things in our daily life. For my purposes in this work I take these terms in their strict sense: *praxis* or *practice* denotes any human act addressed to another human person; further, praxis denotes the very relationship of one person to another. Praxis is both act and relationship: "those who believed lived at one" (Acts 2:44).

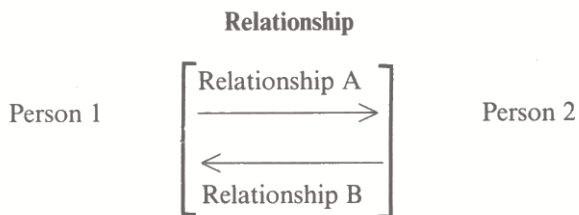
In the first place, praxis is an *act* done by a person, a human subject, but addressed to another person, either directly (like a handshake, a kiss, words in a dialogue, a blow), or indirectly (through the intermediary of something: for example, sharing a piece of bread—the bread is not a person, but it is shared with *another person*). If I am sleeping, I am not present to the world. I am resting; I am not conscious. I am not engaging in any praxis. Praxis is the actual, here-and-now manner of our being in our world before another person. It is the real presence of one person to another. For Thomas Aquinas a relationship betokened the constitutive reality of each of the persons of the most holy Trinity.

In the second place, praxis is the relationship between two or more persons.

For example, the relationship of a father (Diagram 1, person 1) to his daughter (person 2, arrow A) is that of parenthood. The relationship of the daughter to the father (arrow B) is that of filiation, or being-a-child-of. A person is a father by *being-in* relationship to (by having) a daughter or son. One who *does not have* a child is *not* a father. A practical relationship between persons is called *praxis*.

We must clearly distinguish between *praxis* and *poiesis*. *Praxis* is doing (Lat., *operari*), an acting with and upon another or others.

Diagram 1



Poiesis means a fashioning, a making (Lat. *facere*), a producing with or in something, a working with nature. It denotes the person-nature relationship (see 18.2).

1.3 PERSON: FACE, CORPOREALITY, AND "NEIGHBOR"

The terms or poles of a *practical* relationship are persons. What is it to be a person? Strictly speaking one is a person only when one is in a relationship of praxis. A person is a person only when he or she is "before," somehow in confrontation with, another person or persons. Solitary and alone in the presence of impersonal nature, one ceases in a certain sense to be a person.

For the Hebreo-Christian tradition, the person-person relationship, the relationship of praxis, is expressed in terms like: "The Lord spoke with Moses *face to face*" (Exod. 33: 11). "But never again did there arise in Israel another prophet such as Moses, with whom the Lord dealt *face to face*" (Deut. 34:10). "He spoke to him *mouth to mouth*" (Num. 12:8). Saint Paul uses the same expression: "Now we see confusedly in a mirror, but then we shall see *face to face*" (1 Cor. 13:12). "Face," in Hebrew, is *pnim*, or in Greek, *prosopon* (the conjectured idea of the Latin word *persona* [a mask] corresponds to *prosopon*). When I am face-to-face before another *in a (practical) relationship*, in the presence of praxis, that person is *someone* for me and I am *someone* for him or her. The being face-to-face of two or more is *being* a person.

The "face" indicates what appears of the other, his or her corporeality, his or her "fleshly" reality. "Flesh" in the Bible (*basar*) denotes the *whole* human being (without distinction of body and soul) who is born, who is hungry, who dies, who rises (see 3.4 and 6.3). "The word became *flesh*" (John 1.:14): not "became soul" or "became body" only, but "became a *human being*." This "face-to-face," this "person-to-person," constitutes the practical relationship of *proximity*, of nearness, between persons. The experience of the nearness of persons as persons is what constitutes *the other* as one's "neighbor" (someone "neighboring," our "near one," a "someone"), rather than as merely a thing, an instrument, a mediation.

Praxis, then, is the actualization of proximity, of the experience of being proximate, for one's neighbor. Praxis is the experience of constructing the other as person, as end of my action and not as

means. We are dealing with a relationship of infinite respect.

1.4 RELATIONSHIP AS AGAPE

"Love" is one of the most discredited words in Western languages: it has so many meanings. A dictator loves his accomplices and the demon his angels. A man loves his wife-and a prostitute as well. Heroes love their native land and misers their money. But the "love" I speak of here is something very particular and precise: *agape*.

A relationship with another person can be one of selfishness; I can seek myself in the other. *Eros* was regarded by the first Christians as using another person as a medium for my own self-seeking-hedonistic or pleasurable companionship in which I make the other the means for my own enjoyment.

Philia was a love among equals. In the mind of the Greeks and Romans, we can love only our equals. A love for the poor, for the miserable, was something contemptible, and it depraved the one who pursued such a love.

For Jesus, on the other hand (Luke 11:42; John 13:35; Matt. 24:12), or Saint Paul (1 Cor. 13:1-13), real love is *agape*. It is a very special love. It is not love of oneself; it is love for the other *as other*, for the sake of that other and not for my own sake, with a respectful attitude toward the person of the other as something sacred and holy. Thus the authentic relationship among persons *as persons* is that of love, but love with respect, or *agape*. *That* one must love is not the point. The point is that Christian love is a very demanding kind of love. It is love for the other in view of that other's own reality, though I myself may receive nothing from that other. It is the other *as other* who is the object of this love, even were I ultimately to be required, as Christ, to lay down my life for him or her (Matt. 20:28; 25:40).

Love for the other as other is delight, beauty, goodness, and holiness. It is "gift" (the denotation of *charis* in the Greek of the New Testament, from Luke 1:30 to John 1:14): the gift of oneself, commitment, surrender, self-donation without recompense: "There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friend" (John 15:13).

1.5 THE "WE" OF THE FACE-TO-FACE: THE COMMUNITY

The person-to-person or face-to-face relationship between two

persons is an abstraction. In the concrete, historically, in the face-to-face of respectful love (agape)-"charity" in the authentic meaning of the word, and not in the sense that it has in the "works of charity" performed by philanthropists-Christian love is lived in the plural, in community, as a people.

When one person loves another in the love that is respectful, he or she wishes the well-being of that other. This love used to be called the "love of *benevolence*"-seeking the *good*, the *well-being* of another though it cost me my life. If the other loves me in the same way, our love is said to be *mutual*. It is this mutual love, consisting in wishing one another well, each one for the sake of the other and not for himself or herself, that is authentic "Christian love." This alone is *charity*.

