

THE THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION: EPISTEMOLOGICAL STATUS

*I believe in God the Father. ...
Son. ...and Holy Spirit. ...
Apostles' Creed*

I want to talk now about the "conditions of possibility" for a Latin American theology of liberation. The following will be epistemological reflections on this kind of theology. I wish to indicate that, in order to think theologically in Latin America, certain *conditions* must be fulfilled. Without them, no theology is possible here. This chapter will be a consideration of the method and the present status of the theology that responds to Latin American reality.

IMITATIVE AND EUROPEAN THEOLOGY

To encourage all of us and especially those who are not studious, we should know that Latin American theology is primitive. It is new, so new that in a few months one can study everything that has been written about it. To be up to date on European theology one has to study for years and years. But we are just beginning to take the first

steps, real and not imitative and therefore not alienated or obfuscatory.

I decided to use the creed as a framework for this exposition. "I believe in God" is a matter of faith; there follows the matter of reflecting on that faith. In Latin America we are more and more inclined to think that theology has absolutized an aspect of the present world situation. It thus becomes, unconsciously and even unwillingly, an ideology, in the sense that it covers up rather than uncovers reality. If I take one aspect and affirm that this is all there is, I exclude everything that is not embraced by my reflection. I cover up what I have not uncovered. Perhaps all the theology we have studied has been a response to a certain "world" that is not the whole world of our time, that has not responded in its reflection to the marginal, the peripheral, the oppressed. Thus European theology and United States theology is a reflection of it—the theology of the "center," has not discovered the sin of domination, rampant since the fifteenth century. Because of this failure, it has overlooked the kind of totalization that has taken place over the past five centuries.

Thus when their theologians talk about Christian *salvation* from within a system they believe to be the only one, they talk unrealistically. The system is calling for another kind of salvation. If I define sin badly, I will define the process of liberation badly. If I discover the real sin, then my thinking about liberation will be total and universal. So the question ought to be stated thus: European theology has held that "being Christian" is being a European Christian. Any other way of being Christian is beyond them. What is more, there is deception here, unconscious perhaps but dangerous because, until now, the theologians of the periphery, alienated more or less by the center, have repeated the theology of

the center with two bad results: that of being imitative and that of pretending to have uncovered reality. To pretend to uncover reality when it is being covered up is a sin not only of alienation but of irresponsibility, the sin of "false prophets."

MODERN EUROPEANS: THE "I" AS FOUNDATION

I will start with modern day in order not to go too far back. The starting point of modern Europeans is the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. After having battled unsuccessfully against the Arab world, the modern Europeans find their way across the Atlantic and arrive in America. They are the Renaissance persons. They come to the agonizing discovery that they are not the only people. Russia and the United States have evidenced much greater power than the Europeans, but in the long run they are the Europeans' ultimate imitative heirs. We are thus at the end of an epoch. We must make a diagnosis of the Europeans' agony and find out if we are different from them and there is thus hope for us or if we will die with them.

Modern people became totalized in a way different from their predecessors. Medieval people, although totalized in their Christendom (excepting the great saints like Francis of Assisi and the great theologians like Thomas Aquinas), always recognized the other and that other was God. The critics of the Middle Ages prophesied from a divine transcendence. Thus Francis called himself "little brother" (which today would be like calling yourself "proletarian brother") because the lords of that epoch were the great ones and he, by contrast, became small. Everyone, nevertheless, recognized the other as God, and in the center of the world was the person, who was before God.

Modern European people, on the other hand, are centered upon themselves and, in a way, have made themselves god, denying divine transcendence. The Renaissance gives birth to the secularized subject, and that subject is divinized with Spinoza, the great Jewish philosopher of the Low Countries, or with Hegel, for whom humankind is nothing less than the deification of the *cogito*.

The European "I" is at the beginning of a process. In reality, the first experience of the "I" is an "I conquer," which went unnoticed by European ontological thought because these thinkers were mostly anti-Hispanic Central Europeans; they were not aware that before there could be a European "I" there first had to be, as a foundation for its potency, the "I conquer" of Cortes or of Pizarro. Thus the European "I" begins with the "I have sovereignty over all the lands" of the Hispanic king, ceded in capitulation to the "I conquer." America was the first conquest.

Later the power of conquest is phrased ontologically as "I think"; in other words "I" in turn begin to *reflect* on the fact of my conquest. With Descartes the "I think" becomes the foundation. He can even doubt his senses, the existence of his body. His "I" is reduced to his soul; it is found only in his soul. The "I" is the starting point for the unfolding of all else. If the "I think" is the foundation, where does that leave the other?

