

Chapter 4

GOODNESS AND LIFE

4.1 STATE OF THE QUESTION

It is time to take a new step in our reflection. Evil, which produces death (see 2.8), destroys the communal face-to-face of love. The praxis of domination inaugurates a "moral" order that legitimates sin: Babylon. Now we must see how, out of the reign of *this world*, the good, goodness, holiness, the gift of the other, emerges.

Every day the newspapers carry news of courageous and valiant acts. A child rescues a companion swept away by a river. A union is founded for the defense of its members. A liberation movement is organized somewhere in Africa or Asia. A popular party wins an election. A country declares or attains its independence. The papers are full of accounts of praxes of goodness, of holiness.

We read in holy scripture:

Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! ...I will put sinews upon you, make flesh grow over you, cover you with skin, and put spirit in you so that you may come to life. ...O my people, I will open your graves and have you rise from them, and bring you back to the land of Israel. ...I will put my spirit in you that you may live, and I will settle you upon your land; thus you shall know that I am the Lord. I have promised, and I will do it, says the Lord [Ezek. 37:4-14].

Our task is to see how God brings forth goodness-holiness-among men and women in "social" relationships that institutionalize sin. God cannot accomplish an irruption into history by forcing the human will. That will is free. At the same time, human beings, be

they ever so meritorious or heroic, cannot coerce the self-bestowal of the other person. They cannot force that other to open and to establish the face-to-face. The mutual face-to-face presupposes the free self-proposal of both parties as absolute gratuity.

4.2 ETHICAL CONSCIENCE AND THE VOICE OF THE POOR

The inversion of the reign of evil begins with the breach with that reign effectuated by those who can hear the voice *of the other*. Why did the Samaritan, rather than the priest or the Levite, take pity on the victim of the roadside ambush? How did it come about that the Samaritan, "seeing him, was moved to compassion" (Luke 10:33)?

The "practical" system of domination, Babylon, is the system wielded by all those who have denied the other term of the face-to-face relationship, all who have constituted themselves that other's sovereign. Accordingly, the obliteration of the reign of evil will commence with someone's reconstitution of the face-to-face relationship with the other. This is what the Samaritan did. He *constituted* the half-dead victim a *person*. The victim had been beaten, robbed, and thrown into a ditch. This was a dangerous place to be (and perhaps this is why the priest and the Levite, in their selfishness, avoided any delay hereabouts, such as would have been entailed in any attempt to rescue the victim themselves). And yet the Samaritan pulled him up on to the road and bestowed on him the dignity of personhood, of being served, and thus rendered him an *other*, a neighbor.

In order to *constitute* the mere "thing" that had been dropped by the side of the road "an *other*," the Samaritan obviously had to *hear the voice of the other*. That voice may cry, "I have been beaten! Help me!" Or it may cry, "I am starving! Help me!" But in all cases it is precisely the capacity to hear the voice of the other that constitutes *ethical* conscience. In the Bible the supreme sign of goodness is to have "a heart that can listen" (1 Kgs. 5:9-*Biblia Latinoamericana*). The Lord "awakens my ears daily that I may hear, as a disciple" (Isa. 50:4). "Keep silent, Israel, and listen!" (Deut. 27:9). In this case *conscience* is not so much the application of principles to concrete cases, but a listening, a hearing the voice calling to me from outside, from beyond the horizon of the system: the voice of the poor calling for justice, calling from deep within their absolute, sacred right, the

right of the person as person.

Ethical conscience (very distinct from *moral* conscience-see 3.8) consists in knowing how to "open up" to the other and to take that other in charge (take re-sponsibility for him or her)-*for the sake* of the other, vis-à-vis the system.

4.3 CONVERSION

Of course, to be able to hear the voice of the other is a gift in itself. Why do some hear that voice, whereas others, with their hands over their ears, immersed in their fetishism, remain deaf to it?

It is the "other," others in their cry, in their shout, in their pain, who "pro-voke" us (call us forth), "con-voke" us (call us to them, to help them), "inter-pellate" us (call us to account, call us as witnesses before the reality of their poverty). It suddenly becomes clear to us that they have rights, and that we are guilty of their disaster and have the duty to serve them, that we carry the responsibility of their saving, their salvation, their happiness, their health, their sustenance. Awareness of our *guilt* for the catastrophe of others, our guilt for their unhappiness, upon hearing their voice, is the root and wellspring of conversion.

Conversion, *metanoia* (a changing of one's ways, one's life, motivated by repentance-Matt. 3:3-8), is a breach with Babylon, a breach with the prevailing *social* relationship in whose toils we had been snared. Hence "unless one is born *again* one cannot enjoy the reign of God" (John 3:3). This breach and this meeting with the other is a *gift*: "The Spirit breathes where it will" (John 3:8). The irruption of the Spirit that consecrates (Isa. 61: 1), baptism as the gift of God that brings us into community, the grace that cannot be merited, justification by gratuity-all these things are expressions of the fact that the other comes toward us *from within that other*, in freedom and spontaneity.

Goodness, holiness, irrupts as breach, as violence, as painful change of life. Moses belonged to the pharaoh's family; Jeremiah enjoyed the privileges of the priestly families. Conversion is experienced as that soul-rending "Cursed be the day I was born!"

4.4 THE "COVENANT"

It is not the human being who takes the first step. It is God who calls

first, through the poor. "Conversion" has to be seen, first, as proceeding from the other but, secondly, as taking place in community. Conversion is incorporating a historical process into a "covenant."

Now we see why the Lord said to Abram: "Leave your native land and your father's house for the land I shall show you. I shall make of you a great people. ...Abram went forth as the Lord had commanded him" (Gen. 12:1-4). The act of "departure," the act of emerging from one's *former* land, is the praxis by which the old order, the "moral" system of Babylon, is transcended. But the departure is possible only because God strikes a covenant with the one who is to depart, constituting that one the first of many, the first of a whole people (Rom. 5:15-19).

Covenant, as its daily working-out indicates, is the meeting of a plurality of wills in view of a common end, a strategic project. A covenant differs from an order or command in that the parties are partners, equal partners, "community." Covenant is the reconstitution of the "community" negated by sin. It is the reign of God, which begins in smallness, among an original few, among a small "remnant," the little community .

Breach with the "flesh," with the "world," is the unification, encounter, and solidarity of those who originate a new order of service, of justice, of mutual friendship. Diatheke-the word for "covenant" in the Greek of the New Testament(in Hebrew, *b'rith*)-denotes a pact ratified in blood (Luke 20:22; Amos 1:9). It is also a "pact of peace" (Ezek. 34:25), a pact for the good of the community. The covenant is *Immanuel*, "God with us," God among us, God our equal, God as the one who has kept the promise. The right, the law that God has now established, will abide unshakable, for the "covenanted" are now God's "adopted children" (Rom. 9:4).

4.5 GOODNESS AS SERVICE

Those "born anew," converted, are the "covenanted," the allies, of God. They accomplish the good deed, the good praxis, the good, the holy. In what, essentially and basically, does good, holy, ethical praxis consist?

Just as it is proper to the Prince of this world to dominate, to exercise power, so ethical praxis will consist in the exact opposite.

"This man has come not to be served, but to serve (*diakonesai*), and to give his life as a ransom for the many (*pollon*)" (Matt. 20:28). "To serve"-the attribute of the *diakonos*, the deacon-is *habodah* in Hebrew: labor, service, the activity of the *hebed*, the "worker" or "servant" of God (Isa. 53:10-12).

The service in question is addressed to the other term of the face-to-face relationship-the poor, in community. The Bible calls the potential, possible, future community-the object of the service of the one who is ethically just-the "crowd" (*hoi polloi* in Greek, "the many"; *rabim* in Hebrew). It indicates an indefinite number of poor who are not yet a "people," because they lack the service that is the task of the shepherd; they are without the leadership of the just one, the prophet, the "Servant of Yahweh." These "many," who are outside the laws of the system, who indeed live "in exteriority" even with respect to social class, are the special object of the good, the holy, human being, the person who practices justice, goodness, holiness, love of the other as other. "Personal" goodness is praxis as performed by those who struggle, even to the point of giving up their lives, for the fulfillment of the other .

If conversion is breach with the system, with the world, with the totality, then the service of the poor that emerges from that conversion will be explicit, concrete, "practical" struggle. Service to the other is the negation of domination. It is the practice that contradicts the established legality, the prevailing structures. It is the toil emerging from a liberation project that transcends the present order, which dominates the poor. If the world hates the just, they have no choice but to continue the struggle with Satan.

4.6 COMMUNAL GOODNESS

Personal goodness or holiness, however, is abstract. *In the concrete*, goodness is communal, historical, and itself institutionalized.