The friendship of many individuals, once scattered but now joined together, once forming a "crowd" (Gk., *ochlos* or *polloi*; Heb., *rabim*) but now established in the face-to-face of unity, is what we call "community" (or in the Greek of the New Testament, *koinonia*). A "community" is so called because it holds all things in "common" (Gk., *koina*). Now let us carefully re-read the text of the Acts of the Apostles placed at the beginning of this chapter. The "crowd" has become a *community*, a "people" (Gk., *laos*; Heb., *ham*). In *community*, all individuals are persons for one another. Their relationships are "practical," and this praxis is that of the love that is charity: each serves the other for that other, in the friendship of all persons in all things. Everything is "common," then. What would an association of free persons be? It would be a community in which *individuality* is expressed in full and uncoerced communication.

The community is the real, concrete agent and mover of history. In the community we are "at home," in safety and security, "in common."

1.6 "EUCCHARISTIC" COMMUNITY

Rooted and established in mutual, respectful love, grounded in the charity of its free and unfettered participants as persons, as individuals fulfilled in a life in common, the Christian community is celebration, and a celebration that takes up or assumes the totality of life.

In order to break bread together, to share bread, as we read of the

first Christians in the Acts of the Apostles, there must be bread. Bread is the fruit of toil (see 11.3). It is a real, material product, something made. At the same time it is made *for another*. Therefore the relationship it incorporates is not only productive (person-to-nature) but also practical (person-to-person). The presiding relationship in the offering of bread to one's sister or brother in the community-and to God in the eu-charist (Gk., *eu-*, "good"; *charis*, "offering"; *eucharistia*: thanks-giving)-is practico-productive: *to the other* is given *the fruit* of production. This complex relationship is called "economic" (bestowing, offering, selling, buying, robbing, and so on, *something* to or from *someone*).

Sharing bread, holding all things in common, and selling one's possessions and goods all indicate the radical nature of love that is respectful of the loved person(s). The first Christians' love was not platonic-a supraemotional, immaterial love. It was a concrete, real, efficacious, bodily love. Their love was attested by *deeds* (*praxeis*), not words only. It was not only in "the prayers" that "they devoted themselves to ...the communal life." They also "took their meals in common. ..." Their love imbued their existence. In it their whole "bodiliness" was committed.

In the well-known text of the Didache, too, the celebration of the eucharist is a picture of very early Christians, in the small community of Jerusalem and elsewhere (as in the base communities in Latin America today), living a life that was really a life in common, without room for selfishness or deceit (recall Ananiah and Sapphira, Acts 5:1-11). This exemplary (and in this sense utopian), first, total community will always be our ideal, and our "practical" horizon.

1.7 NEED, SATISFACTION, FESTIVAL

Praxis, as action and as relationship, tends to its integral realization, which is complete happiness, joy, and gladness, the fruits of satisfaction. When the lover is with the beloved face to face, mouth to mouth (the kiss of the Song of Songs 1:2), there is festival. There is the full realization of praxis.

Because human persons are but finite participants in the life of God, they consume their vitality in the process of living. After a day's work, they are tired and hungry. What has been consumed, what has died, must be replenished. The lack to be made up-the want of

nourishment, rest, clothing, and so on-is called *need*. In the very early Christian community, members received from the common store "on the basis of each one's need." Without a *theology of need*, neither the eucharist, nor community, nor justice, nor the reign of God (see 4.9) will have intelligibility.

But the negativity (*not* having something to eat: hunger) of need is a principle and an absolute *criterion* of the last judgment: "I was hungry" (Matt. 25:35). Obviously this hunger is not a random physical phenomenon, but a "historical" one-here, the fruit of sin (see 2.8, 6.5). At all events, to quiet someone's hunger, to give someone something to eat, to bestow the enjoyment of consumption, is a moment in the building of the reign of God, "Happy are you who hunger now, for you shall be *satisfied*" (Luke 6:21). "Satisfaction," as an act of *eating* and as enjoyment and joy, is negation of a negation -the removal of hunger, which is want-of -and a positive affirmation of the reign of God. As we read in the Acts of the Apostles, "They took their meals in common. ..."

Thus the highest expression of the life of the community is a festival: "Come and celebrate with your Lord!" (Matt. 25:21). And so the Christians of the primitive community praised God in their homes, "with exultant ...hearts," with felicity, with rejoicing.

1.8 THE REIGN OF GOD AS THE ABSOLUTE FACE-TO-FACE

Jesus came to proclaim "the good news of the kingdom" (Matt. 4:23). His messianic reign is the reign of God (Eph. 5:5). What is the essential element of the reign of Christ, of the Father, of God, of heaven?

The reign of God is total fulfillment. Some are poor now, but "the reign of God is theirs" (Matt. 5:3); those who suffer now "shall be consoled"; those who are now oppressed "shall inherit the land"; those who now hunger "will be satisfied"; those who serve now "will be served"; those who have an upright heart "shall be face to face with God"; those who struggle for peace "shall be called sons of God." As we see, in confrontation with present negatives, the reign of God is presented as the full realization of the human being as absolute, irreversible, undiminished positivity.

But of all of the goods to be possessed by human beings in the

reign, the supreme possession will be the being person-to-person before other persons, and essentially before God:

I have given them the glory that you have given me, that of being *one* as we are one. I have joined myself with them as you are joined with me, that they may be fulfilled in oneness [John 17:22-3]. Now you are sorrowful, but when you see me again you will rejoice, and of this your *gladness* no one will deprive you. On that day you will ask me nothing [John 16:22-3].

Jesus preaches the gospel of the reign of God, the good news of the total fulfillment of humankind in the infinite gladness of God. But after Jesus is crucified and raised, he absents himself. Nevertheless, he has promised there will be an advocate, a defender of the building of the reign of God: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you in the full truth" (John 16:13).

1.9 THE REIGN BEGINS NOW IN COMMUNITY

Jesus proclaimed the reign of God. Then he was murdered. But he has left his Spirit behind, to prepare for his *second* coming. Now is the time of the church, the time of those called to complete the messianic mission of Jesus in history. But this reign will not be realized *only* in the remote future, *after* the end of history. The reign has *already* begun. Where?

The apostles questioned the risen Jesus: "Is it *now* that you will restore the kingdom of Israel?" (Acts 1:6). To be sure, they are thinking of a "political," a nationalistic, kingdom, perhaps an anti-Roman nation. Jesus responds: "You will receive a power. The Holy Spirit will come down on you" (Acts 1:8). And there the primitive Christian *community*, of which we have been speaking, was born—the community that praised God "with exultant and sincere hearts." True, the reign develops mysteriously in every man and woman of good will; but it must not be forgotten that the privileged place of its presence is the *community*.