The Indian, for example, the African, the Asian is reduced to an idea, but even then not as something exterior but as an idea internal to the system "I" set up. People disappear as otherness and as history other than my own to become just an idea with the limits of the "I think." Finally, this "I" becomes an "I as will to power" in Nietzsche. It can be put this way: Things exist when I believe them to exist; the creator in this case is nothing

more than an artist who brings forth the new from within. For Nietzsche this "I" is the complete man. There is in this a pantheistic vision of "the eternal return of the self." This "I," because it comes first, because it has been deified, and because it creates all the rest as something at its beck and call, is *unconditioned*. It should be noted that, since it comes first, there is nothing that comes before it, no previous condition. Furthermore, since it comes first, it is *indeterminate*, because all determination is within the "I." This is Fichte's position. This "I" is *undefined* inasmuch as it is infinite because all other realities are within that totalized world. This "I" is *absolute* and, therefore *divine*. This is what Hegel says about the primordial notion of "being-in-itself" and of "absolute as result." This "I" then is actually an "I think what is thought." There is no one else; "I am all there is." What there is, is only something that I think. Therefore, I am a "theoretical I" and things exist only inasmuch as I can think them to exist, as theory. I am "contemplating I" and things exist only inasmuch as I can contemplate them. Beyond contemplation, beyond vision or theory, is the not-being, nothing, that about which we can say nothing.

AWARENESS, FAITH, AND ABSTRACT THEORETICAL THEOLOGY

"Awareness" is a way of being in the day-to-day world. Furthermore-and this is important-I can think about the awareness I have of things. Thus, I turn in upon myself in a reflex movement and make a judgment about my day-to-day conduct. This is self-awareness. I turn in upon myself so that my "conscience" will know what I am doing and be able to lead me, correct me, help me to plan, perfect me. This is precisely what Freud thought. For him sickness was a hiding away from awareness of the origin of the trauma. By identifying the originating

trauma one would get well. It's this old business of "health through knowledge," a thesis defended by the Greeks. There is also in this a little of Ignatius, who to this extent was one with Freud and all modern thinkers in his insistence on the "examination of conscience." Salvation through *theory*-this is why we taught catechism as Christian "doctrine." The child *learned* the catechism theoretically and, presto! had faith and could repeat the "doctrine" by rote. It is a reduction of otherness to something known; knowing becomes important, as well as seeing, theorizing, contemplating. It is a reduction of exteriority to pure interiority of a world that is mine and, therefore, the negation of every other world as barbarian in need of being civilized. Thus Europeans contemplate their world and from that world see how they can conquer all other worlds.

Theology has used this same procedure surreptitiously because it also started with the "I think" but, in this case, "I think what is theological." And "the theological" consisted of doctrines, theoretical *articles* of faith that were thought of in terms of sentences with subject and predicate: "I believe in God." "I" is the subject, "believe" is the verb, and "God" its objective complement. It was a theoretical "article" of faith that I had to learn by rote. I learn, I comprehend in my world what this article of faith is saying; it is a "doctrine" that I know. All that is a serious watering down of faith, because when I say, "I believe in God," I am not affirming some thesis that I should memorize but something quite different, namely, that I, a person, recognizing that I am not all there is, open myself to God and listen to God's Word. But I am a concrete person and God is the Mystery; I cannot know God but only "believe in God." The creed cannot be known; rather, it is to be proclaimed, announced. In the creed I express the impossibility of my know-

ing-that is why I say "I believe," not something but "*in* Someone" who is Mystery. The relationship is interpersonal; it is not a perception of a known object as in the case of an idea, but rather, of a person "before" a person, in a face-to-face. But theology had become a gnosis, a *Wissen*, a knowing. To do theology, one had to go into the "state of the question" of knowing. So to answer the question, What is the church? one had to consult the biblical dictionaries, all the formulations of the encyclopedias, then on to the treatises of the theologians and then arrive at establishing, laboriously and bookishly, the theological *status quaestionis*. All this was a painstaking theoretical study. The conclusions arrived at were the starting point for adding something new, complicating an aspect, and going on to a subtle exposition of the new discovery. The daily reality of an oppressed people, even the European people, was at another level, totally distinct from the *status quaestionis*.

The *status quaestionis* has nothing to do with day-to-day living. *Iffaith* is *giving thought* to a doctrine, theology, then, is *giving thought* to "what is thought." This kind of theoretical theology, which has itself as the point of departure when it propounds the *status quaestionis*, becomes divided. First there is the highest form of theology -dogmatic theology-which is called systematic *theory*; next, we have moral theology, which is the application of dogma to praxis; next is exegesis, which attempts to find biblical backing for the first principles of theoretical argumentation; further on comes pastoral theology, which is a study of how to convert people and bring them into the kingdom; then homiletics, which is the study of how to use rhetorical techniques to stir people; then there is historical theology, which anecdotally describes the history of the church.

Theology is thus broken up into pieces that are all

founded on theoretical principles whose *status quaestionis* is derived from theology itself.

The result of this process has been that the other, the poor, those who are the epiphany of God, have been reduced to a *cogitatum* ("that which is thought"). About the other, much can now be said and thought. But if "I think" about someone and know him, I cannot ask him, Who are you? I don't ask, Who are you? if I know who someone is, nor do I ask, How are you? when I know how the person is. If I make that person an object, *cogitatum*, if I know the other, I cannot believe in that other or have the experience of face-to-face. Only if the other is *beyond* my understanding and knowing can I humbly bow before that other as before something sacred and ask, Who are you? And how are you? Summon me out of my finitude to serve and, therefore, to grow!