The reason why those who serve an other, breaking with the structure of the system of the flesh to enter into solidarity with that other, are able to do this is because the Lord has first struck a covenant with them. But to be part of a covenant is to be part of a "community." In the Bible the Lord's designation for the "covenant community" is "my people." Here we have a people (Deut. 4:34; Exod. 7:5; Luke 1:17; 1 Cor. 10:18-see below, 8.5-8.7) who can

betray its God: "Call them 'not-my-people,' for you are not my people and I am not with you" (Hos. 1:9). Nevertheless-and this is the point-we have a *theological category* as well (in addition to its objective historical reality). As theological category, "people" expresses the presence in the world, in history, of holiness or goodness as community, as institution (see 2.5)-in the positive sense of this term.

Such expressions or realities as "small community," "base community," "association of free persons" all denote the institutional ambit where the person-to-person relationship, as the face-to-face of love, has been reconstituted. Thus the good is not only the good will of a person, or even the isolated, individual act of someone who is good. No, now the good is "community," as well, with all its real, empirical, sociological consistency. It is now holiness, and its members are "the holy ones of Jerusalem." It is capable of a strategy, of tactics, it can have its mysteries and its functions, it can mount a concrete resistance. As the community of holy ones it is a "*utopian* community." In other words it has "no-place" (Gk., *ou topos*) in the system. From *outside* the world, outside the flesh and the system, in virtue of its actual, concrete solidarity, it can exercise the concrete function of liberation and service to the *poor*, to the *people*, in the form of criticism of that system. It is this prophetic community that makes the "crowd" a "people," and makes the "poor" a historical subject.

4.7 INHERITANCE OF THE GOOD

If continuance in the age of evil is institutional, in virtue of inherited "social" relationships of domination, in analogous fashion the *gift* of the Lord, the gratuity of God's covenant, penetrates time thanks to the community called by God "my people," the community founded on the abiding stability of God's promise and faithful word.

There is such a thing as inherited good, too, then. Good is no more a matter of spontaneous subjectivity than evil is. "This is the heritage (Heb., *najalat*) of the servants of Yahweh; I am their justifier" (Isa. 54: 17). In Hebrew, "to justify," to cause to be accepted as just, to grant amnesty to, is derived from *tsadakah*-innocence, justice, goodness, holiness. In Saint Paul, "justification" (*dikaiosisune*, Rom. 1:18ff.) is a reality proceeding not from the law (Gal. 3:21)-that is,

not from "social morality"-but from God: from the antecedent forgiveness and amnesty granted by the Lord and no other (Rom. 4:7).

The covenantal presence of the Lord in the community constitutes the historical institutionalization of the communal *relationship*. "Thus also the gift (grace) becomes reign (*basileusei*), by means of justification" (Rom. 5:21). The servant, the converted one, the community, can rely on God's promise: "the promise God assured to David, making him a witness before the peoples" (Isa. 55:3-4). Once the communal relationship is historicized, it can be communicated in time: "Your children will be disciples of the Lord" (Isa. 54:13). That is, we have precisely the opposite of what happens in the case of "originary" sin. Children will be born into the covenant community, where a *community* relationship is waiting to receive them.

This re-established relationship-which is not "natural" ("native," inborn), but communitarian, historical, a gift of the Spirit in the passage through the laver of purification and repentance-this new face-to-face, is an *encounter*. Human beings, justified, now address themselves, through their community praxis of service to the poor, to a God who comes to meet them, a God approaching as holiness, justification, and forgiveness.

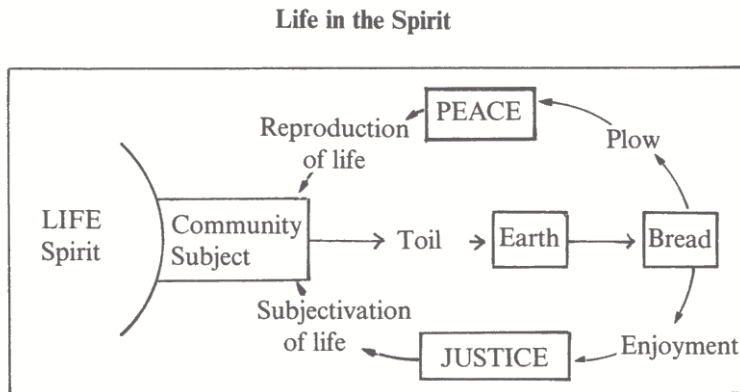
4.8 LIFE REGAINED

As by sin death entered the world, through the encounter with God *life* is poured into the world. The theology of liberation is a theology of *life* against death.

In community, the just share bread. They produce it, divide it, and distribute it. The needy are needy no longer. Now they live.

We read: "the Spirit tends to life. ...The Spirit is life. ...The One who raised the Messiah will also give life to his mortal beings" (Rom. 8:6-11). "I shall strike a covenant of peace with them. ...They shall camp in the wilderness in safety. ...They shall know that I am their Lord when I cause them to snap the couplings of their yoke, when I deliver them from the power of their tyrants" (Ezek. 34:25-29). Today this resurrection to life, to be prolonged in resurrection at the end of the ages, is the bestowal of life for the new *community relationship* of mutual service in the friendship of the face-to-face.

Diagram 5



The *subject* of this resurrection to life, of this receipt of life, is the people of God in community-"flesh, risen," risen to the life of the new covenant, risen to the new system of justice that has left oppressive, death-dealing Egypt behind, abandoned that producer of the death that is the fruit of sin. If sin was domination, if it was by domination that the "rich " dispossessed the poor of their labor, so it is through the mutual service of goodness that the fruit of the toil of all means life for all. "Of their swords they shall forge plowshares; of their pikes, pruning hooks" (Isa. 2:4).

4.9 THE POOR HAVE THEIR FILL

Wealth is good. It is the gift of the creator and the work of human hands. The evil of wealth resides in its *accumulation*, which produces poverty in the other. Wealth *in itself* belongs to that of which we read: "And God saw that it was very good" (Gen. 1:31-see our 18.3).

The fruit of good, of holiness, is life. "Happy the poor, for theirs is the reign of God" (Matt. 5:3). Again, the reign is fulfillment. "Happy ...because they shall receive consolation ...shall inherit the earth ...shall be satisfied ...shall receive help ...shall be face to face with God (in *community*) ...shall be the daughters and sons of God" (Matt. 5:4-9). All these positivities, affirmations, joys, are the reign "already," for those who *have been* poor. Wealth shared today is the

good that negates and defeats the poverty of yesterday.

Eating is a material, biological activity. Animals eat when they are hungry. But in history, in the human reality of social structures, to feed the hungry is not a mere material, animal, biological activity. Inasmuch as the hunger of another is the fruit of sin, of a satanic act, of evil, it constitutes a moment in the "reign of this world." Hatred of Satan, the struggle against the structure of "this world," against sin, is a *spiritual* activity—an activity inspired by the Spirit that moves the prophets and the people to build the reign of God.

The feeding of the hungry, or for that matter the very activity of eating when performed by the hungry, is a "spiritual" activity, and not merely a material one, because it is an act of service, of *diakonia*, of love, of *risk* (because it is against the system). "Happy those persecuted for struggling on behalf of justice ...for this is how they persecuted the prophets before you" (Matt. 5:10-12).

4.10 THE REIGN OF THE SERVANT

The community of the reign of God cannot be organized in the manner of a state, by way of coercive laws, with a police force to ensure the observance of these laws, and an army to rule, coerce the will of, others despotically and by force of arms (15.9). These are the instruments of death, not of life. This is the sword, not the plowshare. As Saint Augustine put it: "Cain built his city. Abel never built his."

The community of the reign grows slowly, by way of the daily, simple, patient, ethical, faithful face-to-face. Its method is not that of the politics of domination, if by politics we understand the state's technique of coercion (see 9.8).

The community of the reign is built by the servant: "Behold my servant, whom I champion. Upon him have I placed my Spirit, that he may promote justice among the nations. He shall not shout or cry aloud" (Isa. 42:1-2). Into the deepest heart of the structures of evil irrupts the reign of God. Its methodology cannot be that of the "reign of this world." It will be the unmistakable methodology of goodness, holiness, and the good. The *martyria* (Gk., "witness," martyrdom) of the utopia of justice, the praxis of service, the love of justice, alive and operative in the face-to-face relationship, moves, converts, animates, and vivifies (see chapter 9).

The reign of the servant (Matt 12:17-21; 20:28) is not a reign of coercion. It is not a society of dominators. It is not even an association of mutual assistance in the selfishness of the common good of its own members to the exclusion of all others. It is a community of service that stands open to the other. It is the people itself as servant of the future.

CONCLUSIONS

Good irrupts, bursts forth, into the heart of the structures of sin. The "good" is to hear the voice of the poor exclaiming, "I am starving!" To hear that voice is the root or *conditio sine qua non* of goodness, of holiness. To take the other in charge, to make myself responsible for that other, is conversion, whose immediate embodiment is a covenant with the Lord. The "covenanted" of the reign of God *serve*, do justice to, the oppressed. As members of that reign, they stir up in their hearts, as a legacy of grace that they have received, good among themselves, their own children, and all the sons and daughters of their Father. And so the poor have their fill. This satisfaction is their *life*, regained as the fruit of the praxis of goodness, of justice. Thus in the very midst of "this world" a new reign springs up and grows strong, the reign of the servant of Yahweh, a reign whose subjects inaugurate the community of a love that serves, a community of holiness.