"I shall pour out my spirit on all humankind. Their sons and daughters shall prophesy" (Acts 2: 17). The community of "the consecrated" ("Christian" comes from "Christ," the "chrismated one," the one consecrated with oil, the *Messiah*, the anointed one), of

believers, lived the *communal* life. This was a *communal unity*, an interpersonal face-to-face of respect and justice ("dividing everything on the basis of each one's need"), of joy, of mutual love, of such friendship that "a reverent fear overtook them all, for many wonders and *signs*"-the *miracle* of being-community-were present. In this communal unity they sought "first the reign and its justice" (Matt. 6:33), and all the rest (daily life, happiness, subsistence, security, exemplarity, holiness, and so on) was the natural fruit of that justice.

The *community* itself, community life itself, was *already* the reality of the reign: merely under way, inaugurated, still in the pangs of birth, it is true-but *reality*.

1.10 THE REIGN AS BEYOND: UTOPIA

The reign of God was proclaimed *in the past* by Jesus and is realized *in part* in every human being of good will, but in a special way in the small Christian *community* (in the interpersonal, concrete, daily face-to-face, in need satisfied, in the justice of equals, in the liberty of persons respected in the present). That reign *always* retains, as a constitutive moment, its "not yet."

The reign that is absolute *transcendence* with respect to all praxis, to all historical face-to-face, to all community, is ever a "beyond," an approach to full human realization. The reign is the sign, signal, horizon that tells us: "This is not good enough! There is still more to do!" The reign *as reality* is a something-more-to-be-practiced. The reign *as category* is the critical horizon signaling the negativity, the injustice, the selfishness of the prevailing dominant order.

Historically, the reign is a "promised land" (Exod. 3:8: a "fertile and spacious land, flowing with milk and honey") as concrete, temporal projection into the future. It is the objective of a hope *here* and *now* of a more just, happier future, where all will receive what they need. It is a future historical goal.

Transhistorically, the reign ever remains the absolute fulfillment and actualization of the human being, of temporal community, of history as final totality. It is the "above and beyond," it is *eschatological* transcendence (from the Greek *eschaton*, "last," what is to occur at the "end of days"). But we have already reached the "end of days," in the sense that Jesus has already risen and we now look forward in hope to his second coming. As *eschatological*

horizon the reign of God is the absolute principle of Christian ethics, which is the measure of *all* historical undertakings-reformist and revolutionary included.

CONCLUSIONS

This first theme, "Praxis and the Reign of God," has furnished the occasion for an explanation of the *radical principle* of Christian ethics in general and of liberation and community ethics (which is the central aspect of basic theology) in particular. That radical principle will operate as the light that illumines, the horizon that criticizes, the root from which we must nourish, all our subsequent ethical discourse. This first issue, in its total simplicity, is the "font," the foundational force, the "wellspring" of all Christian ethics.

The radical principle of Christian ethics is the face-to-face of the person-to-person relationship in the concrete, real, satisfied, happy, *community*, in the gladness of being *one* with God (Saint Thomas Aquinas called God the *bonum commune*: God is our "common good" as the lover is the supreme good of the beloved and vice versa) and one with our brothers and sisters, the members (Heb., *chaberim*) of the community.

Chapter 2

EVIL AND DEATH

2.1 STATE OF THE QUESTION

As happiness, fulfillment, and holiness, the reign of God is the face-to-face of persons among themselves and with God, who also is conceived as a *community* of persons, subsuming, taking unto itself, the community of created persons. Evil, wickedness, is the interruption, the breach of this face-to-face, its nemesis. One term of the relationship absolutizes itself and negates, annihilates, "reifies" (makes a *thing* out of) the other.

Each day the media carry news of wars, murders, thefts, administrative corruption, drug addiction. We learn of the daily presence of evil. We read of the rich, the very rich-and the miserable poor. We read of powerful countries and weak ones. No one any longer believes in the Devil, the Evil One. And yet the works of the Devil are evident. We have only to open our eyes to see them for what they are.

In holy scripture we read:

Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the animals that the Lord God had made. ...The woman answered the serpent: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; it is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, 'You shall not eat it or even touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman: "You certainly will not die! No, God knows well that the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods. ..." Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked [Gen. 3:1-7].

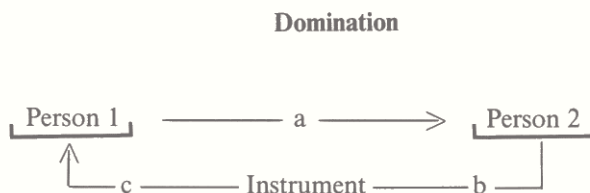
The subject is deeper, and more current, than we might think. The difficult thing for us to grasp is that evil begins as idolatry, fetishism, atheism; it develops in the domination of human beings by their own brothers and sisters, one person's subjugation by another. It is not the *person-person* relationship that prevails, but the *I-thing* relationship, the relationship of subject to object. Instead of two "some-ones," we have *one* "someone" in confrontation with "things." We have "reification."

2.2 WHAT IS WICKEDNESS, EVIL?

Evil, sin, the wickedness of the subject who commits the perverse praxis that builds the reign of the "Prince of this world" could be described in the following steps.

In the first place, the origin of evil or sin lies in a negation of the other, the other person, the other term of the person-to-person relationship. "Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. ... 'The blood of your brother cries to me from the ground' " (Gen. 4:8 10). To kill, rob, humiliate, dishonor, violate, and so on, the other Abel, is to destroy the other term of the face-to-face relationship.

Diagram 2



The *praxis of domination* is evil-sin (Gk., *hamartia*). It is praxis (see 1.2), but not of one person vis-à-vis another *as person*. Relationship *a* (in Diagram 2) is interrupted, and the dominator (Cain, person 1) makes (b) of the other (Abel, person 2) an *instrument*, a means. Person 2 is killed because he or she has been the enemy of person 1; or is robbed, used as an instrument of wealth; or is violated, used as an instrument of pleasure; and so on. Thus the status of the other person precisely as other is now reduced to that of a *thing*, a *means at the service of the dominator*. Person 2 now serves

person 1 (arrow *c*). "I" am the end, the sovereign, the owner, of person 2. This is sin: the destitution of the other as person, the alienation (Lat., *alienum*, "other than oneself," sold, destroyed) of someone in some respect: reification, instrumentalization.

Offence to God is always and antecedently an act of domination committed against one's brother or sister. God is the absolute Other; hence God is offended when we dominate in some manner the other-and-neighbor, Abel; therefore does Christ take on the form of the very poorest, for what we do to our brother or sister we do to God. To dominate our neighbor is to sin against God.