The other was destroyed by Europe because, as I have already pointed out, the other was interiorized in a world system. Trent, echoing Paul, said that faith comes from hearing (*ex auditum*) but, in fact, the men of Trent listened only to the Europeans. Did they know nothing about the Indians, about the blacks sold as slaves, about the Asians? Just like succeeding councils, Trent was interested only in intra-European and intra-Latin questions; the Byzantine problem was not even on the agenda and at the height of the sixteenth century the Lutherans were being dismissed. We see then just how far they went in negating the other and how, imperceptibly, the church took on the totalization of the center and the subjugation of the poor. Bartolome de las Casas cried out: "They are killing the Indians and reducing them to the most frightening kind of subjugation and slavery." But Europe didn't really believe this; it was not interested (apart from seeing the situation as an excuse for criticizing Spain). The intellectuals would have said that

Bartolome was paranoid. He was a voice crying in the desert, but there were no ears to hear him. *Ex auditum* was solemnly stated but in fact was ignored.

Thus the sin of subjugation went undiscovered and therefore the comprehensive sin of this whole historical epoch went undiscovered. Since the concrete meaning of salvation and redemption also went undiscovered, the horizon of Christian living becomes privatized, or, at best, was lived out within the national horizon. Thus the Spaniards under the Catholic kings saw the internal sins of the Iberian peninsula; the French under the most Christian of kings saw their side of it; the Germans and their princes likewise. Redemption is considered within the boundaries of the nation, or within Europe, but, at any rate, within privatized boundaries. The European theologians themselves have been trying to review this situation, and out of their efforts should come important new theological considerations.

SOLIPSISM IN EXISTENTIAL THEOLOGY

First Rahner, then Schillebeeckx and the whole trend of what can be called existential theology begin with the following suppositions. They have studied Heidegger and, like Heidegger, have risen up against modern thought. For them "to think" does not come first but, rather, the "to be-in-a-world," to be *in* that in which some day I will begin "to think" about. To think is not the foundation; "to be-in-a-world" is. I am first of all and every day in Buenos Aires, in Argentina, in Latin America; some day, due to some crisis situation, I will start thinking. But the problem of thinking is secondary to *understanding* the day-to-day world. This theology, that of Rahner and Schillebeeckx, proposes the following: First, being is in the existential world; then comes reflec-

tion about the existential, or day-to-day existence, and this is thinking. This kind of thinking is called not existential but "existentiary." Consult any of their books and you will read that faith is an existential position and theology an existentiary position because theology is a reflection on day-to-dayness. This is very important because traditional modern theology, including neo-Scholasticism, frequently started with one's own experience of consciousness as thinking in order to think theologically about something; their starting point was theology. Whereas Rahner and the others now recognize that the starting point has to be day-to-dayness in order to come up with a way of thinking about day-to-dayness. There is great interest in this review of existential theology.

Where should the advancement of Latin American theology be based? In the idea that "to be-in-the-world" is the same for all Christians. The "world," and therefore "to be-in-the-world," is the same experience for all Christians.

In my book *History and the Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1976), I explained the significance of "to be-in-the-world" that was pre-Christian, and how faith is *anew* light in which the world is seen as a new world. It is a new existence because I see everything differently, I discover a new meaning to things.

It is affirmed that the world is *one*. But this is a mistake because what is really being affirmed is that that one world is the European world. Since the Latin American world is *beyond* the European world, as something "barbarian," it is not recognized in its exteriority. So we again have the indeterminate "I think." Now the "to think" is determined by a world, but the European world is the indeterminate, the foundation. Latin American theology

says No! That world is also conditioned and conditions others; it is not the only world. "To-be-Christian" in the center is not the same as "to-be-Christian" on the periphery. It is not the same to think from the center as to think out of oppression or to think about the periphery from the periphery itself.

The worst comes, though, when the periphery thinks European thought and discovers European reality in the belief that it has found its own reality. This is the supreme theological alienation that afflicts so many in Latin America. There is a double fallacy here: in the first place, that of believing its thinking to be the only thinking; second, in believing that the European reality is identical with ours and that therefore our reality doesn't really exist. So, of course, there would not, and could not be, a Latin American theology; there would only be one theology-the European, which, furthermore, is universal because the "to be-Christian" can only mean "to be-European." At the present time in Latin America, the greatest danger of rootlessness is to be found in repeating uncritically the progressivist theology of Europe.