Chapter 5

COMMUNITY ETHICS: THE "JERUSALEM PRINCIPLE"

5.1 STATE OF THE QUESTION

Our task in this chapter will be to make a clear distinction between "community" on the one hand, and "society" of domination on the other .

Every day the newspapers carry reports of some popular celebration: a popular carnival, a national patron saint's day or independence day, a birthday, a golden wedding anniversary. Festivals express joy, happiness, a being-together with one another.

We read in holy scripture:

Then I saw *new* heavens and a *new* earth. The former heavens and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no longer. I also saw a *new Jerusalem*, the holy city, coming down out of heaven from God, beautiful as a bride prepared to meet her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne cry out: "This is God's dwelling *among humans*. He shall dwell *with them* and they shall be his people and he shall be their God who is always *with them*. He shall wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, crying out or pain, for the *former* world has passed away" [Rev. 21:1-4].

In the theology of the prophets of Israel, as also in Jesus' theology and in that of his disciples (and the New Testament authors), we encounter a striking dialectic between the "before" of the *old* world-as being the world of sin, domination-and the "after" of

the future, of the "new," of a world to be created by goodness, justice, community. What "is coming," the future as fulfillment, is proposed here and now as a praxis of a love that will embrace justice, a community relationship. Further: never is God a private good to be possessed. God's self-bestowal is *among* human beings, *with* them, as one who is *among others*, one who is in the midst of *one's own people*. Grace, salvation, the reign, is communal. At the same time it constitutes the transcendence *of* an order of evil and a trajectory *toward* the order of good. The two reigns are in a dialectical relationship.

5.2 SOME NECESSARY DISTINCTIONS

To continue in our discourse on the ethical theology of liberation, I need to set down three distinctions.

First, two categories, or interpretive instruments, make up the main focus of the whole ethical discourse of the prophets, of Jesus, and of the martyrs. In a basic sense, the category of *totality* ("this world," the order of the flesh, which can be represented as Babylon when it closes in upon itself) stands for the prevailing system as point of departure—for Moses, Egypt; for the Book of Revelation, Babylon—in a word, the prevailing "*moral*" order (see 3.6).

In a still more basic sense, by *exteriority* I understand that which is not given or established under the dominion of the "Prince of this world." I mean the other, the poor, the people as the social bloc of the oppressed, the Spirit (God, as the absolutely Other, never became *part* of a system of sin). "Exteriority" indicates the absolute *transcendence* of the reign of God.

Secondly, the *prevailing project*, the common good of the order of domination (that of Pilate or Herod, that of the Beast—the Roman state that functions in the name of the Dragon, Satan), is the end and objective of social praxis, the morality that justifies the death of the poor. By *liberation project*, on the other hand, I understand the utopian (in a positive sense) end and objective, the object of hope (here we have the "hope principle"), a goal at once historical (a more just, though not perfect, temporal system) and eschatological (see 1.9 and 1.10).

Accordingly, and in the third place, the Bible never tires of showing us the dialectic between the two "lands": "leave your native

land for the *land* that I shall show you" (Gen. 12:1). "I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, to take them out of *this land* to lead them to a land fertile and spacious, a *land flowing with milk and honey*" (Exod. 3:8). "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and hearing it shall have life" (John 5:25). The first land is a land of death. The second is a land of life, to be entered by "resurrection" (our 4.8). "One must be born *anew*" (John 3:7).

5.3 FROM "MORALITY" TO "ETHICS"

From start to finish, the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1-8:1) is one great lesson in theology. It is an instruction on the difference between "morality" (the prevailing morality, taught, commanded by dominators) and "ethics" (see 3.2).

Human beings who have been converted to life, who have been raised up by the Spirit and rendered capable of hearing the voice of the poor as the word of God, who are the *allies* of the God of service, soon realize that the entire "moral" order (the norms and praxis of dominators) is against them. Therefore they will have to strip off its mask. "You have been taught that the ancients were commanded.... You have been taught that it was commanded, 'eye for eye, tooth for tooth'" (Matt. 5:21-38). Over against these "moral" (unjust, dominating, hypocritical) precepts, Jesus poses "ethical" exigencies: "Then *I* say to you. ...For I tell you: Do not stand against the one who offends you. ...Be completely good, as your Father in heaven is good" (Matt. 5:22-48).

To many, Jesus' ethical demands have seemed paradoxical. Are these "obligations" not impossible to understand or fulfill? If "paradoxical" (Gk., *para*, "alongside of, beyond"; *doxa*, "opinion, decree") be taken to mean something opposed to the prevailing moral opinion, then Jesus' teaching is indeed paradoxical. It flies in the face of the whole morality of domination. It contradicts prevailing morality, in the name of the absolute, transcendent, critical horizon of all morality: the "ethical." And in what does the ethical consist? The ethical consists in praxis. It consists in praxis as activity directed toward, and relationship to (1.2), the other as other, as person, as sacred, as absolute. The ethical is not governed by moral norms-by what the system proclaims to be good (3.7). The ethical is governed by what the poor require, by the needs of the

oppressed by the struggle with the domination, the structures, and the relationships established by the Prince of "this world" (2.10).

Thus the ethical transcends the moral. Moral systems are relative. Latin American history has witnessed the Aztec, the colonial, and the capitalistic morality. Each of these systems has sought to legitimate the praxis of domination as good, each in its own way. Ethics, by contrast, is one, and absolute-valid in every situation and every age.

5.4 THE POOR IN SPIRIT

One of the decisive aspects of any ethics (and any ethics that is not an ethics of liberation will be a mere "morality") is its interpretation of Matthew- 3:5: "Blessed are the poor to *pneumati*"-which can be translated "in spirit," "spiritually," "by choice," and so on. In other words, the crucial modifier can be an open door to the evacuation, the inversion, the annihilation of the ethics of the gospel and its transformation into amorality of domination. Now the rich, too, may be poor, and blessed-and keep their riches! All they need do is become poor "in intention."

"Spirit" and "spiritual" can mean a great number of things in the New Testament. But it always translates the Hebrew *ruah*, which can have our familiar psychological meaning (as later on, as well, for the Stoics), or that of bodily force, or breath, or wind. Its strongest meaning is: the presence or manifestation of the *power* of God (Ezek. 1:12). Thus *pneuma* becomes God's own creative might, the power that launched the prophets. Spirit is the immanent essence of God (Isa. 31 :3). It is set over against the flesh, as God (*El*) is set over against the human being (*adam*). But a human being may be possessed by the Spirit(Hos.9:7; 1 Sam.10:6). The "living"(or "natural," as we would say today)human being is the opposite of the "spiritual" human being (*soma pneumatikon*: 1 Cor. 15:44-6). "Flesh" is merely alive (*psychikos*). One born anew receives the Spirit, and becomes spiritual (*pneumatikos*-1 Cor. 2:13-15).

The moral order of the dominant system is a totality of carnal practices. It is a moral order "according to the law." This is the old order. The ethical order-the praxis of liberation that builds the reign of God-is the system of "spiritual" practices "according to (*kata*) the Spirit" of God. This is the new order, the new human being.

Just so, the poor according to the flesh are, merely, those lacking in goods, as an empirical, natural, bodily datum. In the order according to the flesh, in the moral system of domination, the poor are in their death, in their poverty, which is the fruit of sin. Precisely as so situated, the poor, like the innocent Job in his suffering, are not sinners. But the poor "according to the Spirit" (and these may be wealthy, like Moses, or poor, like Jesus of Nazareth, who belonged to the *'am ha'aretz*, the "people of the earth") are those the Spirit converts, moves, consecrates, launches into the world as prophets to evangelize the poor (Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18). They are poor for the reign, for the sake of the reign (Matt. 6:19-34).

5.5 THE JERUSALEM PRINCIPLE

In the theology of the prophets, as in that of Jesus, in dialectical opposition to the categories of totality, world, flesh, Egypt, or Babylon, we find a series of correlative categories. To the world, the reign of God is opposed; to the flesh, the Spirit; to Egypt, the land of promise; to Babylon, the new Jerusalem. Or, abstractly: in dialectical opposition to the prevailing order of the established system stand exteriority and transcendence.

Confronted with the persecution and murder of Christians in the first century of our era, which took place at the hands of the imperialism of that age ("suffered under Pontius Pilate"), today other Christian-murdering empires carry on the Roman empire's tradition of sin. The author of the Book of Revelation has formulated an explicit political theology. Christians are murdered because they are "witnesses" ("martyrs") of the "heavenly Jerusalem," the "*new* Jerusalem"-called "new" lest it be confused with the "old" Jerusalem, the empirical one, the one that killed Jesus and was destroyed for its infidelity. The *new* City of God-and future Christendoms will be the "earthly city" of Cain, still claiming to be the City of God-is utopian. It comes from the future, and is built of the blood of the heroes, the saints, and the martyrs.

