

1  
*THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY I:  
ETHICS AS  
DESTRUCTIVE CRITICISM*

*Our Father...  
save us from the Evil One.  
Matt. 6: 9, 13*

These first two chapters take' up the matter of theological anthropology, that is, a theological consideration of the being of the person. The first chapter enters into a consideration of the last phrase of the Lord's Prayer: "Save us from the Evil One" (Matt. 6: 13). I prefer this translation to "deliver us from evil." The Evil One, of course, is the Devil. This will be a chapter mainly about the Evil One, the Devil, but viewed from the standpoint of Latin America.

What I say about Latin America is valid for what today we call the "periphery" (which includes Africa and Asia as well); a realistic look at world history will indicate this. Evil is by no means confined to the private sector, something I do all by myself. The "prince of this world" structures everything to his advantage. If right now I could pin a name on evil-a name in line with current history-I would call it "detente." Evil can also be a world

power that we are a part of: a world order in which there seems to be a benign justice and things get done because there is peace under the security of law. One who would liberate us from the Evil One will thus have to start from something very concrete.

In the second chapter I shall be talking about the words "He died under Pontius Pilate," because the just person dies under the power of sin. This is the major theme of contemporary Latin American theology. Latin American theology does not start with existing theologies but with the real and concrete totality of what is taking place. Neither does it start with a relationship of the solitary self with another individual self but considers the structure in which the sin of the world conditions our own personal sin.

#### FIFTEENTH-CENTURY ECUMENES AND THE ORIGIN OF DEPENDENCY

A little more than five hundred years ago, Bartolomé de las Casas was born in Seville. In that epoch Isabel de Castilla married Fernando de Aragon, thus achieving the unity of Spain. On our planet there were then seven great "ecumenes," that is to say, seven horizons of understanding, unique spheres of power outside of which were nothing but barbarians. Later we will see that the ecumene (as a totality) is a theological category. The first ecumene is *Latin* Europe, the Europe that opposed the Arabs who from the east and from the south had, for eight centuries, impeded its expansion to the Orient. The second is the little that was left of the Byzantine world after its conquest by the Turks in 1453. The resplendent Christendom of the Orient practically disappeared in the fifteenth century.

Next there is the empire of the Hindu kingdoms,

where there is also a Buddhist presence that is mostly Brahmin. There is China, where Marco Polo in the thirteenth century viewed the natives as barbarians. Going across the Pacific, we come to the Mayan-Aztec world. We see it and the Incan world to the south as another "center of the universe." Every ecumene sees itself as the center of the universe. The Incas in Peru called their city Cuzco, a name meaning "navel of the world"; for the Jews the center of the world was Mount Zion. Every culture sees itself as containing the ultimate totality of meaning. It is the place where the gods communicate with human beings in the way that a mother communicates with her child through the umbilical cord. All these ecumenes were self-contained, "totalized" worlds and had practically no contact with other worlds. That is, until 1492. In that year, Europeans were able to go west across the Atlantic and achieve what they had never been able to do before, namely, slip out of the enclosure the Arab world had erected around them. When the Atlantic was conquered, the geopolitical organization of the world changed completely. The discovery of America by Spain and Portugal gave Europe elbow room for development and an end to their entrapment.

What would they now do about the Arabs? Simply surround them. The navigating of the Cape provided Europe with a water route to India. The ancient route through the Middle East, so long dominated by the Arabs, would now no longer be needed because the produce of China, Japan, and India could be brought home by sea. Thus the: Arabs ceased to be the center of the world. The Mediterranean basin, which had been the geopolitical center of the world for almost five thousand years, gives way to the Atlantic. Now Europe can conquer the whole world, known and unknown, and it now occupies the center of the world. The rest becomes

periphery. Thus was born a situation in the fifteenth century that has perdured until the twentieth; we call all this the colonial world. The colonies of Spain in Spanish America and Asia, the colonies of Portugal in Brazil, Africa, and Asia, and later those of England in Africa, India and China present us with a whole new panorama. The colonial world comes into being. The ecumenes that before the fifteenth century were on a par with Europe become its colonies within a century, so that there remains but one ecumene, one center, ringed by a concentric circle.

The term "ecumene" comes from the Greek word *oikoumene*, which is derived from *oikos*, meaning "house." My home is my ecumene, and my home is my world; it is where things take on meaning for me. Someone coming from the outside does not know the significance of the objects in my home, the pictures on the wall or the portrait of my grandfather; that person cannot grasp the meaning of "my home"; I am in charge in my own home because I am in the center and I have always been there. "World" in the gospel is *kosmos*, and Jesus speaks of the "prince of this *world*"; this prince is completely at home. Every ecumene has its prince and it is about that "prince" that we want to speak.