LACK OF HISTORICO-POLITICAL MEDIATION IN THE "THEOLOGY OF HOPE"

Let us go one step further and consider the thought of Moltmann in his *Theology of Hope*. Starting with the thinking of Ernst Bloch about hope, he demonstrates that the world is totalized as a world of "remembrance of the same." For him the essence of Christianity is hope, hope for the kingdom. No system can come forward as the ultimate except the kingdom. Thus there are two kingdoms-the prevailing present kingdom and the eschatological kingdom. He shows that those who allow themselves to be locked off in the latter kingdom commit

an idolatrous act; and only by hoping for the future kingdom can we challenge the system and open ourselves to the Parousia, to the utopian. What kind of critique can be brought against this theology? Very simply, he conjures away a third terminus by using only two poles, thus reaffirming the status quo. (By 1974 Moltmann had begun to modify this thesis, however.) See how a logic of hope that is not sufficiently historical functions. Simply by saying that we must hope for the kingdom allows me to open myself to God. But if I speak of hope as eschatological hope, how, in fact, can I signify this through my commitments? The only way would be to work away in hope. But in the presence of the historical visible kingdom, how do I give witness to the eschatological? In the presence of the economic, the political, the cultural, how do I symbolize or manifest the eschatological kingdom? Moltmann ends in saying very little, a kind of justification of professional ethics through which all do their duty in hope without the need to question radically the totality of the system. Between the prevailing system and the kingdom, however, there is a third aspect that I have been talking about all along; this is the historical plan for liberation which is neither the prevailing kingdom of the moment nor the eschatological kingdom.

It is not sufficient only to speak of hope beyond the status quo. Even though we say we are hoping for the kingdom, we are reaffirming and sacralizing the status quo by not risking all historically in a project for the future, by not becoming empirically through our praxis a dysfunctional factor within the system. We go to Mass for the eucharistic celebration and hope even more fervently for the kingdom; we pray and come away from the community enthused. We work all week, perhaps harder than the rest, but we do not question the system as such.

Whoever affirms the system in a private way (even though it be social) with the hope of the kingdom but in fact calls for no historical, empirical upsetting of the system, with the purpose of thrusting it anew toward a historical project for liberation, reaffirms the system. The theologians are in the center, without realizing it, living in the best of all possible worlds. Afterward comes the kingdom; there is no *new* plan for liberation on the horizon. About all the theologians can do for their contemporaries is free them from the bonds of the consumer society. Thus Moltmann as well as Marcuse and the others who want to challenge people from within the superconsumer society come up with the monks' remedy of retiring from the world, and thus we have the emergence of the hippie. The hippie is one who essentially says No to the system and retires from it. It is the *play* of Cox's theology, which comes from Nietzsche. But to retire from the system is an epiphenomenon of the system and does not as such overcome it; it does not call it into question. Hippies may lead a more human life, but they do not affect the totality of sin as such. Their lifestyle represents an extrinsic and perhaps symbolic motivation for survival.

In contrast, the concrete process of liberation of the underdeveloped nations challenges the totality of the system, not just as external criticism but also as an internal tearing apart of the totality. Hence the fact of self-redefinition with respect to the system in the light of faith and hope in God is not the same as believing and hoping in God while totally dedicating oneself to a concrete system of historical liberation. Moltmann, then, although he poses the question of working out a plan for the future, does not take up the phenomenon of the historical project for *liberation* that calls for a complete

economic, political, and cultural commitment. Because he fails in this, he has disemboweled hope and even turned it into opium.

LACK OF INTERNATIONAL VISION IN POLITICAL THEOLOGY

In the same way we could find fault with the critique that Johann Metz puts forward in his political theology. Metz says, and rightly so, that traditional theology has been privatized thinking, proper to the individual who fulfilled a function in the church and in society without any critical sense. Theology, then, was an accomplice of the society. Beginning with such reflections as those of Henri De Lubac in *Catholicism*, we can show that there is not a single Christian dogma that is private; all are social. In Christianity the individual is not considered an autonomous totality but as exteriority or as part of a community. But Metz goes further than De Lubac. He demonstrates that dogma is not only social but that the function of Christian faith and theology is a critico-liberating function for the world it inhabits. This is the theology we are concerned with; it is a reflection on day-to-dayness that is critical and de-privatizing and points out the communitarian demands upon people at all levels.

The drawback is that the critique is done from the horizon of a nation and, to be even more concrete, of a *European* nation. He talks about a *whole* in which theology should fulfill its critical function. But what is that whole? That of one nation. Could we not ask him: Why do you not propound this critique on an international level, where there are peoples on the periphery and nations in the center? In this way his prophetic critique could become a critique on the domination of the center countries, of imperialism, of exploitation of poor peoples.

Where is there a critique of imperialism in the sense of worldwide exploitation of person by person? But here Metz provides no critique because he is very much a part of the German national reality and never achieves a problematization of the international horizon within which we live, but only of "his" national world. He finds support in the world of the center for his critique. But it is of the same if you are on the periphery.

Finding ourselves on the periphery, the whole that we look at is not the center but really the totality of the present world system. Being poor, we are closer to *reality* than those who are in the center, in the money. Suddenly, poverty becomes a great blessing even for theology as well as for Christian living, because we can glimpse the next system aborning and we can know how to commit ourselves to its coming. Those who have not become aware of domination are unable to call into question the international whole, which is the whole of the world. European political theology has called into question only the national *whole*. But in doing so, it approves that which makes that national whole what it is; this is to say that it approves the domination wreaked on other peoples and fudges its criticism. Its criticism, being national, is not sufficiently liberating; it becomes ideological again, because it criticizes "part" of the system and not the totality of the German national system, for example, as a country of the center .