Why does the empire, yesterday as today, murder the heroes and martyrs? For the simple reason that, in proclaiming the new order-a future system of justice and satisfaction for the starving poor-they destroy consent. They shatter hegemony. They undermine the foundation of the prevailing morality: they obliterate its justifica-

tion. The "new Jerusalem" is the project of liberation, the new homeland, the new land "where milk and honey flow."

The hope of the new Jerusalem is the "Jerusalem principle." It is a utopian Christianity that believes in the reign of God" hates the Prince of "this world" and his reign, and inaugurates a praxis of liberation where all will receive "on the basis of each one's need." But in order for Jerusalem to exist, obviously Babylon must be destroyed, and the poor, the heroes, the saints, and the martyrs rejoice at its fall: "Alleluia! Triumph, glory, and power to God!... He has condemned the great prostitute...and has lost count of the blood of her slaves" (Rev. 19:1-2).

5.6 UTOPIAN PRACTICES

Saint Paul spoke of "madness" (1 Cor 1:18-2:16): that which is absurd for the prevailing morality. For the dominant, present rationality, which dictates the true and the false (as does Karl Popper in his *The Open Society and Its Enemies*), the construction of the new Jerusalem is the absolute evil (because it calls in question the current system in its totality). Builders of the new Jerusalem are, for conservative groups, "prophets of hate," radical critics of the absurd, and the new Jerusalem is, for conservatives, the "utopia" that, wishing to improve the current state of affairs, destroys all.

The poor set out on their journey. They pass *beyond* Egypt's frontier, they transcend the horizon of the system, they cross the barrier of death. Now there is nothing to follow, no one to heed, but the Lord. They have now embarked on the *nothing-of-the-system*, the non-being of the prevailing morality. They are on the road to the "wilderness." (Heb., *bamidbar*, "in the wilderness," is a theological category.) The "wilderness" (Matt. 3:3; 4:1) is exteriority, the expanse over which domination no longer has sovereignty. As a people, the Israelites have escaped the reach of the *power* of sin: "The Israelites marched from Ramses to Sukkoth" (Exod. 12:37). "The Lord walked before them" (Exod. 13:21).

Praxis, as an action and a relationship of the members of the community, of a people that has transcended the morality of sin (as Nicaragua, after its 1979 revolution, became a "new land"-an earthly one, it is true, but nevertheless a historical "new land"), is utopian, meaningless, absurd, mad, subversive, destructive, *danger-*

ous for the system left behind, left in the past: "But they cried out the more: Crucify him!" (Matt. 27:23). His physical elimination was necessary, for it had thrown the "realism" of the dominant classes (the "elders, priests, and scribes," who, to their own advantage, acquiesced in Herod's inauthenticity and the Roman occupation) into a state of crisis.

The practices of the liberators, those complying with *ethical* demands, *have no meaning* for the system: "They ridiculed them" (Acts 17:32). The system just laughs. The Israelites, however, who have moved out into the wilderness, know that God is *with them*, Emmanu-el.

5.7 THE NEW ETHICAL CODE

There are no highways in the wilderness. One makes one's own way. The morality of Egypt, of the flesh, has been left behind, it is true. It has been left "in the past." But new demands arise, and these operate as a compass for the Israelites in their journey toward the promised land, the "new Jerusalem."

The emigrants traveling through the wilderness toward the future had no norms or requirements to guide them in blazing this *new* trail. The law of Egypt was no longer. But there was as yet no new law. They were a people without a law, without a new legality. "It is not good what you do" (Exod. 18: 18), counsels the old father-in-law. But the *new* law will not be a "moral" code (and indeed, to the extent that it is "moralized" it becomes the old law all over again, and will have to be renewed once more). In fact, the seeming negatives, the prohibitions ("you shall *not* have other gods ...you shall *not* take the name of the Lord. ..you shall *not* kill. You shall *not* commit adultery .You shall *not* steal"-Exod. 20:3-17) are implicitly positive injunctions. As negations of negations, they are basically affirmative. "You shall not make idols for yourself": to make idols for oneself is to deny God; to deny the idol is to assert God. "You shall not steal": to steal is to say no to the good of another; not to steal is to respect one's neighbor .

On the other hand, these *ethical* norms ("ethical" because they were not those of the dominators of a *moral* order, but of poor desert bedouins) could be transformed into a *moral* code:

Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, you frauds! You shut the doors of the kingdom of God in men's faces. ...You pay tithes on mint and herbs and seeds while neglecting the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and good faith. ..until retribution overtakes you for all the blood of the just ones shed on earth" [Matt. 23:13-35].

Over against this *morality* of domination, with its thousand precepts but not one jot of justice for the poor, Jesus establishes a new code, with new, ethical demands: "Blessed the poor, for theirs is the reign of heaven" (Luke 6:20 ff.). The Beatitudes are the *ethical* code par excellence. Jesus curses the *morality* of the dominators, the satisfied rich, those who laugh in "this world," the world "according to the flesh," and proclaims that the goodness, the absolute holiness of service to the poor, to the hungry, to all who suffer, are building up the reign of God.

5.8 THE POOR AS AGENTS OF THE REIGN OF GOD

The poor as the subject of poverty are the victims of evil, of sin. Their poverty is death, the fruit of domination and pillage on the part of the rich. But as the poor grow in awareness, they hear the voice of the other, the other poor among the people, and they are transformed into subjects, agents, of the reign-its primary builders, its principal protagonists.

Under the domination of the *moral* order of "this world," the poor frequently accept the structure of domination in a spirit of passivity. In this condition, that of passive domination, they are merely part of the "crowd." They belong to "the many," the masses, who have introjected the norms of the flesh. It was on them that Jesus of Nazareth "took pity" (Matt. 14:14).

It is precisely the sign of Jesus' messiahship that, when he is present, "the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Luke 7:22; Matt. 11:5). We do not read that the poor are to be "saved." Not being sinners, they are already saved, at least in their formality as term of the concrete relationship in which they are poor. (They can be sinners, or "rich," in another relationship, if they dominate "others.") The order of "salvation" is a function of "good will," of receiving "sufficient grace" to be saved. The order of "evangeliza-

tion," of hearing the preaching of the gospel, is on another level. The poor are evangelized or receive the "good news" in which they are "happy," "blessed" by God, and so on, because they are poor. Thus they come to awareness that they are the *subject*, the agent, of the reign of God, but only insofar as they are active participants in its construction—only to the extent that they understand, with Job, that their poverty and suffering are the fruit, not of *their* sin, but of the sin of domination. "The dead rise" (Luke 7:22): the passive objects of the domination of sin, the poor, have become the active subjects of the reign.

In the system of "this world," the subject or agent is the Dragon (Satan), who has given his power to the Beast (the dominating state, the order of sin) and to its angels. The poor are the *nothing*, the non-being, of "this world." And it is in virtue of their not having been stained in "this world" that they are "subjects" of the reign of God.

5.9 "ETHICITY" OF THE PRAXIS OF LIBERATION

Thus if there is a *morality* (see 3.7) of the praxis of the prevailing system, there is an "ethicity" of the praxis of liberation. In the dominant system, an act is *morally* good when it complies with prevailing norms. An act will be *ethically* good in situations of greater difficulty, and principally when it is in conformity with the conscience of the agents of liberation themselves. Heroes and great critics of domination often throw out the baby with the bathwater. They discard *ethics* because they have discovered the inhumanity of the prevailing *morality*. Legitimacy and respect must be restored to the heroes and martyrs, and to ethics.

In their journey through the wilderness, the Israelites, a people without a law (or with the *new* law of absolute demands, not always mediated) frequently wonder: Are we doing the right thing? Is this the correct way to act? Is God with us? In other words they mistrust the holiness or *goodness* of an act because it is inconsistent with the morality that they have always been taught. They will suffer the ongoing temptation to change their minds and "return to Egypt" (Exod. 13:17). And behold the moment of uncertainty: What ought I to do? (Luke 18:18). In the absence of prevailing, established, dominant criteria, only the authority of the prophet is valid (Luke 20:2)—a confidence and trust that the right manner of action will

appear in the need to serve the poor, the other .

Even in the moment of praxis "without a prevailing law," however, there are clear and absolute principles, norms that will be valid everywhere and always. The first of these is: "Free the poor," as an imperative of practical reason.

In *any* system of domination, of sin, there are those who are, by definition, dominated-the poor. The discovery of these poor here and now, in the concrete, belongs to the ethical conscience, to an ethical awareness. All praxis directed to the liberation of the poor is basically good. There are conditions that will limit the goodness of this praxis and even render it unjust. But the "liberation of the poor," and not compliance with *moral* norms (as with the praxis of the Pharisees), is the practical principle of the *ethicity* of praxis (Matt. 12:1-8).

5.10 THE NEW JERUSALEM

Jerusalem is the symbol of the reign of God that is beyond history . But it is also a metaphor for the new order beyond the prevailing system of domination. The new Jerusalem is historical, then, as well. In the historical new Jerusalem, the journey through the wilderness, and the tenuous occupation of the promised land by the people of God, are at an end (see 1.9, 1.10,4.9).