2.3 IDOLATRY, FETISHISM

In negating the other, in negating God, sinners are left to themselves. They totalize themselves, asserting themselves as God, fetishizing and divinizing themselves. They fall into idolatry.

The sinner, the malefactor, is anyone who "devours my people as bread" (Ps. 14:4), who kills, who robs the other. And with the other term of the person-to-person relationship thus eliminated, the sinner-"the fool"-thinks "There is no God" (Ps. 14: 1). There is no longer any "god" but "myself," says the one who has negated the other. By negating the other such persons affirm themselves sovereign over the other, for they have instrumentalized them. Thus they divinize themselves. And thus they make atheists of themselves vis-à-vis God, who is the Other par excellence, inasmuch as they have affirmed, asserted themselves to be god.

The act by which one asserts oneself as the end of other persons-as factory owners think they have a right to the factory's profit even though that profit be their workers' hunger transformed into money (see 12.10)-is idolatry. The prophets had to struggle with the idolatry of the Canaanites, and even of the Israelites. In the Adamic myth this temptation is concretized in the wish to "be like gods," to be absolute, *no longer to be in the person-to-person relationship* and at the service of the other (Ps. 115 [114]: 4-8).

This is not a reality solely of the past. For example, as we shall see below, when proprietors of capital forget that all of the value of their capital is the labor of others objectified (12.9), they forget the other term of the relationship that has occasioned their wealth: the other as a wage-earning worker. In thus forgetting others and robbing

them of their work and life, they absolutize, fetishize capital, constituting it an idol to which they sacrifice their neighbor's life. These modern "gods" are the product of the "logic" of sin, of the domination of one human being over another, of the constitution by one person of another person as the mediation of the former's "own" wealth.

2.4 INDIVIDUAL OR ABSTRACT MALICE

The theologico-symbolic description of the genesis of the evil act or sin-which we might call the description of the structure of temptation in theological figures-is situated at the beginning of the biblical accounts, in the so-called Adamic myth (Gen. 2:9-3:24).

In the myth of Prometheus, human fault or sin is tragic, inevitable. The gods are unjust. Men and women are not responsible for evil, for they are not really free. In the myth of Adam, on the other hand (and "myth" here denotes a *rational* account based on *symbols*), two liberties come into confrontation: that of the tempter and that of the tempted. Nothing is "necessary" or inevitable. The tempter speaks to, "propositions," seduces the tempted who is free to say no. This is the reason for the blandishment, the "feeling out" of the intended victim, the effort at persuasion: "You will be like gods. ..."

The Adamic myth, then, teaches that the *fall* of Adam was the fruit of his own free will. It was not a flaw decreed by the gods. The *source* of the evil is Adam's freedom. Thus the evil will be reparable, and will lay history wide open as the theater of human responsibility. Adam accepts the proposal of the tempter to constitute the other as dominator (of himself) or dominated (by himself). The tempter proposes, in essence, the following: "Dominate me," in a passive or masochistic attitude; or "Let yourself be dominated," in an aggressive or sadistic attitude. The "other"-not in his or her reality as other, *but as part* of the system-can be the tempter. We must know the discernment of "spirits."

Those who yield to temptation and fall into evil, into the praxis of the domination of the other, their neighbor, signal that they have either instrumentalized that other for their own ends or else have accepted instrumentalization by him or her. At all events, in this perspective, this sin, this fault, is not in the last analysis an individual one. It is not abstract. In concrete reality one sins only *in relation to* others.

2.5 SOCIAL OR CONCRETE SIN

True enough, speaking *abstractly* one can say that John, the individual, has sinned. But *concretely* John is Mary's father, Martha's spouse, Peter's sibling, his pupils' teacher, a citizen of his country, and so on. He is never-not even before God-solitary and alone: in the *concrete*, he is never *this* solitary individual. Likewise, his fault or sin is never solitary in the concrete.

An "institution" is never a structure existing in and of itself, independently of the individuals composing it. The "institution" is but the *modus quo*, the "way in which" individuals comport themselves in a stable and related manner. The *institution* of marriage is a way in which women and men *relate* as spouse-to-spouse (be this manner of relating monogynous or polygynous, monandrous or polyandrous, patriarchal or matriarchal, and so on). All "institutions" (from a national political state to a soccer team or a church) are stable types of *relationships* among *individuals*. (The individual is the support of the institution.)

Accordingly, if a person (or group of persons) dominates another person (or group of persons) *stably* or *historically* (as the encomendero dominated the Amerindian, the capitalist dominates the wage-earner, the man the woman, and so on), we may say that this praxis of domination, this defect or sin is *institutional* or social. It is a type of objective, real, social relationship maintained in historical groups.

From the moment an individual is *born*, he or she will never exist apart from the institutional texture that antedates and *determines* this particular individual (a *relative* determination, of course, but one that is fundamental for this particular existence). For example, someone may be born wealthy, a member of the dominant class and of a moneyed, bourgeois family. He or she is surely not responsible for *having been born there*. But just as surely, this individual *inherits* this institutional, "originary" sin. Thus, as Paul proclaims, it is possible for death to reign "even over those who had not sinned by breaking a precept as did Adam" (Rom 5:14).

2.6 INHERITED SIN

Writing against Pelagius (who held that sin is inherited "through the evil example set by Adam "), Saint Augustine proposed that sin was inherited in virtue of human conception in concupiscence. That is, an

erotic bodily desire, constitutive of our material being from birth, transmitted Adam's fault. This is scarcely the only possible explanation.

For our purposes, I shall define "original sin"-without posing the question whether it is original sin in the traditional sense-as the sin that is constitutive of *our being* from its origin, from our birth. But our "being" is more than our materiality, our corporeality, despite what some have thought. Our most radical *being* is our social being, our "being" in virtue of our being human (and not merely animal). The *place* we occupy in the social texture (see 2.4) determines (although not absolutely) our *being*. And as I have indicated above, we *receive* our membership in the dominant or the dominated class (this is an observable, evident *fact*, not a judgment) from the first instant of our origin.

When the individual subjectivity of the human person achieves effective freedom (psychologically in adolescence), it *already finds* itself that of a bourgeois or a proletarian, a peasant or a petit bourgeois, a woman or a man, and so on. We are *this way* already. *Upon* this foundation we can construct our life. But we must inevitably construct it precisely *from* the original constitution we have received and inherited.