PEOPLES' STRUGGLE BEFORE CLASS STRUGGLE

The French theologian of Italian origin, Giulio Girardi, speaks of a theology of European liberation and "class struggle." I believe his position to be highly important because he shows how theology can fulfill a critical-social and even revolutionary function, since the struggle

among people, subjugated and subjugating, is a concrete reality. But he doesn't explain clearly the origin of the struggle. The *origin* of the class struggle is a first fact of history, but the struggle itself is a second fact. First, people are in the totality; they dominate others, alienate them. When the dominated become aware of their condition of servitude, there is born in them the "will to freedom" and they set out along the road to liberation. Once they do, repression occurs. The response to repression is war, struggle. Class struggle appears only after the "will to freedom" and the "love of justice." First you have the love of justice for the poor, a commitment to them. Once in motion, it starts the struggle. Struggle is the outcome of sin, a frequent theme of the Bible. The class struggle is a fact but only a secondary fact. This is the difference between a Marxist and a Christian interpretation.

Struggle is the outcome of sin, but the two opponents are not equally in the right, nor are both sides bad. Those who attack as subjugators are perverse; they are "angels" of the "prince of this world." The subjugated who defend themselves are good; they are liberation heroes. The liberation theologians of the center are concerned about the poor of the center, who are the laboring class of Germany, France, the United States, but they do not advert to the fact that there is an essential difference between the poor of the center and the poor of the "world," those on the periphery. The North American miner is poor but he makes five dollars an hour; a Bolivian worker earns a dollar a day-forty times less! The difference is much too great. North American workers are part of the system of domination that they benefit by, and that is why at heart they are opposed to the liberation of the Bolivian worker. If Bolivia were to be liberated, North American prosperity could be in trouble and so would the worker. Therefore, the worker in the center is

willing to go along with the exploitation of the worker on the periphery.

These facts are overlooked by the liberation theologians of the center. Latin American liberation is more radical and has different motivations. It should be clear that the case is different.

LIBERATION THEOLOGY?

It is time now to go into the origin of "liberation theology." Gustavo Gutierrez was mainly responsible for its origin when, a few years ago, he began to ask himself, "Is there a theology of development" or "a theology of liberation..? From the model of development, there arose a theology of developmentalism, which had as its model the center. Liberation theology arises from the discovery of the fact of dependence. Now the model is no longer imitation of the center but, rather, the proposal of a new person based on an understanding of the structure of the world system. It is a theology that is much more radical, universal, and world-embracing, not just one new aspect but a total transformation of theological reflection.

Gutierrez was the first to begin the soundings for this new theology, and his starting point was the one great fact of poverty. The Medellin pronouncements on poverty, which were the work mainly of Gutierrez, are important because of their revelation of the poor as oppressed. The poor revealed as exteriority is the beginning of the reflective process that concerns us here.

Thus we have a whole new approach to theology, epistemologically because of the formulation of the question of dependence, spiritually because of the discovery of the countenance of today's poor. It is along this path that Hugo Assmann, for example, with his fine grasp of European theology, begins his critique of European

theologians, showing step by step that that theology has confined itself to a given horizon to the point of becoming ideology. European theology is not for the periphery, not for or from the barbarians. What we need is some kind of "suspicionometer"; we need to be suspicious of what is hidden in many of their reflections. Our theology will be much more critical than theirs, not because we are more intelligent, nor because we would have more theological tools, but simply because we are victims of the system and because we are on the outside.

A beggar, for example, sees the color on the outside of the rich man's house *from* the outside, something the rich man on the inside doesn't see. We have a better view of the house of the center because we live on the outside. We are not stronger but weaker. But in this case weakness is an asset. Our theology engages in criticism of the theology of the center precisely because ours is a theology of the periphery. Therefore, it is a theology that will clearly propose critical points of support for Latin America but also for the Arab world, for Africa, India, China, and for the blacks and Chicanos of the United States. By far the greater part of humanity!

And as this majority turns against the center, this theology becomes valid for the center as well, because it points out to them the pathway of their own liberation, or, better still, of their conversion, their dispossession. The conversion of the center will not be affected by the hippie movement but only by total dedication to the poor. Those who aren't so dedicated will never be converted. In a way their Christianity will become more and more an embarrassment for them; they will not know what to do with it. It will continue to chide them. They will come to realize that alms are not enough but that justice is demanded of them. Do you remember the "aid to underdeveloped countries"? This was bank loans to

the countries of the Third World at high interest rates. This is aid? It is now clear that there is no generosity in the center but, rather, systematic exploitation. When Christianity refuses to be critical of this sort of thing, it becomes ideologized, it begins to close in on itself and to believe in the poor no longer .