#### TOTALITY AS FLESH OR "MY WORLD"

Ecumene is the same as "totality", a highly abstract technical term. "Totality" obviously comes from "total"; we say: "the totality of meaning" of my day-to-day world, because everything in that world has meaning. What is in my world makes sense for me but it would not necessarily do so for another. My world is a totality of meaning; therefore whoever understands the meaning of all that takes place there has to be someone in the *center* of the world. One who is on the periphery of the world does not

know what it is all about. This means that the totality has a center, and that center is where everything acquires meaning; in the Bible, totality is called "the flesh." The "sin of the flesh" has nothing to do with the body and much less with the sexual or sensual. The "sin of the flesh" is evil itself, it is a world become totality; it occurs, for example, when an ecumene sees itself as the only ecumene in the world and denies the existence of all others; it occurs when I think only of myself and deny the existence of others; in its essence it is egoism. "Flesh," then, in the Bible means "totality ." In the flesh and in the world everything is seen in the light of "this" world; I am the center of that light.

In the age of Hispanic discovery the European world expanded and other human experiences (Mayan, Aztec, Incan, African, Arabian, Hindu, Chinese) were conquered and destroyed.

One example: the Aztecs sacrificed people to the god Huitzilopochtli at Tenochtitlán, because in the fifth age of the world a lesser god, the sun, sacrificed himself for others and now the sun needed the blood of humans to subsist. According to the Aztec theology of Tlaccatelel the sun-god needed human blood and the Aztecs would have to get victims for the sun-god; for this reason they built an empire. A theologian causes the founding of an empire. What are we to make of this? Well, what more befits a person's dignity: to die sacrificed as a person on the altar of the sun-god or to die in the depths of a mine sacrificed to the gold-and-silver-god like a beast of burden? Many more Indians were sacrificed to the new modern European god than to the Aztec god, and it is far more indecent to die in the depths of a mine like an animal than to die as a divine victim on an altar, even though it be the altar of a false god.

The first bishop of Potosi, of La Plata, quickly cen-

sured for theological reasons those who were sacrificing people to the god of gold. Often the Spaniards wanted only to get rich. Spaniards who in Spain were nobodies, menials whose masters were constantly ordering them about, come now to America as conquistadors and want to be the "masters" here-to get rich and go home to Spain, wealthy, in order to say, "I have become rich," a process which later will be called "making it in America." This "making it in America" was achieved with the blood of Indians. That bishop was seeing, as did Bartolomé de las Casas, the new plan of worldwide totalization: Europe's determination to have wealth coming in from overseas; this wealth would have to flow in toward the *center*. Thus arose the gold and silver adventurers, and Spain was the first to begin the quest for wealth and glory. Today in Seville there is a tower that is still called "the tower of gold," where the American gold and silver was deposited and little by little was distributed in Spain until it finally found its way to the rest of Europe in the process of buying manufactured goods, coming to rest in the Low Countries or in London banks. Or it would take the Mediterranean route to Venice and Genoa and from there to the Arab world, coming to rest in China. The Chinese sold silk and spices and bought gold in order to build their temples. It is much more fitting that gold end as a temple ornament than in a bank, and more so because it was purchased through the skilled labor of the Chinese, whereas the gold and silver that came from America had been stolen at the cost of Indian blood. What is far worse, however, is that that light which illumines all that happens in the world is in turn considered to be sacred, eternal; and Latin Christians go on from there to say that their culture-which is Christendom-is also sacred, because "God is with us." The Christians who came to rob the Chibchas of their gold

were not simply Spaniards with a craving for wealth; they also stood before the Indians as Christians. We see here precisely the sacralization of an ecumene whose sole purpose at bottom is to "be in the money. "