The death of Moses is another symbol of this transition from one historical era to another, "Go! Cross the Jordan, with this whole people, on the way to the land that I shall give you" (Josh. 1:2). Similarly, "the dispossessed of their land will go up from Babylon to Jerusalem" (Ezra 1:11). In Jerusalem, the promised land, the new order, "the people went to eat and drink, send portions, and organize a great festival" (Neh. 8:12). Now in its land, the people had to organize a new life. First, like Nicaragua, besieged from the North by the Contras and the soldiers of the Empire, they had to build a wall that would protect them. "Let us rebuild the walls of Jerusalem," they said (Neh. 2: 17). Now that the new order prevailed, "those who had returned to Jerusalem from captivity began the work of building the temple" (Ezra 3:8). God was with the liberated people. There were no poor. All lived in justice, in community, in the covenant, and all their needs were satisfied.

The heavenly Jerusalem, which will come only at the end of days,

once and for all, as the bride of the Lamb that was slain, will no longer be able to fall into sin. But the earthly Jerusalem can do so. It can close in upon itself idolatrously, and let the promises fall into oblivion. In this case the land of promise would be transformed dialectically into a new Egypt: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you!" (Matt. 23:37). "They came to Jerusalem. He entered the temple and began to cast out the buyers and sellers. ...'You have made it a robbers' cave'" (Mark 11:15-17). The task will have to be begun again and again, until the end of time.

CONCLUSIONS

Community ethics, which is distinguished from the prevailing moral order as Jerusalem from Babylon, is the ethics in force during the time of passage from the former land to the land of promise. Morality is not ethics. The builders of the new order are the prophets, the poor, in accordance with the demands of the Spirit. Thus they build the utopian city, the *new* Jerusalem, the future, a more just order. The praxis of those delivered from the hand of the pharaoh into the wilderness is "madness" for "this world." It is absurd, it is senseless. All along the course of their journey from slavery to the future, the Israelites have a *new*, ethical code. It does not consist in the norms of a dominant morality. Its demands are those of an ethics of the liberation of the poor. Under this ethics, the poor are evangelized. They receive the "good news" of their hope: they are transformed into the "subject" of the active construction of the reign of God. The "ethicity" of the goodness or holiness of their praxis no longer depends on the old law. Theirs is the very praxis of the prophet, of a pilgrim people, whose norm is a living norm, the new law. Yet the new earthly Jerusalem-not the eschatological one, which will gleam with a glory that will never fade-can still be totalized. It can still constitute itself an old Egypt, by way of a breach with the covenant. And once more a mere moral order will prevail.

Chapter 6

SENSIBILITY, JUSTICE, AND SACRAMENTALITY

6.1 STATE OF THE QUESTION

I have now treated the five basic problems of community ethics. We are in possession of a foundation upon which to erect all our subsequent discourse. In view of the importance of these five topics, however, I should like to go back over some of them. They all involve some aspect of corporality ("bodiliness"-see 1.3), satisfaction (in general terms-1.7), death (2.8), the flesh (3.4), or the satisfaction of the poor in particular (4.9). That is, they all deal in some way with *sensibility*.

We read stories in the newspaper every day about the cruel starvation of so many of our brothers and sisters in Ethiopia and the Sudan; we read of the human rights violations documented by Amnesty International; we read of the stifling heat of the desert or the cold of other regions; we read of the poverty of the beggars in Paris and London, of the poverty of the peripheral countries, the dominated classes, and so on.

We read in holy scripture:

Come! You have my Father's blessing! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me. I was ill and you comforted me, in prison and you came to visit me [Matt. 25:34-6].

Let us return to this theme. After all, this is the prime criterion of Christian ethics, of the ethics of liberation. This is the absolute criterion of the goodness or evil of actions, of praxis. Bodiliness, the "flesh," is what *feels*, suffers, sorrows, enjoys. If the flesh had no dignity, then we might renounce it. But as we see, it has a central place in Christian ethics.

6.2 HELLENISM, GNOSTICISM, AND MANICHEISM

In the early Christian centuries, there were three currents of thought or mentality that disparaged corporality, the flesh, and sensibility, as evil.

First of all, the Indo-European mentality, and Greek thought in particular, spurned the "body" as the origin of evil. This was the prevailing attitude from the pre-Socratics onward, but it reached its zenith in Plato and Plotinus. "Matter is the original sin," said Plotinus, inasmuch as, it seemed to him, matter limited, determined, partialized the "soul" of the universe as "my" soul, inclining it by its desires to petty, selfish, low things.

Secondly, Hindu and Buddhist thought took a similar tack, preaching a morals of "liberation from the body" that would leave one free to pursue the contemplation of divine things—a goal that only an aristocracy could reasonably aspire to.

Thirdly, somewhat later, the Gnostics (including the Docetists) came on the Christian scene. For the Gnostics, the body was the result of the sin of one of the "eons" (the eternal substances in the complex structure of beliefs of these early heretics)—namely, Sophia, wisdom. The body was evil. Jesus must have only seemed to have a body, then, as otherwise the Word would have taken on evil. Irenaeus of Lyons valiantly combated the Gnostics.

The Manicheans, disciples of a third-century A.D. Zoroastrian called Mani, held matter to be an external principle along with God, and the origin of the evil that imprisoned the soul in its body. "Cursed be those who formed my body and enchained my soul," runs an ancient Manichean text.

6.3 DIGNITY OF THE "FLESH"

As we have seen, "flesh" stands for the human, natural order—whatever is not Spirit (see 3.4). However, "flesh" has a positive

meaning, as well, in Hebreo-Christian thought. "The Word became flesh" (John 1:14), the evangelist tells us-not "body."

Hebrew and Christian thought asserts the *unity* of the human being. We are not composed of two distinct substances, "body" and "soul." Earliest Christian thought refers to the entire human being as "flesh." (If the word "body"-*soma*, in Greek-sometimes appears instead, it too means "flesh," the whole human being, body and soul, and is used only because the Greek version of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint often translated the Hebrew *basar*, "flesh," as *soma*, "body.") The "flesh" is the whole human being, then, the human order of things, the history and society of human beings. The "soul" (Heb., *nefesh*) is simply the "life" of the flesh, and not a spiritual substance-which latter, with its co-principle, the body, would constitute the human being for the dualists, such as the Indo-Europeans. The "person," the flesh, the "face," is an indivisible "someone." A body-soul dualism is unacceptable to the deepest and most central thinking of the prophetic tradition.

For the Greeks and other Indo-Europeans, the "soul" was divine, uncreated, eternal, immortal, incorruptible. Hence the apologists would insist that "only God is increate and incorruptible. ...For this cause souls die and are punished" (Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 5). With the dying of the "flesh," human beings die utterly.

The "flesh," the "flesh" of the other, his or her "face" (*persona*-see 1.3), is the only sacred thing in creation. It is second only to God in worth and dignity. Hence everything bound up in any way with "flesh" (sexuality, sensibility, pleasure, and so on) is good, worthy, and positive, not to be rejected. Only sin in the flesh, which occurs when the flesh idolatrously totalizes itself, is to be rejected (3.4, 2.3).

6.4 SENSIBILITY : THE "SKIN"

I now address the central moment in our reflection-a point that, in the moral systems of domination, frequently passes unnoticed. But it is the very springboard of the discourse of the ethics of liberation. By "sensibility" ("sensitivity") here I do not mean only the sensible cognitive faculty, the "senses"-sight, hearing, and so on-as a means of the constitution of the "sense" or meaning of what appears in the world (referring to the intuitive moment). No, here I wish to stress *sensing* itself-the actual sensation of pain, hunger,

cold, and so on, or indeed of pleasure, satisfaction, empirical happiness. Our subjectivity is wounded in deepest, most secret, intimacy when something wounds our "skin"-when our corporality is assaulted in its constitution by some trauma. By "sensitivity," then, I mean the resonance of, the impact on, our capacity for "contentment," for suffering, for joy or sorrow in reaction to some stimulus irrupting from the world around us.

Every living being, even the unicellular (such as the amoeba), has an outer frontier that unifies its living structure and separates it from its "medium," from that which is "outside": a membrane. In the human being, this membrane, which may have any of a very wide variety of structures, is called the "skin" (here taken to include, interiorly, the various mucous membranes, or, externally, the cornea of the eye, the eardrum, the taste buds, and so on). Through this "skin" we "feel" what comes from without-often enough either as pleasure, enjoyment, or satisfaction, or as pain, disgust, or the suffering of a traumatism.

Life seeks to protect itself from danger. Life exults in the presence of its fulfillment, and a degree of this fulfillment is to be had in "sensitivity," which acts as a red or green light signaling its own fulfillment or nonfulfillment.

6.5 INJUSTICE AND SENSIBILITY

Hedonists-or for that matter the Stoics, the Epicureans, even Buddhists-habitually pronounced for or against "pleasure." I am not speaking of pleasure here. I am speaking of "sensitivity." And the "sensitivity" of which I speak is that of *others*. What is under consideration here is *their* hunger, thirst, homelessness, cold, illness-the "negatives of sensitivity" that sin produces.