Latin America right now has a fantastic responsibility. If I am correct in saying that the Latin American church is, by a design of Providence, situated within the poverty of the world, not by choice but by birth, then we have a great deal to do in the world of the near future. If the Latin American church does not commit itself to liberation, worldwide Christianity will have nothing to say to Asia or Africa. If this is so, we should no longer talk of liberation theology or of Latin American theology, but of a theology of the world of today. Understand "world" to include the center and the periphery.

REVELATION OF THE INTERPRETATIVE CATEGORIES

Before asking what theology is, we should ask what revelation is and consequently what faith is.

First, what is revelation? I will give a general definition and then go on to explain it phrase by phrase. Revelation is the alterative, existential "speaking" of God that manifests the interpretative categories or guidelines of Christic reality. To reveal demands that there be an other, because I cannot reveal myself to myself. I do not say anything to myself, I only remember things. Whereas when the other confronts me in totality and speaks to me the word that reaches my listening ear, that word is revelation. Revelation, then, is the word of the other that tells something *new* that I would not know unless it were revealed to me.

The opposite of revelation is delation. And how do I

get the other to delate? Itorture him. Through torture I an get the other to say what he would be unwilling to say. Revelation is the word of the other given freely. But listening is demanded of me because if the other reveals something to me and I do not listen, there can be no revelation.

The word "revelation" by itself embraces the whole of humanity's experience, the face-to-face, totality and otherness and all that I have been talking about so far . There is no point even in beginning if this is not understood.

Philosophy brings about a clarification of the categories of totality and otherness as making possible an anthropological revelation. By this I mean that another person, in freedom, reveals himself or herself to me. And only then can we arrive at divine revelation and say that, if there is a God, it is possible that he would reveal himself. And philosophy stops here.

Theology begins at the precise point where we say Yes, God has revealed himself and he has said *this*. This means then that revelation is a "speaking," not just *what* is said but the actual saying of it; it is the "saying" of the other who by his word makes his presence felt and gives an answer to what he has been asked because the answer is not known. Hence, "he who has ears to hear, let him hear" is about the anthropological structure of hearing and also about revelation.

Revelation is an "alternative" speaking on the part of God. God first creates. This is metaphysical otherness at its cosmological level, because when the other was alone he created the things we call the cosmos. In the totality of the cosmos the absolute Other reveals his *new* Word and that is revelation.

The first Word, *constitutive* revelation, is that "the Word was made flesh." The Incarnation is the whole of

revelation and at the same time the *reality* of what is later said. I indicated that "revelation" is the "speaking" of the Other, but of the "Christic" reality. Note that "reality" is not the same as Word. Christ saves and is now the salvation of humanity; he is the reality. But we have to uncover that reality because it is covered, and in order to do so, the Word enlighteningly reveals that reality. Thus we have to distinguish between the Christic reality (Christic instead of supernatural, which is not the right word) and the *revelation* of that reality. Christ is *real*, *grace is real*; supernatural means something not natural. But what is natural? Is the natural that which is cosmic, before the incarnation? This can't be correct. Furthermore, we frequently believe that grace or the Christic is at times accidental and we confuse this with the "over and above," with *unreal*, whereas the Christic is the fullness of reality.

The Christic reality is truly, effectively, and constitutively what the Word of God reveals. Is what God reveals then this or that historical fact? No, what is revealed are the guidelines or the interpretative categories of that reality. This means that God does not reveal this or that to be good but reveals the criteria that allow me to discover what is good. When Jesus is asked, Who is god? he responds with a parable, which is the explication of the categories in the manner of *masal* (Jewish didactic method) : " A man was once on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of brigands who threw him to the ground. Then a Levite came; a priest went by and, lastly, a Samaritan drew near. ..." He does not say, "You are good." He says, "Do this and you will be. ..." In this *masal*, he reveals the interpretative categories which, when applied to concrete cases, will uncover the reality. We can see then that revelation, rather than manifesting concrete content, reveals the light that allows me to illuminate the concrete content.

These are what I call categories, guidelines, or criteria; with them we can take the measure of any past, present, or future historical situation. It is a matter, then, of knowing how to put these into practice. If I put them into practice, I am a Christian. Knowing what they are is the function of the theologian.

God, through revelation, gives us guidelines that are like a lantern. With it we are able, in the night of history, to discover a table, a window, a bench. God does not reveal the table, window, or bench, or any concrete thing. What God reveals to us is the light that then enables us to discover the meaning of the table, window, or bench in that light. We have said, "By the light of faith." It comes own to knowing precisely what faith is and who has it. Revelation is the alternative speaking of God in an existential way, that is, day by day, every day. Let us take a look at how this question can be stated.