Thus historical, social sin is transmitted by institutions-by cultural, political, economic, religious, erotic, and so on, structures. In taking up our position as one of the terms of the social relationship of sin (as a proprietary or dispossessed individual-that is, as the member of such and such a family, in the particular social class in which we fall, as a citizen of such and such a country), we inherit a praxis that constitutes us relatively and "originally."

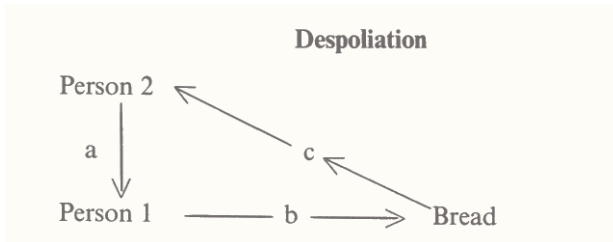
2.7 THE "POOR"

"Poor," in the biblical sense, denotes the dominated, oppressed, humiliated, instrumentalized term of the practical relationship called sin (see 2.2). The constitutive act of the "poor" in the Bible is not lacking goods, but *being dominated*, and this *by the sinner*. The poor are the correlative of sin. As the fruit of sin, their formality as "poor" constitutes the poor or oppressed, and as such, the just and holy.

The "poor" are those who, in the *relationship of domination*, are the dominated, the instrumentalized, the alienated. *Outside* this

relationship they can be "rich." *Poor* and rich, in the Bible, in addition to being concrete persons, are dialectical *categories*: the proper content of each correlative term includes the other, just as the term "parent" includes having a "child." No one is a parent unless he or she has a child. Nor is anyone "poor" in the biblical sense unless there are "rich."

Diagram 3



"Bread is the life of the poor; who robs him of it murders him" (Eccles. 34:21). In Diagram 3 the person (1) who toils (*b*) produces the product of his or her hands ("Bread" symbolizes that product). Another person (2) dominates (*a*) person 1-commits sin against him or her, as in the case of the suffering Job. *Because of this domination*, and in virtue of the basic fact of sin, person 2 robs (*c*) person 1 of the fruit of his or her toil (*b*). The poverty or want suffered by the poor (person 1) is not the sheer absence of goods. No, the poverty of the poor consists in having been *despoiled* of the fruit of their labor by reason of the objective domination of sin.

Thus the alienation of the other (fruit of the praxis of the sinner) produces the poverty of the poor (fruit of sin) as robbery, or dispossession.

2.8 "DEATH"

When a human being dominates a brother or sister, the result is that described by Paul: "Sin entered the world, and by sin, death" (Rom. 5: 12). "Death" in what sense? We immediately think of eternal death (condemnation), and correctly, to be sure. Or we think of physical death (the death that consists in the extinction of biological life). But let us consider a third type of death, the cause of the sinner's "eternal death."

It is because the poor objectify their life in the product of their

hands (in bread, for example-see 11.3) that "he murders his neighbor who deprives him of his sustenance; who will not pay a just wage spills blood" (Ecclus. 34:22). For the Bible, "blood" is the seat of life (see 11.2). If I deprive a living being of its blood, I kill it. To take the "blood" of the poor is to kill them. This is the third type of death, to which I have just alluded-the death suffered by the poor as the fruit of the sin of the sinner, the "rich": "Woe to you rich, for you have had your consolation" (Luke 6:24). The "rich," the dominator, the sinner (because he or she snatches from the poor their product, because the dominator "kills" the poor in their very life) is condemned to "eternal death," to a "second death," as we hear: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and *his angels*. For I was hungry and you did not feed me" (Matt.25:41-2).

Thus the life of the poor is accumulated by the rich (see 12.6). The latter live the life of the rich in virtue of the death of the poor. The life of the sinner feeds on the blood of the poor, just as the idol lives by the death of its victims, like Moloch of old, to whom children were immolated, or the Aztec Huitzilopochtli. The fetish god was "animated" or ensouled by the blood of its victims.

"They have broken my covenant by rebelling against my law. ... With their silver and their gold they have fashioned idols for their perdition" (Hos. 8:1-4). "The Egyptians imposed heavy labor on them, and embittered their life with harsh slavery" (Exod. 1:13).

2.9 CONSCIENCE AND RESPONSABILITY

One might think that, inasmuch as sin is inherited (as the social relationship of domination by the sinner over the poor), there would be neither personal (individual) awareness nor personal responsibility in that praxis of alienation of the other .

Each individual, as a real term of social relationships (see 1.2, 2.5), consciously assumes-in the lights and shades of his or her biography (historical, psychological, familial) and to a greater or lesser degree-the meaning of his or her "place" in the institutional structure of sin (as also of the "covenant," as we shall see later on-see 3.5,3.6). Moses was the pharaoh's adopted son (Exod. 2: 10): he belonged institutionally to the number of those who dominated the poor, those who were the sinners.

The strength, wealth, beauty, culture, and so on, of the dominant group to which one belongs is consciously known, enjoyed, and affirmed. Humiliation, weakness, cultural deprivation, serfdom, and so on, are consciously known and consented to by the despised poor. Thus it is that, day by day, dominators take on personal, individual *responsibility* for their sin of domination. After all, they daily assert the privileges and the potential (the opportunities) accruing to them in virtue of this inherited sin. And never again will dominators be able to claim innocence of that of which they have the use and enjoyment.

Too many signs furnish the rich with a *daily* indication of the distressing presence of the poor. The radical separation of one's own satisfaction in the use of wealth from the suffering of the poor in their poverty (not to see that the one is cause of the other) is a *wish not to be guilty*. "If they will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they listen to one returned from the dead" (Luke 16:31). Nor will they take any heed of a poor person who dies of hunger as a result of their domination. To a greater or lesser degree, one is always conscious of, and thus responsible for, one's sin-one's personal, individual lapse (in virtue of one's personal, individual constitution as one of the real terms of a social relationship).

2.10 THE "PRINCE OF THIS WORLD"

Jesus answered: "You have the devil for your father, and you seek to accomplish your father's desires—who was a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44). "Now begins a judgment upon the world: now the Prince *of this world* will be cast out" (John 12:31). In our one, single history—our one *place* of confrontation—sin is organized as a society, as a "world," as an order.

Sin is not only not exclusively individual, sin is not only social and historical, institutional, a social relationship—sin is actually an organized, self-conscious, functioning "subject" or agent: Satan, the "power" of evil, the Evil One. The essential question here is not whether this objectification of evil in a pure, substantive, personal spirit corresponds to a literal reality—which I do not deny. What is essential here is that we understand his historical praxis, along with that of *his angels* (Matt. 25 :41), who include the dominators, sinners, the "rich," and so on.