Sin is domination over the other. Its fruit is the poverty of that other. Poverty is a broad concept, and denotes the negative side of the sensitivity of the other: his or her hunger, thirst, homelessness, cold, and the like-anything constituting the other's poverty under its formality of the result of sin (which has dispossessed that other of his or her food, drink, home, clothing, health, and so on). If the "flesh" is something positive, something worthy and good, then hunger, thirst, homelessness, cold, and so on, will be evil. And their evil is not only physical, but ethical, political, communal, as well.

These things are evil as the fruit of sin, of injustice.

The suffering of the starving (who, after all, starve only because they have been robbed) or of the tortured (as Jesus among the Roman soldiers or hanging from the cross as his requital for having committed himself to the evangelization of the poor) is experienced in the "skin," in the mucous lining of the stomach or in the muscles of one's members. The "flesh" cries out, suffers, undergoes pain. Thus "sensibility" serves notice, in the just who suffer oppression (as it did with Job), of the reality of sin-the sin of the other subjectivity, the other pole of the relationship, as dominator, robber, torturer. Sin, the praxis of dominators (and their satisfaction, because it is by virtue of their sin that their sensibility now enjoys the good of another), appears as pain (in the sensible subjectivity of the oppressed).

Thus the pain of the flesh, in its sensibility, constitutes the "last judgment" of any human praxis. Jesus' expression, "I was hungry and you ...," capsulizes the sensitization in the oppressed of the *sense* of the praxis of the dominator and the just, respectively.

6.6 ASCETICAL MORALITY , CORPOREAL ETHICS

All moralities of domination (see 3.2) are ascetical. Their end and aim is "liberation from the body. " The body is of no value. That is, the body of the *other* is of no value. A morality of domination may be defined as insensibility to the sensibility or pain of another. All ethics of liberation is corporeal: it is affirmation of the flesh, of sensibility; it is sensitivity to the pain of another (when that pain is the result of the sin of domination).

The ascetical morality of domination begins with the enunciation that the "spiritual"-not Spirit, but the mental, the immaterial, the "good intention," and so on-the soul, is sacred, and "virtuous"; the material, the bodily, the sexual, the sensible, however, is of no value whatever, but "vicious." Accordingly, nothing transpiring on this negative level-the realm of the body-is of any importance: daily manual labor, torture at the hands of a Latin American dictator or CIA trainee, and so on. Nothing is of any worth except in the light of eternal values, or from the perspective of the "spiritual" and cultural virtues of the soul. This is the morality of domination. The ethics of liberation is "fleshly"-if by "flesh" we understand

the *whole* human being in his or her indivisible unity. Thus there is no such thing as a human "material body"; there is only "flesh." Nor is there such a thing as an incorporeal soul; there is only "flesh. " "The Word became flesh"-neither body nor soul separately.

We need only restore the human "composite" to its authentic unity, its concrete oneness, and behold, our neighbor's pain becomes a sign. Now this pain glows like a red light. We see that something has gone wrong. Suddenly this pain is a sign of sin-or at least of the urgent imperative that we go to the aid of this neighbor of ours, as did the Samaritan. Sensitivity (or com-miseration, com-passion-the capacity to suffer with another) to the pain of another becomes the very criterion of praxis. The criterion is a "corporeal" one: "I was hungry...." The commitment it calls for, however, is "spiritual": it is the Spirit that moves me to the service of my neighbor (see 4.5,5.4).

6.7 EATING AND FOOD, RESIDING AND HABITATION, DRESSING AND CLOTHES

Sensibility reaps enjoyment from its satisfaction, from its act of consumption, from its use or possession of the products of the labor needed to produce them (see 1.7). This is the very life cycle intended by God. But between need and satisfaction a whole history takes place-the history of sin as the holocaust of life and the theft of the product of labor.

"I was hungry and you gave me *to eat*." Eating is an act of consumption, of destruction-for example, of bread. It is the moment when "the other" (the product) becomes my flesh. The flesh, revived, restored, revitalized, having incorporated that which it lacked in the moment of negativity, enjoys, is satisfied, because it *really* revives. Having declared its own death, in the form of hunger, now sensibility signals the reproduction of its life in the form of enjoyment, satisfaction.

At the same time, the enjoyment, the joy, of eating, dwelling, being clothed (against the cold, for example) never materializes in the absence of the thing, the object of production, that will negate the correlative need. But that thing, that object, that product is the fruit of toil, and is distributed under the auspices of social institutions. In capitalism the object of consumption is possessed in return for a payment of money (11.8). Persons may be hungry; if they have no

money, they stay hungry. My impecuniousness does nothing for my sensibility (my hunger). I must simply endure the ethical injustice. And prevailing social morality can find no one to blame.

Food, housing, clothing are objects of consumption. But they are signs of goodness, as well, when they are the product of the service, the justice, the praxis, of liberation (James 2: 15; our 17.4). They are signs of the "grace" of the other: they are sensible, material signs for sensibility. That is, they are the bestowal, the gift of the hero and the prophet. They are the "milk and honey" of the land of promise. "I am the bread of life" (John 6:48).

6.8 CULTURAL POVERTY

It is not only in their corporality or fleshliness, their sensibility, their deprivation of material consumer goods, that the poor suffer. They suffer as well in their lack of other goods. Life asserts itself through our natural organs, such as our eyes, our hands, or the body parts that allow us to move in space. Living beings are equipped with natural instruments or organs to perform the vital functions of sight, manipulation, locomotion, and so on.

Human beings, however, have learned to extend these natural organs, by means of artificial, historical, cultural organs. These organs consist in those objects of production *by means of which* natural activities are extended or otherwise enhanced. In the activity of eating, the knife extends the teeth, the fork the hands. The hammer hits harder than does a fist. These products are "cultural instruments"-the extension of our own bodiliness.

Not only have the poor been deprived of their bread, their housing, their vesture-their consumer goods-they have been robbed of their productive goods as well, the tools they need to reproduce their life. They have no land of their own. They have no labor of their own initiative. They have only their suffering *skin* and their marketable labor. Today we might hear not only, "I was hungry ," but "I was out of work and you did not help me, I was landless and you exploited me, I had no tools," and so on.

The lack of culture (18.6) as instrumental totality, of technology as the extension of corporality, is likewise the cause of pain, suffering, and inequality. The totality of culture is "flesh," and the poor suffer its want.

6.9 IT IS THE FLESH THAT RISES

The English translation of the Apostles' Creed says: "I believe in the resurrection of the *body*." This is not a true translation of the Latin Apostles' Creed: "I believe in the resurrection of the flesh." Nor is it the formulation of the Nicene Creed: "We look for the resurrection of the *dead*." Is the meaning of all these enunciations identical?

In original Hebreo-Christian teaching, it is "the flesh" that rises, "the dead" that rise. "Flesh" and "the dead" in that teaching stand for the *whole* human being. Thus the more primitive formulations indicate that it is the *whole* human being who has died, and the *whole* human being who will rise—not just the body. Socrates, the Greek sage who believed in the immortality of the soul, was joyful in the face of approaching death, as Plato tells us in his *Apologia* (of Socrates). If the body is the origin of evil, death will be the origin of happiness, and a return to life among the gods. By contrast, Jesus was seized with terror and anguish in the face of death (Luke 22:40-45). Why? Because death is the death of the *whole* human being.

For Christianity, the "flesh" is a positive thing. Its pain is something that must be defeated, its hunger something that must be quenched. Hence the reign of God preached in Christianity will be a resurrection of the flesh. For those who disparage materiality or fleshly sensibility, this is simply absurd. Thus the Greeks ridiculed Paul's talk of the "resurrection of the dead" (Acts 17:32). To what end could we possibly need a body in the company and happiness of the gods? What good is the body after death if the soul is immortal? (Of course, the Greeks, who were slaveholders, required their slaves to toil in their bodies. But these bodies were of no actual worth—for the Greeks.)

Maintenance of the doctrine of the "resurrection *of the flesh*" is essential, then. And it is essential not only as eschatological doctrine (regarding a life after death), but as historical ethical doctrine as well. In attributing to the flesh its whole dignity, this doctrine calls for the stilling of its "hunger" as the criterion of goodness and holiness.

6.10 SACRAMENTALITY

Classically, a sacrament is an "outward sign of grace." On its materiality rests its capacity to "signify." But a certain aversion to

bodiliness has forgotten the sacramental corporality of ethics.

The water of baptism, the chrism of any consecration-and most of all the eucharistic bread-speak to us once more of sensibility (see 1.6, 4.9), of sacramentality. The real is not defined as the object of thought. The real is anything constituting the object of sensibility, as Kant and Feuerbach have shown us. When I feel, touch, anything, I experience the reality of that thing (Luke 24:38-43).