FAITH AS INTERPRETATION

I live in a pre-Christian world. I interpret everything in a certain way. To interpret is to unveil the meaning of something. When I say "table," does it make any difference if I am talking about a table for firewood or a metal table to be sold? Yes, because the meaning is different. If I am going to use it as firewood, it has the meaning of fuel. But if I need it to put something on, I interpret it as a table. If I sell it, I discover its economic meaning. The table is the same but the meaning is different. "Interpret" is not the same as "understand"-to interpret is to discover the meaning. I am in my world and in it I discover the meaning of something. Revelation is to reveal interpretative categories. Suddenly now I receive notice from someone, an indication, a light that introduces me to my world as a *new* world.

If I am a pagan Greek, I say "table" and "wood." The minute I say "wood" I think of "tree" and relate it to the "goddess of life." The meaning is that of the eternal return of the same. But if I am Christian and I say "tree," I think immediately that it is a creature at my service. That is quite different. This means that because of the mere idea of creation all things have changed their *meaning*, they are at my service, even the sun. Whereas in the light of the Greek vision, I adore the sun because the sun is divine. Quite different! What I'm saying is that the *meaning* of things changes according to the light. Hence, I say that faith is a light that existentially "exercises" the revealed categories.

Faith, then, is a light, but a light that is carried by the Christian community, passed from hand to hand. If I learn these categories, it is not because someone told me: "This is a category." It is rather because I experienced existentially how someone in the Christian community made use of it and, thus, in the face of this or that event, I discovered this or that meaning. In the face of one reality, I discovered a certain meaning and in the face of another reality, another meaning. Daily I began to give it the meaning that the Christian was giving it, not theoretically but in practice. And thus I began acquiring faith and I began to interpret things as the Christian interpreted them. In doing so, I was using the revealed categories daily and in a practical way to interpret reality. I was using them existentially and not as the result of deep thought. There is a difference. If we were to ask the Christian: What category are you using? he or she might well answer: What is a category? The Christian had never heard of such a thing and yet could be a hero, prophet, saint.

All that I have been saying here about categories I have said as a theologian. But the Christian, the *good* Christian,

makes use of them perfectly but un-self-consciously. The Christian knows concretely what sin is but cannot explain it with categories. By the word "sin," the Christian means to become totalized. But I use a category explicitly whereas the Christian lives it implicitly; the Christian has had experience of what it means to "be closed off in oneself" like a god and to deny God the Creator.

Faith is a daily interpreting or a using of the guidelines or categories or the light that God has revealed and with which we discover the meaning of the reality, of the Christic fact which is developing, unfolding in the history of the people-in everything, in the way we drive a car , keep a diary, knot a tie, or spit. In everything, even in this nonsense of spitting-a sick man could refrain from spitting in the street so as not to spread his germs around. He would thus be serving his neighbor; he would be performing all act of love.

This means that in the little everyday things of life, there are being put to use these guidelines that either totalize us as being all that matters or open us to the other .

From all this it can be seen that loving your neighbor is the whole law. To love your neighbor is by no means a secondary moral norm. We mean, of course, not loving "your neighbor as yourself" but "as I have loved you." This is the *new* commandment, the new kind of love that transcends totalization. To love "as I have loved you" is to lay down one's life. Here, indeed, is a guideline. Those persons are Christian who day by day see the other as meriting their service even to the point of laying down their life.

The Christian life is a daily putting into practice of certain categories that have been received from the Other (the other in this case being the God of revelation

in the tradition of the church) through the summoning voice of the poor .

THEOLOGY AS THE "ANALECTIC PEDAGOGY OF ESCHATOLOGICAL LIBERATION"

What, then, is theology? In the first place, theology is reflective thought about these categories. That is, theology turns to the same shining light and reflects on it as such. Thought, then, is a turning to the daily and revealed categories in the Christian community, not to exercise them in day-to-day living but to situate them as *object-in* the sense of something brought forth from a *theoretical* consideration. But we are talking about the kind of theory that emerges from the praxis of a people and knows, furthermore, that the praxis is infinitely more worthwhile than the *abstract* description that the theologian gives. Thus, to think theologically is to reflect on the Christian day-to-dayness.

How and why should this be done? To "reflect on" is a *critical* position, that is, a crisis has come about in the day-to-dayness. Why should people want to do this? Because in their daily existence they have seen that there is lacking a certain clarification. The resulting confusion has become intolerable, holding back the process of liberation. The *crisis* in the church calls for a clearing up of the situation. Thinking as a vocation does not come out of nowhere but as the result of a breakdown, a crisis in the acritical day-to-dayness of the church. Here is where the need for clarity in regard to these categories is born and the vocation to theology enters.

If Latin America can now produce a theology, it will be, I think, because here in Latin America we are living through the worldwide crisis of the church in a very

privileged way. The Europeans of the--center are undergoing a crisis much less severe than ours. Theirs is the crisis of European modernity whereas ours is the crisis of the entire world. In that sense, because we are on the periphery, we are concerned with the crisis of all the poor peoples of the world, whereas those in the center take on only the responsibility for the crisis in their own world and they have no plan for liberation, no "way out" of their situation. They will be unable to find a way out on their own; this must come from the poor.