"The princes of the nations lord it over them, and the mighty oppress them" (Matt. 20:25). The praxis of sin, of domination (the constitution of oneself as the sovereign of the alienated other), is insitutionalized by way of political, ideological, religious, and economic structures. There is no such thing as a religious sin that is not a political or economic sin- and vice versa. All domination, or offense, committed against the other is *sin* against God. It is chimerical to separate in, on the one side, from historical structures and institutions on the other. The latter are the *concrete* forms of Satan's exercise of his dominion *in this world*, through the mediation of his angels: the human beings who dominate their sisters and brothers.

The sinners, the "rich," the dominators, are the *angelos*, the "envoys" dispatched by the Prince *of this world* for the institutionalization of his reign: namely, the historical structures of sin as "*social* relationship."

CONCLUSIONS

Our second theme, "Evil and Death"-negative counterpart of the first ("Praxis and the Reign of God")-leads us to consider the *principle of sin* that constitutes the perverse, negative point of departure of a Christian ethics. That principle is an impediment to the constitution of community: it is the assertion of individuality *against* community. In authentic community, genuine individuality is fully actualized. In anticommunity, individuality is fetishized and ultimately destroys itself, by way of the death of the poor. It is this *death* that is now of interest to us.

Although it is true that sinners-"the rich" as a category and as social relationships, rich *persons*-can be saved, they cannot be saved if they remain in their sinners', rich persons', *relationship of domination*. Then they will be condemned (second death) to eternal death, deserved by reason of their responsibility (also personal and individual) exercised in the murder of the poor: because they will have caused the *death* of the poor "in this world."

Chapter 3

PREVAILING SOCIAL MORALITY: THE "BABYLON PRINCIPLE"

3.1 STATE OF THE QUESTION

Now we must take a further step. We must discover and identify the mechanisms of evil.

We read in a newspaper:

The Salvadoran army shot into the crowd indiscriminately, and burned the fields of the campesinos of Morazán Department, while Radio Venceremos announced that dozens of young persons were becoming the victims of forced recruitment in the central zone of the country Elsewhere, following upon the violent resurgence of the so-called death squads of the extreme right, the bodies of three persons shot to death "execution-style" on San Salvador's south side were found today. ...Meanwhile Archbishop Arturo Rivera y Damas of San Salvador today asked "those responsible for the structure of oppression" in the country to have faith in the dialogue for peace [*El Dia*, International Edition (Mexico City), February 18, 1985, p. 13].

We read in holy scripture:

In her hand she held a gold cup that was rilled with the abominable and sordid deeds of her lewdness. On her forehead was written a symbolic name, "*Babylon the great*, mother of harlots and all the world's abominations." I saw that the

woman was drunk with the blood of God's holy ones and the blood of those martyred for their faith in Jesus.

When I saw her I was greatly astonished. The angel said to me: "Why are you so taken aback? I will explain to you the symbolism of the woman and of the seven-headed and ten-horned beast carrying her" [Rev. 17:4-7].

Evil, sin-whether individual but subsumed in the social, or concretely and historically social-is organized or "institutionalized." The mystery revealed in the Book of Revelation is actually more current today than ever, and merits our close attention. The Dragon, the Beast, the kings and authorities at their disposal, their envoys or angels, their servants, their customs, laws, and powers, all constitute a full-fledged order, that of *this world*-as category-and its prevailing morality.

3.2 SOME NECESSARY DISTINCTIONS

I now propose to borrow a number of terms from ordinary speech and endow each of them with a narrower, more precise, meaning for purposes of our discourse.

First, for purposes of our discourse, the term "morality" (or "morals," and so on)-of Latin origin-will denote any "practical" (from "praxis") system of the prevailing, established order, the order now in place (see 3.3). By "ethics" ("ethical," and so on)-of Greek derivation-I denote the future order of liberation, the demands of justice with respect to the poor, the oppressed, and their project (historical-see 1.9; or eschatological-see 1.10) of salvation. Thus something might be "moral" without being "ethical," and vice versa. All of this will become clearer in the following pages.

Secondly, "prevailing social," "social," even "society," will have a restricted, negative meaning, and will denote the "worldly"-the condition of the individual (labor, toil, and so on) in the prevailing order of domination, of sin. "Community," on the other hand (along with "communal," and so on), will stand for the face-to-face relationship of persons standing in a relationship of justice. So "community" will denote a utopian order from whose perspective we shall be able to criticize the prevailing "social" element. This is why I have entitled this work "Ethics and Community," and not

"Prevailing Social Morality," or even "Social Morality."

Thus a praxis can be "good" in the eyes of the prevailing *morality* and "evil" for an *ethics* of liberation. Jesus was a blasphemer, a disturber of the social order, one who deserved to die, and so on—in other words, "evil"—for the order of the dominant values of the "elders, priests, and scribes," for Herod (governor of the nation), and for Pilate (representative of the occupying imperial power).

3.3 "THIS WORLD"

In the New Testament the word "world" (Gk., *kosmos*) denotes the universe, locus of our single history, humanity, a certain order. I shall use the word, however, in a sense more directly apposite to our subject matter.

"This world" is both a reality and a category. "My reign is not of *this world*. If my reign belonged to *this world*, my armies would have fought to prevent my being delivered into the hands of the Jewish authorities" (John 18:36). "*This world*," then, is a "practical" totality (a totality constituted and characterized by relationships of praxis), a system or structure of prevailing, dominant *social* actions and relationships, under the hegemony of evil. It is the reign of the Evil One. "This world" is Egypt as a *system of practices* confronting Moses. It is the monarchy of Israel confronting the prophets. It is the kingdom of Judea confronting Jesus. It is Christendom as the City of Earth. It is the feudal system confronting Saint Francis of Assisi. It is capitalism in the eyes of the oppressed of today.

"This world" has the Devil, Satan, or the Dragon as its principle and authority—"the Prince of *this world*" (John 12:31; 14:30). The Dragon (the Devil: Luke 4:5-6) has given its power to the Beast (Rev. 17:12), and thus "the entire world is in the power of the Evil One" (1 John 5:19). "The spirit of the world" is opposed to the "Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:12). Hence "whatever there is in the world—base appetites, insatiable eyes, the arrogance of money—none of it comes from the Father. It comes from the world" (1 John 2:16).

The "world" is closed in upon itself. It is self-totalizing, self-fetishizing. The "world" in this sense is identical with "the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The world hates Jesus (John 15:18) because he discloses "the perversity of its machinations" (John 7:7).