If Christianity were an intimistic, individual, "spiritualistic" (in the sense of incorporeal) religion, a religion of the "good intention" alone, without objective parameters, without community-then why sacrament? A morality of domination will either deny sacrament, through a negation of bodiliness, or fetishize it (as if the sacraments worked magically and of themselves, regardless of the adequacy of one's subjective, individual disposition).

The sacramentality of the Christian life establishes the essential importance of sensibility, of the reality of the "bread," or the *fruit of toil*, when it comes to the *life* of the laborer. A prerequisite of the offering of bread to God is the objective existence of a community that has satisfied the needs of its members. Sacramentality gathers in its embrace the totality of human life-its politics, its economics, its erotics, its pedagogy, and so forth-as a sign recognizable by sensibility, a sign arising out of the satisfaction, through justice, of corporeal sensibility. Sacramentality and sensibility are partners.

CONCLUSIONS

On the present subject I have found it necessary to retrace my steps, and bring together what I had already said on a key topic frequently forgotten by satisfied dominators. My guideline has been, "I was hungry and you gave me to eat." Many heretics (such as the Gnostics, the Manicheans, the Albigensians, certain charismatics, and others) forgot the dignity of the "flesh"-as has a whole modern capitalist culture, beginning with Descartes. Sensibility, as pain or pleasure, the "skin" as the locus of cold or torture, remind us that injustice, sin, the oppression of the poor, crucify those poor in their sensibility. The morality of dominators denies the value of the body precisely in order that it may continue to dominate it and exploit it without a feeling of guilt. The ethics of liberation appreciates the

"flesh," asserting its faith in its resurrection and mobilizing a praxis calculated to feed the hunger of the hungry and deliver the instruments of work to the poor. It understands that sensibility is the road to Christian sacramentality.

Chapter 7

MORAL LEGALITY AND ETHICAL ILLEGALITY

7.1 STATE OF THE QUESTION.

Let us now return to a topic already treated-the moral and the ethical (see 3.6, 3.7, 5.3, 5.7). This deserves to be reviewed at this point.

Every day we read of alleged thieves or murderers on trial. We also become aware that terrorist groups are sentenced as political prisoners; priests and nuns or lay persons who have committed themselves to the cause of the poor are jailed, sentenced, even judicially murdered. How are we to discern the legality, the lawfulness of these judicial acts?

We read in holy scripture:

What occasion is there then for boasting? It is ruled out. By what law, the law of works? Not at all! By the law of faith. For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from observance of the law [Rom 3:27-8].

When we were in the flesh, the sinful passions roused by the law worked in our members and we bore fruit for death. Now we have been released from the law-for we have died to what bound us-and we serve in the new spirit, not the antiquated letter [Rom. 7:5-6].

If we apply our categories appropriately, and correctly distinguish the scope and setting of the various letters of the New Testament, then these passages from Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans, both so

rightly appreciated by Luther, become consistent with the texts of the Letter of James that are so heavily emphasized by Catholics. "What good is it to anyone to say he has faith if he has not works?" (James 2:14).

7.2 SOME NECESSARY DISTINCTIONS

I shall continue my practice of making some distinctions at the beginning of a chapter. Here it will only be a matter of reviewing some distinctions I have already indicated.

"Illegal" or "unlawful" means opposed to law. An action is unlawful when it opposes a law promulgated for the purpose of the concrete application of prevailing "morality," moral norms, or social institutions (see 3.2). "Legal" or "lawful," on the other hand, denotes anything found to be in compliance with prevailing law, which has at its disposal the coercive power of such "legal" institutions as the army and the police.

The hero (see 7.6, 9.3) refuses to comply with prevailing laws. Washington opposed English laws; San Martín, Bolívar, and Hidalgo opposed Spanish laws; Comandante Borge opposed the laws of the Somoza dynasty; Jesus opposed the Herodian, Roman, and temple laws or prescriptions. Heroes, then, will be "outlaws." Their "outlawry" is a sign of their goodness, their holiness, in refusing to comply with oppressive, unjust, anti-human laws. In serving the poor, Christians frequently oppose the dominant legality. The important thing is not the law (for example, laws pertaining to the Sabbath) but human beings (the poor as persons).

However, lest we forget: what is unlawful for the prevailing legality of the dominant order is *lawful* in terms of the law of the poor, the law of a people en route to liberation. Hidalgo was proclaimed a heretic by a faculty of theology in 1811, and was excommunicated by the bishops of Mexico. His praxis, however, was *lawful*, good, proper, in terms of the *future legality* of a new homeland, the "promised land" (Mexico no longer as a Spanish colony but as an independent country).

7.3 THE LAW OF MORALITY

Philosophers and theologians have distinguished many kinds of laws. They speak of the natural law, positive law, the law of nations

(*jus gentium*) or international law, divine law, and so on. They have not, however, made these distinctions in terms of the theology of the New Testament and in light of current Latin American needs, as I attempt to do in these pages.

Positive law is a norm of praxis promulgated by those who wield political power. Of course, if they exercise power, they will be the dominant, dominating classes or strata. All positive law, then, as juridical ordination, is potentially ambivalent. It can be unjust, as Thomas Aquinas himself expressly notes. Prevailing law cannot, therefore, constitute the absolute criterion of goodness, holiness, or justice.

Hence, our theologians and philosophers have held, "natural law," or what is demanded by nature-what is dictated by God as creator-will furnish a more adequate foundation for judging the rightness or wrongness of an action. But the problem remains how to determine this "natural" law concretely and positively. Frequently the prevailing order has simply been projected as "nature." Thus in bourgeois society private property has come to be regarded as a right guaranteed by "natural law," despite the contrary opinion of the church Fathers from the fourth century onward or that of Thomas Aquinas in the age of feudalism.

Jesus never appealed to a "natural law." The Greeks or Romans, the Indo-Europeans, posited law as the foundation of all things, by reason of their persuasion that the legality of the gods, of the natural cosmos, and of human polity were identical. This legal fetishism (which in reality, as we have seen, simply projected the prevailing order of a slave society as *natural*, as for example in Aristotle) was simply a tool for hegemonic domination.

7.4 PAUL AGAINST MORAL LEGALITY

For Paul, the order of law (morality) is opposed to the order of faith (ethics). Let us see how this is to be explained. We need only apply categories we have already examined.

Paul counterposes the "regime of law" to the "regime of grace" (Rom. 6:15), the order of death to the order of life, of the new spirit, of faith. The order of law (morality) has norms, a foundation, and a legality. Compliance with the law does not "save," however, for the law represents an old order, that of the first covenant. It represents

the "old human being," or "Adam." No matter the extent of compliance with all its (moral) precepts, that order has no capacity to bestow the life of the Spirit.

On the other hand, "the promise depends on faith" (Rom. 4:16). Without faith there is no promise. That is, the promise will remain ineffective. What is faith? Faith is "the anticipation of what is hoped, proof of realities unseen" (Heb. 11:1). In other words, faith is an ethical tension toward the future order, toward the reign of God (both in the here and now, and beyond time). The reign to which faith aspires is the one actualized after the resurrection (both here and now, and after biological death). Hence "in dying to what had bound us, we remain *free* from the law" (Rom. 7:6). We are free of the law, liberated from the "moral" order. We have left Egypt, Babylon, the reign of "this world" behind.

For Paul, the law, sin, and death pertain to the "moral" order (see 3.6, 3.7), that of the "flesh." Faith, grace, and life constitute the ethical order, the order *beyond*, the order beyond Babylon (3.5). It is faith, not *moral* works, that saves.

7.5 ETHICAL PRAXIS AND FAITH

Paul rejects Pharisaical Judaism (as does Luther, who rightly criticizes Latin Christendom for failing to do so). Paul insists that works performed under the law (of the prevailing, dominating *moral* system) do not save. James, for his part, is dealing with another reality. (Thus he does not contradict Paul or Luther.) Faith does not save, either, nor hope, nor the currency of the promise, unless these be accompanied by an *ethical* praxis (no longer a *moral* praxis, such as has prevailed in the past, under a regime of domination) of effective service to the poor in the construction of the new order (see 4.5).

In the *moral* system of domination it was hope, it was faith in the reign, the future promised order, that saved. Now, however, *in the new order*, "what good is it to someone to say he has faith if he does not have works? ...Suppose a brother or sister has nothing to put on and is going without daily sustenance, and one of you tells him or her: God be with you, keep warm, good luck!-but without giving him or her the necessary for the body?" (James 2:14, 16). After all, "the demons, too, believe." But they cannot build the reign of God.

In the order of law, *moral* works corroborate the law. After all, they are founded on it, just as are sin and death. Only faith saved *there*. Today, by contrast, when one has died to the death of sin, when it is the *ethical* demands of service to the poor and the building of the reign that are in force, hope or faith in the reign no longer save. What saves now is the objective, "practical" (praxis) construction of that reign of God.

That is, what saves now is service to the poor. The *ethical* praxis of liberation begins with faith and hope, and actualizes them. The *moral* praxis of the law, however lawful that praxis, and however it might fulfill that (moral) law, is a praxis that stands in relation with sin and death. *Ethical* practice, by contrast, is founded on faith, and actualizes that faith.