The thinking that arises from crisis is as deep as the depth of the crisis. The crisis in Latin America is much deeper than in the center. Therefore our thinking will have to draw more deeply, will have to take soundings from the beginning of the church until now and throughout the whole world.

Theology is thought that deals with day-to-dayness, not only to seek its concrete meaning at the moment but also to ask itself about the categories themselves that shed light on this day-to-dayness. What are these categories? I have been making use of them from the beginning of these chapters. I explained the notion of totality-it is the *flesh*, in the sense of the *world*. Here I was describing a category. It is one of the first lights, or categories, that both the Old and the New Testaments as well as Jesus and the church use. We have to think of it as such-as an interpretative category.

When the interpretative category of Christian theology was "substance" (*ousia*), as it was for the Greeks and, then, "accident" (as quantity, quality, relationship, and the other categories of Aristotle), we began with something that was given as substantial, *underneath* (*sub-*) appearances as an essence; then we went on to that which was supported, borne by, that is, the relative accidents. These were all categories also. But they were categories

seen from within the Greek *totality*. Whereas if I question that totality as such, I place all the Aristotelian categories in crisis. But at the same time there arose new categories that were foreign to Greek thought. The category of "substance" turns out to be totally insufficient in describing the human phenomenon, because here the essential aspect is not substance but relationship. It was Thomas who said that person, in the Trinity, is a "subsistent relationship."

The Greek interpretative categories responded to a pantheistic understanding of the world where all beings, all things emerge out of "nature," having a certain form, substance. According to the metaphysical view of creation, however, everything is understood as coming out of the free option of God to create. The cosmos itself has an ethical status because it is the work of absolute Liberty. The category of Otherness (the Other as free beyond Totality) is the beginning: "In the beginning God created. ..." (Gen. 1: 1); "in the beginning (*en arje*) was the Word. ..." (John 1:1). In the origin was the Other, whether as creator, as redeemer, as the poor who cry out for justice or as Christ who liberates. And thus, Totality and Otherness, domination and oppression, sin and liberation or service, the old order and the new order or the kingdom are the categories revealed by God, lived out by the believer, thought upon by the theologian.

This is to say that theological thought is aware of its own categories; it uses them not only existentially but also gives thought to them methodically. Theology has a *method* that is not scientific or demonstrative, not dialectical but strictly analectic. The scientific method draws its conclusions from axioms. Theology does not demonstrate from axioms but from the poor, from Christ, from God who is beyond the system. Theology cannot be

dialectical ("to go through" diverse "horizons") because the dialectical method starts with Totality, with *theflesh* and can only show the foundation of the flesh, of the system, of Totality; it cannot explore further. The method of the prophets, of Jesus, of Christian theology and, therefore, of liberation theology is analectic. That is, it rests upon a Word (the *logos* of analectic) that invades from *beyond* (the meaning in Greek of *ano* or *ana*) the system, Totality, the flesh. From the act that arises from beyond the cosmos (the Liberty that creates), from beyond history (the call of Abraham and Moses), from beyond Israel (in the Incarnation of the Word), from beyond every system (the poor as the epiphany of God), Totality is overthrown and a new world is born: the kingdom already born among us in history, which will come to full flowering beyond the human order at the end of world history.

Therefore, we can finally define theology as the analectic pedagogy of historico-eschatologicalliberation. Theology is borne along by the theologian. Theologians place themselves in political and erotic history as pedagogues. This relationship with the Other is not like that of the man-woman relationship, but neither is it like that of brother-brother or master-servant. It is neither erotic nor political. In this situation, theologians carry on the gift of prophecy and add to it a self-aware clairvoyance. Theology is teaching, it establishes the teacher-disciple relationship. Jesus was the *rabb* of Galilee, prophet and Jewish theologian, educated in the synagogue and in his home at Nazareth. Theology is a pedagogy.

Its prophetic-pedagogical method is analectic. Its five stages can be summed up in the following way. (1) It confronts the facts of a system and refers them to the system as Totality. (2) It discovers their meaning in the

given world. In the bourgeois world it discovers that everything is interpreted as merchandise and as a means of getting rich. From that horizon it can explain everything that happens in the world. The movement of being to the horizon is dialectical; the movement of the horizon toward being is demonstrative or scientific. (3) The theologian begins his or her proper task in the analectic phase by making a judgment on the totality of the system (political, erotic, or pedagogic) from the standpoint of the revealing Word of God (categories), historical measures and, concretely, the summons of the poor of the system under consideration. (4) When we question the system from the exteriority of the Word, we are able to consider the fact of subjugation in the system (sin) and (5) the possibility of the praxis of liberation, redemption, or salvation (analectic praxis inasmuch as it would go beyond the system toward a plan for liberation).

For its part, this fifth stage is directed at the same time to a historical project for liberation (the next temporal, political, economic, erotic order), which is sign and testimony of the plan for *total, eschatological liberation—the Parousia* and the kingdom finally come.

Theology, then, is strategic support for the liberation praxis of the Christian, since it clarifies on a radical level the concrete, historical, somewhat veiled options that christian faith daily interprets.