3.4 THE "FLESH"

In like manner, "flesh" (Heb., *basar*) can have the biblical meaning of muscles, the body, the entire human being. Or it can mean, as for Epicurus, the place where the appetites emerge.

I shall use the word in a stronger sense. The "flesh," like the "world," is an order, a level. "Flesh" denotes the order of the natural, the human. "Of flesh is born flesh" (John 3:6). Hence "the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41). The "flesh" is the seat of the appetites or desires of pride, idolatry, and domination over another as instrument. "Let them not foster the desires of the flesh" (Rom. 13:14).

Thus understood, the "flesh" is the order of sin: "When we were subject to the flesh, to the passions of sin, that the law arouses, it was activating our members in the practices of death" (Rom. 7:5). The flesh is the subjective aspect, the aspect of the passions, the region of the human being where the imperium of the world is exercised. Saint Paul explained that he was subject "by the flesh to the law of sin" (Rom. 7:25). The world has its structure, its laws, its customs, the point of departure from which "it judges according to the flesh" (John 8:15). As "flesh," we are members of the world in its capacity as subject or agent of sin (Rom. 8: 13ff.; Gal. 4:23). A struggle is being waged between the "flesh" and the "Spirit," between human or carnal knowledge and the madness of God (1 Cor. 2:6-14).

In the totality of the *systems of practices* of the world, as objective and social reality, the "carnal" subject or agent desires the permanency of order, which, however, attempts to legitimate itself by appealing to the "gods" as its foundation. The "flesh" is idolatrized in the "kingdom of *this world*," and promulgates its own law, its own morality, its own goodness.

3.5 THE "BABYLON PRINCIPLE"

Original Hebreo-Christian theology possessed a category to express the structural *totality* of the practices of sin. This totality assumed a distinct concrete physiognomy at each historical moment, while retaining an analogous essence.

At the time of Moses, the world-the system according to the dictates of the flesh-was Egypt. And God said, "I have beheld the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cries against

their oppressors. I have fixed on their sufferings" (Exod. 3:7). "In Egypt" is a category. The Monarchy, which was founded on idolatry, came to represent the same category. God addressed the prophet Samuel: "As they dealt with me from the day I led them forth from Egypt, abandoning me to serve other gods, thus they treat you" (1 Sam. 8:8). The new order, the system of the practices of the kings, will make of the people an oppressed mass. "You shall be slaves! Then will you cry out against the kings they have chosen for themselves, but God will not answer you" (1 Sam. 8:18).

Later the people was to have yet another experience of suffering and oppression: the Babylonian captivity: "All this land will lie desolate, and the neighboring nations will be subject to the king of Babylon" (Jer. 25:11). "Babylon" signifies the order of oppression, that of the Devil. "All, great and small, rich and poor, slave and free, he made that they mark them on the right hand or the forehead" (Rev. 13:17).

This system is closed in upon itself. It has replaced the universal human project with its own particular historical project. Its laws become natural, its virtues perfect, and the blood of those who offer any resistance—the blood of the prophets and heroes—is spilled by the system as if it were the blood of the wicked, the totally subversive.

3.6 THE SYSTEM OF MORAL PRACTICES

Essential to an ethics of liberation is a clear understanding of the starting point of the praxis of liberation. This starting point is sin, the world as a system of sin, the flesh as idolatrous desire, and a system that nevertheless is "moral," having its own morality and a justified, tranquil conscience.

Any system of prevailing, dominant practices (from Egypt or Babylon to Rome, the several Christendoms, or capitalist society) determines its established practices to be good. Its project (its end, its *telos*, its *beatitudo*, as the Latin theologians termed it) is confused with the "perfect human good" as such. Thus the norms that demand the execution of this project are "natural law." The prohibition, "Thou shalt not steal the private property of thy neighbor," for example, has been part of capitalism's "natural law" since the eighteenth century. The virtues of the project are now obligatory as the highest virtues of all. Somehow the habit of amassing wealth fails

to remind anyone of the usury or avarice of feudalism.

Thus arises a "prevailing" *moral system* (regardless of its origin, regardless of the fact that it owes its subsistence to an "original," institutional sin of domination at all levels-see, e.g., 12.3). The persons who comply with this system, in its practices, its norms, its values, its "virtues," its laws, are good, just, and meritorious persons, and they win the praise of their peers.

Now a total inversion has been achieved. Domination and sin have been transformed into the very foundation of reality. Perverse praxis is now goodness and justice. Ideology, operating as a cloak over the reality of domination, now legitimates the praxis of the flesh and of the world as if it were the praxis of the very reign of God.

3.7 MORALITY OF PRAXIS

The "practical" universe within the moral system of the prevailing order is inverted. Accordingly, it is this system itself that determines the good or evil of an act.

The classic definition of morality was expressed in terms of relationship to a norm or law. Kant demanded the moral law be loved. For Thomas Aquinas it was the relations of an act to the moral law that determined its morality. The problem, obviously, is that once the system of the world has asserted itself as the foundation or law, morality will depend precisely on the actualization of the system. An act will be *morally* good if it is "adequated to," if it complies with, the ends of the prevailing system. If I pay taxes, the minimum wage, and so on, as required by law, I shall be a "just" person, a "good" person. The law itself may be unjust. The taxes may be insufficient, the wages may be starvation wages. But all of that lies *outside* any possible moral consideration.

Correlatively, *immorality* will be constituted by the sheer non-realization of the prevailing norm. The thief whose thievery is a vice is now less wicked than the prophet who criticizes the system in its totality. Barabbas and Jesus are both "evil" for the Jewish and Roman morality of their time. Juan del Valle, bishop of Popayán, was regarded by the *encomenderos* of sixteenth-century Latin America as "*the worst* bishop in the Indies" because he defended the Indians.

And so it comes about that, in their respect and love for the law of

the prevailing system-its norms, its ends, its values-dominators, though they are sinners, are nevertheless seen to be just and good. The "Prince of *this world*" is now the judge of good and evil. Morality itself has been inverted. The "wisdom of the world" has become norm and law.

3.8 "MORAL" CONSCIENCE

To complete the circle, the "world" forms or educates the "moral" conscience of its members according to criteria of the flesh.

Classically, "*moral* conscience" was that faculty of the practical intelligence that applies moral principles to concrete cases. A principle states: "You shall not steal." But in this concrete case I desire to appropriate goods regarded by the system of prevailing practical moral principles as belonging to someone else. In this case my conscience commands me: "Do not do so, for by doing so you would constitute yourself liable to the penalty determined for those who 'steal' something." Whereupon, if I "steal" nonetheless, my conscience will recriminate me, accuse me, give me subjective culpability, by reason of this *morally* evil act.