7.6 LAWFULNESS OF THE PROPHET AND HERO

The prophets and heroes so frequently sentenced or executed are condemned or executed under the law. They are "outlaws."

The moral order is founded on "good conscience." Hence the champions and beneficiaries of that order declare: "Had we lived in the time of our fathers, we should not have been their accomplices in the murder of the prophets" (Matt. 23:30). They may as well have said, had they lived in the time of Hidalgo or Morelos, Farabundo Martí or Lumumba, they would not have murdered them. But they do as much today in Central America: they murder the Sandinistas and Farabundistas:

Behold for this I shall send you prophets, sages, and lawyers: some you will kill and crucify, others you will scourge in your synagogues and pursue them from town to town. And so upon you will fall all the blood shed on earth, from the blood of the just Abel to the blood of Zachary [Matt. 23:34-5].

Or the blood of Bishop Enrique Angelelli in Argentina or Archbishop Oscar Romero in El Salvador.

The prophet and the hero, still together and confused with one another (as we shall see in 9.3), are murdered or persecuted (see 3.10, 4.10) because they proclaim the end of "this world," of sin, of the prevailing "morality." But in opposing, not a *part* of the law (as the

thief, whose theft actually corroborates the validity of the system), but the *totality* and very foundation of the law, they stand outside the structure, lawless, illegal, an *outlaw*. "He has blasphemed. ...What say you? ...to the death!" (Matt. 26:65-6).

The one who has been called, summoned, converted to inaugurate the new order, the new Jerusalem beyond the law, must know how to endure the imputation of outlawry, the charge of "immorality" and subversion: "We have established that this one goes about subverting our nation" (Luke 23:2).

7.7 THE ABSOLUTE PRINCIPLE OF ETHICS

The new legality is based on a new law, which in turn rests entirely on an absolute (not relative), yet concrete (not abstract) principle. We have already broached this question, in 5.9, above. But I should like to examine it more in depth. The criterion or principle of ethical lawfulness, and moral unlawfulness, is the one I have enunciated above: "Liberate the poor."

An *absolute* principle is contradistinguished from a relative one. A relative principle is one that may be valid today but not tomorrow. An absolute principle governs praxis always and everywhere. Where there is sin (and the absolute non-existence of sin would entail its necessary non-existence, and thus an actually realized, post-historical reign of heaven), there must always be dominated, or poor. The existence of poor who in their death suffer the pain of sin (see 2.7, 2.8) indicates the necessity of the principle, "Liberate *the poor*."

"Liberate *the poor*" is an injunction addressed to the poor as well-inasmuch as there are other poor, their neighbors, who constitute the locus of the performance of their own service (the fruit of evangelization-see 5.8). The principle "Liberate the poor" implies: (1) a totality, a prevailing *moral* system; (2) an *oppressor* (sinner), the agent of the act of domination; (3) someone just (at least where the relationship of oppressor-oppressed is concerned) who is being treated unjustly.

At the same time, "Liberate *the poor*" presupposes: (4) the importance of keeping account of the mechanisms of sin; (5) the ethical duty of dismantling these mechanisms; (6) the necessity of constructing an escape route from the system; (7) the obligation to

build the new system of justice. We are dealing, then, with a dangerous *responsibility*.

7.8 PRINCIPLES DERIVED FROM THE ETHICO-COMMUNAL PRINCIPLE

The absolute ethical principle is respect for the dignity or holiness of the human person, in every place and time. In the concrete, the person of the "rich" cannot be respected "*as rich*"; it is the person of the poor, "*as poor*" or dominated, that calls for respect and a praxis of justice.

In a capitalist society (where workers have no other way to reproduce their life except through the mechanism of wages), or indeed in existing socialist regimes (where it is impossible to eliminate a labor market, hence impossible to eliminate wages as a mechanism), the *right to employment* is directly linked to the absolute right of the poor to life, to existence, to their liberation.

When workers actually earn a wage (the value of their capacity expressed in terms of money-see 11.7, 11.8), then these poor have a right to life, through the possession and consumption of the *necessary basic goods*; food, clothing, housing, health, and the like (Matt. 25:42-3), for themselves, their families, and their children. A society that cannot supply workers with these necessary goods by way of money earned as wages is an unjust, dominating society. It has caught the worker in a structure of sin.

But over and above the necessary basic goods, we find other goods to be necessary as well, so that they too constitute the object of the inalienable rights of the poor (as worthy human persons). I refer to *cultural goods*: science, art, information-minimal cultural objects. And all these goods are "human goods"-that is, the objects of a *free will* (see 17). Realistic, rational, "feasible" planning is opposed neither to freedom nor to democracy. Ethics does not trample on any human rights that may happen to have been included in a moral structure. Rather it establishes them (Matt. 5:17-20).

7.9 ETHICO-COMMUNAL LAW

The illegality of prophets and heroes is not absolute and everlasting. "They act in the manner of those who go to be judged by a law of free men" (James 2:12). How can a free person be subject to law?

For those who have abandoned the hypocritical order of the dominator's social morality, there is the new "law of the Reign" (James 2:8). This law is founded on love: "One who says: I love God, while he hates his brother, is a liar, for one who loves not his brother whom he sees cannot love God whom he does not see" (1 John 4:20). Love of neighbor, of the other as other (see 1.4), is the new law, the *ethical* and *communal* law par excellence. But the demands or concrete content of the *new* law are not written once and for all. The new law can always adopt new content, in accordance with the occasion.

The "association of free persons," free from the past system of oppression-free from subjection to the Prince of this world and his prevailing social legality -is now the subject of the ethical and *communal* legality being constructed in the course of the journey through the wilderness (from Egypt to the promised land, from Babylon to Jerusalem, from the moment of Jesus' resurrection to the parousia). The exigencies or norms of the new legality are the Beatitudes, and their observance constitutes, in the eyes of the world, the "paradox of ethicity." Under the regime of the new ethical, communal legality, Jesus-and the prophets and heroes-can face torture (Mark 15:16-20)and even death(Luke 23:46)in peace(1 Pet. 4:12-19).

In the times in which we live, the prophets, the martyrs, and the heroes must be able to recognize the difference between the prevailing moral legality of the dominator, and communal ethical legality or the legality of liberation. They must be able to endure the social illegality conferred upon them by a system of sin, and proclaim before the principalities and powers of "this world" the madness of the communal legality of the reign of God, the land of promise, the "new land where justice shall dwell" (2 Pet. 3:13).

7.10 WHEN JERUSALEM CAN BECOME BABYLON

And so we arrive in the promised land, the reign of community ethics. But now *ethical principles* and law have themselves become historical, concrete legality, and so are liable to relapse into the condition of a mere prevailing social *morality* (see 5.10).

For Immanuel Kant, author of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, the absolute criterion of practical goodness cannot include any

empirical, concrete content whatever. "Good" denotes the quality of the act that can be elevated to universality-that may ethically be performed by all persons finding themselves in the same circumstances. But the universality of this action depends on the judgment of the very agent who is to perform the praxis. Thus the way is open for a surreptitious elevation of the subject's (European or capitalistic) particularity to the status of universality (validity for every culture and system). With all the "good will" in the world, this subject can perform an objectively perverse action.

But in every human situation there are the poor, the oppressed, who constitute the correlative of sin and the domination of sin. *These here-and-now poor* are *concrete* persons, objectively determinable in real worlds, that of Aztecs, Incas, Chinese, Bantus, capitalists, socialists. There can be no innocent "mistaken identity." Everyone knows, in each *concrete* situation, who are poor and oppressed, who have fewer opportunities, goods, values, rights, and so on. Hence the principle; "Liberate the poor" is absolute (not relative), and nevertheless *concrete* (not universal-with a "universality" that in reality is only particularity with false claims to universality).

But the here-and-now poor can come to be the *there-and-then-rich*, the dominators, the sinful. If I continue to serve them after they have become dominators, let me not attempt to justify myself by saying, "I am still serving the *same persons!*" (which of course I may do in a morality of universality). Those same persons are no longer poor. The principle, "Liberate the poor," is *concrete* and historical. At every moment, then, one must go back and rediscover, *here and now*, the "new" poor.

CONCLUSIONS

Goodness and holiness are not a matter of legality. Jesus destroyed the *old* law, completely fulfilling it in the *new* law of a love that is not just any love, but a love called of-justice, *agape*-love for the other, the neighbor, the poor, *as* other. Many lawful acts are evil, because the laws they comply with are unjust. This is why Paul, as a good ex-Pharisee, opposed the elevation of the old law to the status of absolute principle of Christianity. Faith, hope, and love are the new law. Hence the mere works of the old law do not save. It is faith in the reign of God(as Luther taught)that saves. But *mere* hope, a mere

faith-affirmation of the reign, is not enough. *Ethical* praxis (as James teaches) is necessary. The prophets and heroes were outlaws for the prevailing morality in their observance of the absolute, concrete principle, "Liberate the poor."