Between the feudal person whose purpose was to "be in honor" and the person of the church whose purpose was to "be in holiness" there arose in the ninth century a third person, who was neither feudal nor ecclesial and who lived as a pariah in the city and for this reason was called a *burgher*, *bourgeois*. In the city, working in various handcrafts and saving money, this person began to build a new culture. The bourgeois person came out on top in the French Revolution in 1789 and replaced the feudal person, the noble, and the monarchy. And thus the new bourgeois humanism triumphed; by the sixteenth century it was getting a big boost from Spain because that country was bringing incredible amounts of money from America to Europe, whereas before very little accumulated capital was available in Latin Christendom. Beyond that Latin ecumene, beyond the *center*, lay in distant darkness the other ecumenes—the Hindu world, the Chinese, the African. They were far off under the night sky, far from the light of Europe; they were barbarous and blasphemous and had to be civilized: civilization here, barbarity there. All the peoples of the center think that they are "civilized" and that all the rest are "barbarians"; the former step forward to offer the gift of civilization and an education to the unlettered peoples. They see themselves as offering the greatest gift, but in reality they will simply oppress them by imposing their culture upon them and stripping them of their uniqueness. The Indians were "other" than the Spaniards; the Chinese and Hindus were "other" than the English. But their otherness would have to be denied them, rooted out of them, annihilated.

## EUROPEAN EXPANSION

The European expansion of the sixteenth century was not a harmless geopolitical fact but, rather, essentially an ethical fact for the Christian, because there was to be a profound injustice within that expansion. When gold and silver were extracted from America and sent to Europe in quantities five times as great as the gold and ten times as great as the silver that existed in Europe, inflation ran rampant. Within the century many people became poor because ten pieces of silver came to be worth only one. The Arabs, without losing a thing in that century, became poor because the quantity of gold and silver arriving in the Mediterranean basin was so great and its value fell so low. Their fall became evident at the battle of Lepanto, which marked the beginning of the disappearance of the Turks, not because they were less valiant but because inflation was wiping them out. To afford a warship or to pay an army, they had to payout double or more. But the Turks no longer had gold or silver, whereas the Spaniards and, little by little, the Genoese and Venetians were able to pay hard cash. They conquered the Mediterranean because they had first conquered the Atlantic, which now became the new center. The North Atlantic continues to be the center until now. In that North Atlantic are Russia, the United States, and Europe. Japan and Canada ought to be added also. This is the center, and all the rest is periphery.

Samir Amin, an African economist, who is not christian but neither is he liberal or Marxist, has written a very interesting book called *Accumulation on a World Level*. The accumulation of capital is a big problem for Christians because it raises the question: How does anyone become rich? It would seem that persons would have to start with a certain amount of capital; if they don't have it, how can

they make it grow? And if I have even a small amount of capital-where does it come from? Amin, who, although he is African, considers himself to be on the side of the Latin American economists of the left, shows that world accumulation was produced in the center through economic rape of the colonies. Goods were stolen from the colonies and multiplied in the center; gold and silver were stolen from the Indians and exported to the center, carried to Spain. This system of imports to the center was a part of international trade. Spain in its turn sold oils, wine, products that could be produced there. But the balance of trade was unequal; ten times the wealth was taken from America as was returned. This kind of injustice is sinful. The Spaniards in Peru, in Potosi, or in the north of Argentina who set out to mine gold and send it to Spain were thieves guilty of sin; the Spanish miners ought to have been confessing their grave sin; but nobody stopped to think of the morality of the process taking place before their eyes. The conquistadors or *encomenderos* may have felt legally entitled to the gold and may have cheerfully gone about their work, but they were despoilers nonetheless, thieves sending home goods to the center. This economic rape began when Columbus first arrived in the West Indies and saw that there was no gold there; he captured a few Indians and took them off as slaves. A bishop of Michoacán in Mexico said that "the gold and silver that goes to those empires goes purchased with the blood of Indians and wrapped in their hides." This bishop was clearly aware that the gold was stained. How could it not be stained with the blood of Indians? As if that were not enough, it later becomes stained with African blood. From London and Bordeaux shrewd slave traders sailed for Africa and deceived the poor Africans; they sold them in Cartagena or in the Caribbean for the gold and silver of the Indians,

whereupon they could buy merchandise; the holds of their ships filled to overflowing, they would return to Europe.

The original accumulation, which was deposited in newly founded banks, allowed for the industrial revolution. The first capitalistic investments were used to produce luxury products-such as soap, perfume, fabrics-which rapidly increase capital because they are sold at a high markup. An investment of ten gold pieces would double within months, and it was thus that capital grew.

Pirates from England, Holland, and France came to Latin American cities to steal. England as well as Portugal and Holland were poor nations that had no colonies. They began their accumulation of capital by stealing. The origin of the accumulation of the center's capital has been not only robbery but murder as well. This is the original sin for the modern European age. Today in the stock market of New York, stocks and bonds from all over the world are bought and sold on an international scale; the capital involved was first amassed in Europe and England; later it passed over to the United States and Russia. That money is stained by the blood of Indians and wrapped in the hides of blacks and Asians. The Opium War that England waged against China to make the Chinese take to opium (the English were too righteous to want to do so) and to bring prosperity to English business interests was just one more of many rotten deeds committed in the name of English Christianity.