If my *moral* conscience has been formed within a framework of the principles of the system, it will recriminate me if I fail to comply with the laws of the system. But it will be unable to tell me that the system *as a totality* is perverse (for conscience *applies* principles, and does not establish them). Thus the theft of property that is the private possession of someone else is a moral offense, and conscience indicates it to me. But my own private property, which may well constitute, in its origin, the (objectified) *dispossession of others of their labor* (see 11.6)-although that dispossession may have occurred imperceptibly as far as my own consciousness, my own conscience, is concerned-presents itself as legitimate and good. All other persons, "Hands off"

Here I am being *blind* to the fact that private property denied to the workers whose labor has produced it is unjustified accumulation, taking over the capital of the fruits of their labor, previously stolen from them *without* my being conscious of the theft.

In this fashion, "moral" conscience, formed in the moral principles of the dominant system, creates a peaceful, remorseless conscience vis-à-vis a practice that the system approves but that may

originally have been perverse (a praxis of domination).

3.9 THE POOR "BY NATURE"

In the order of the world-the order according to the flesh, the system of the practices of sin, of dominators, of the "rich "-the "poor" (see 2.7), like the slaves discussed by Aristotle or the conquered natives discussed by Ginés de Sepúlveda, are such "by nature" (Gk. *phusei*). They are "poor" not only factually and from birth, but by the eternal design of the gods (or God).

For the Greeks some beings manifest themselves, "by nature," as others as human beings: some as free, others as slaves. No one is guilty of the poverty of the poor. No crime on the part of any human liberty is the creative font of this injustice. The "poor" are poor by natural inclination, by reason of the evil disposition of their body or their soul, by reason of their vagrancy, or want of virtue, or simply their ill luck (as dictated by fate or divine providence). A theology of resignation justifies the fact that some are poor by exclaiming, "It is the will of God!"

Another theology, as pernicious as the first, simply proposes love and reconciliation between "rich " (dominating sinners-see 2.8) and "poor" (those oppressed and murdered by sin)-without requiring the objective conditions necessary for *forgiveness*. Forgiveness requires a clear, antecedent awareness of guilt on the part of the sinner, the "rich" person, together with just reparation (repentance and restitution), as Ripalda's fine catechism put it. Without a real, objective, shared, historical equality between the two persons-which means that the "rich" can no longer be rich nor the "poor" poor-there can be no reconciliation.

To assert that the poverty of the poor (which means their death) stems naturally from the will of God, or to pretend to a reconciliation that would take place without an *antecedent* hatred of the world and praxis of justice, are propositions of a theology of domination.

3.10 THE "CROSS" AS EFFECT OF REPRESSION BY SIN

Not only do the poor keep dying by keeping an idol alive through the sacrifice of their lifeblood-whether the fetish be a European Christian state or a Western Christian civilization-the prophets

and heroes, too, are murdered.

Babylon is "drunk on the blood of the consecrated," the prophet wrote. "The bodies of three persons shot to death 'execution-style' ...were found today," says the newspaper quoted at the beginning of this chapter. All who risk their lives to rescue the lost lives of the poor, the lives squandered every day in acts of worship of the idol, suffer repression and risk murder. What the system (the world, the flesh) fears more than anything else are "teachers" who threaten to arouse the masses and lead them toward liberation from the oppression (economic, political, ideological, religious, and so on) of sin.

"The high priests and the doctors of the law entered into a conspiracy, as they were afraid. ...They sought how they might murder him" (Mark 11: 18). When the system of the moral and social practices of domination realizes that the prophet is denouncing its wickedness, its injustice (thus destroying the *consent* of the oppressed masses, calling into question the ideological hegemony or domination that justifies sin), it must physically eliminate the critic, the dissident, the martyr-the one bearing witness to the future reign of justice.

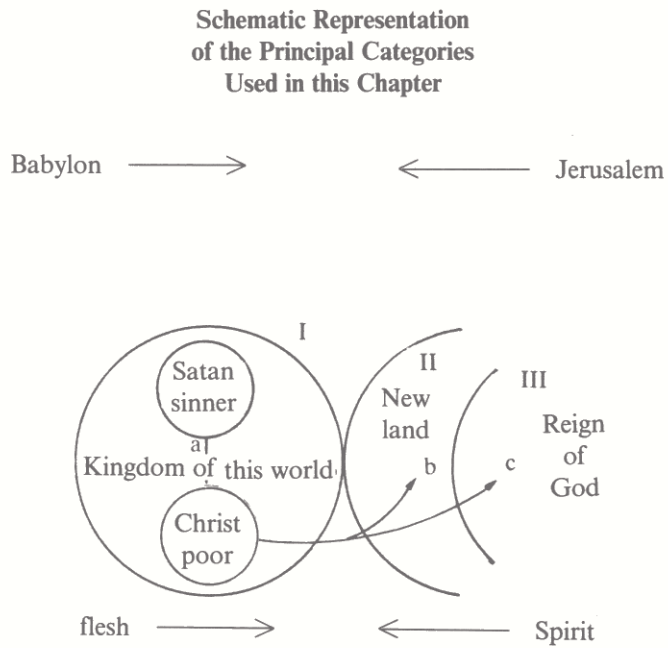
The hour of the ultimate repression practiced by any system (see 9.8), the moment when that system's daily oppression makes a quantum leap to a new and still more perverse form of institutional violence-at the hands of armies, the police, or paramilitary groups such as the Latin American "death squads"-foretells the "hour of the manifestation of glory" (John 17:1).

CONCLUSIONS

We have taken a further step. The negation of the *community* by sin, wickedness, and the death of the poor, has become a *society*, in which relationships among individuals enjoy institutionalization due to a *principle* of wickedness, of injustice: the reign of *this world*, Babylon. Sin, the domination of one human being by another, not only is not exclusively individual-its "socialness" has taken on historical, concrete form. Sin has a transcendent principle (the Evil One, the Dragon), a principle immanent in history (the Beast -at the time of the prophet of Revelation, the Roman empire), its kings at its disposal, and its angels to fulfill its commands. They are the "rich," all those who are sinners and dominators in their being subjects or

agents of sin and of the praxis that instrumentalizes neighbors as "things."

Diagram 4



- I. Order of social morality
- II. Historical utopian project
- III. Eschatological utopian project
 - a. Praxis of domination or sin
 - b. Praxis of historical liberation
 - c. Praxis of eschatological liberation