The conquest of America was nothing more than oppression. The subjugation of person by person is the only sin a person can commit. It is the expansion of dominion and the establishment of hatred. It is like the Levite and the priest who encounter a wounded man along the way, in the parable of the Good Samaritan, and, instead of

helping him, turn away and quicken their pace. Instead of being ministered to, the other is beaten into submission. Conquest is the annihilation of the other as other; it is the establishment of rule. To rule is to dominate the other. Thus the English, the Spanish, the Dutch would reshape a world dominated by their despotic and oppressive rule. Bartolomé de las Casas said that, where they did not actually kill the Indians, they subjected them to the "hardest, roughest, most horrible servitude." Domination of the other is to reduce him or her to the status of servant; it is precisely the construction of a prison so that one person can rule over another .

"He died under Pontius Pilate," says the Apostles' Creed. It is a very easy thing to read this in the creed and to say, "He died under Pontius Pilate." But who is Pilate today? If I do not know who killed Jesus and why he died, I am not a Christian. But it is up to me now not so much to explain how he died under Pontius Pilate but why Pontius Pilate is the Evil One from whom we must be liberated. "Deliver us from the Evil One" is my topic, the world order which from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries evolved into Soviet-American peaceful co-existence-that is my topic. After certain ominous differences between Soviet Russia and the United States, they have now arrived at "peaceful coexistence"; there are no longer major problems between them. There are other world problems today. The Soviet-American peace indicates an alliance of the center. Europe will still fight for a while against the United States. The Europeans produce the Concorde, a fantastic plane; they sell the Volkswagen to the Americans, and Ford suffers. But all will be straightened out. Japan and Canada are also part of the center. But the battle between them never gets out of hand; they don't shoot to kill each other. But they do kill the peoples on the periphery; the wars have been

exported to other places to be fought by the "barbarians. "

Germany, Italy, and Japan were industrial nations that wanted in to the center, but because the center would not admit them, they started World War II. Although they lost the war, they won a place in the center thanks to the United States (remember "the German miracle," "the Japanese miracle" and the amazing development of Italy). Since the end of that war (1945) the center has closed in on itself, leaving no room for any other nation because, if the underdeveloped nations were allowed to come in, the high standard of living of those within the center would be lowered considerably. Indeed, there is today a world order, a peaceful coexistence, but dominated by the center over the periphery. And the worst thing about that order is that it has been divinized. For example, Hitler said, "*Gott ist mit uns*" (God is with us). Hitler took unto himself the role of God; and printed on the U.S. dollar bill is the sentence "In God we trust." Everything they do is in the name of God. There are those among us who still defend "western Christian civilization." They take it upon themselves to be God's defenders; this means, of course, that they see themselves as defenders of Christ. They are like a sacrament because their decision-making becomes divinized, a ploy the conqueror uses so that the world order will not be disturbed. For this reason they have to proclaim that "God is with us" and whoever is against that order of domination is against God. The Romans operated in the very same way. The Roman empire and the emperor were divine. Pontius Pilate was therefore the spokesman for God in Palestine and also, but in a different way, so were the priests of the Sanhedrin; both were delegates of God. When Jesus said he was God, there was widespread alarm. The empire, or Pilate, cried Out, "If you are God,

does that mean I am not?" And the Sanhedrin was scandalized. If you are God and we who are his agents do not know you, this means you are lying. They murdered Jesus for having blasphemed, because they believed themselves to be God, or at least his agents. The order had been divinized. It is only at this concrete level that reflection about theology or about faith begins, in the sense that reflection about faith is theology. If I am not firmly planted in reality, my reflection remains "u p in the air"; it is worthless. I tremble when I hear sermons that treat sin in the abstract and allow sinners to feel they are innocent and to think of the innocent poor people as smners.

#### THE PROPHETS AGAINST THE IDOL. THE ATHEISM OF JESUS

The theological reflection that I am now proposing is absolutely traditional; it is to be found in the most ancient Judeo-Christian tradition, in the New Testament, and in the whole history of theology. What I have to say at this point will be negative and critical because I am going to talk about the Evil One. Later on we will see how the Evil One operates and why he kills the just; death is the fruit of sin.

This critical method, in its negative phase, begins as do the prophets of Israel, who have a genuine methodology of preaching the liberating vision, revealed to them by God, of the meaning of what is happening.

They always layout a boundary. This boundary is the world in its totality; it is the flesh; when it is divinized it sees itself as unparalleled and quickly becomes an idol. It believes itself to be God but it is only a god with a small "g." God is the absolute Other, since he is eschatological and therefore does not give himself entirely to us in history but only at the end of history. Thus the prophets,

in order to affirm God the Creator, had first to lash out against gods, created by people. For this reason the psalmist says, "Their idols are nothing more than silver and gold"-not without reason does the text say, "silver and gold"- "their idols are products of human skill, have eyes but never see, ears but never hear, noses but never smell, hands but never touch, feet but never walk."

Those are the systems that people make and adore; they are their laws, statutes, economic and cultural organizations. All this is the work of humankind but it is called "God." At any rate, it is said that "God is with us and he has blessed us." We have to be careful. It could happen that a bishop or a priest or a layperson identified with the church could give blessing, by simply his or her presence, to an order that is unjust. Woe to that person on the Day of Judgment: Dante stuffed a lot of people in hell in his *Divine Comedy*. Elijah, speaking to the worshipers of Baal, tells them: "Shout louder, since, if it is true that Baal is god, he must be busy or out taking a walk, or maybe he is napping and has to be awakened." Elijah scoffed at these gods. If we dare, we can scoff at these gods also, but we must be prepared to die like Jesus. If we accept these gods as gods, we can get along very nicely, but some day we are going to wake up to the fact that we have been adoring an idol and not God, not Jesus.

This means then that in order to give witness to the Lord, we have to deny the idol, and to deny the idol that purports to be God is atheism with a small "a." The prophets were atheists in regard to false gods and so were the Christians. The Christians who refused to adore the emperor or the state or any other idol or false god were dragged to the arena as atheists and put to death as atheists. Only if I am an atheist in regard to that god can I testify to the God who is Creator; if I deny God the Creator, then I become divine. There are only two pos-

sibilities, not three. Atheism itself is not wrong; it is a matter of saying to what God I am being atheistic. Unjust and dehumanizing atheism is the Atheism of the "God-Other," Atheism with a capital "A." The atheism of the idol is spelled with a small "a." We can love God the Creator only if we are atheists in regard to the false god, the idol. Atheism then is not the problem.

Let us consider a text that comes not from a theologian but from an economist-although a theologian could not phrase the matter in a better form: "Criticism of heaven thus becomes criticism of the earth; criticism of religion becomes criticism of law; criticism of theology becomes criticism of politics." Someone might say, "This man totally lacks any religious sense!" But if one can make a god out of the system, one can also make a religion out of the system. When the Romans adored the emperor, they were being faithful to their religion and adoring their gods. Thus, when I say that criticism of heaven is criticism of the earth, I am saying something enormously prophetic. If I do not look critically at the religion of the emperor, I will fail to see the injustices that are committed in the empire, on earth. Criticism of religion is criticism of the earth and criticism of theology is political criticism, because in politics there is sin, which is the domination of person over person. There is a cultural theology that justifies this, seeing the dominator as a god. We Christians tend to get very upset when an intellectual says, "I am an atheist." But we should right away ask, "In regard to what God?" Jesus and the prophets were atheists in regard to false gods. "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." Jesus, then, was an atheist in regard to Caesar. Jesus began to criticize the religion of the Romans and of the temple to bring about a new alignment with the "God-other," which was himself. I mean that there are two religions-that of the idol and

that of the God of Israel, the saving Creator. Therefore, the text of the economist just quoted quickly becomes a theological text and what he says is soundly orthodox: "The original accumulation comes to play, in political economy, the same role that original sin plays in theology." This means that to accumulate capital, a capitalist robs the Indians and the blacks. But it is worse than that. It is the center that, in robbing Indians and killing blacks, produces that accumulation. Somebody's death--Original injustice-is the origin of accumulation. Five centuries ago it was precisely the desire for gold and silver-"Their idols are no more than gold or silver," said the prophets-that led them into sin, the sin of human domination. And this author goes on to say that "in the period of manufacturing the prime concern of commerce was industry. The colonial system therefore played the dominant role in those times. It was indeed *a foreign god ...*"

The author of these lines is Jewish. Obviously he is being prophetic without realizing it. He is also unaware that he is really Judeo-Christian in his outlook. Speaking of that money back in the period of manufacturing, he says: "It was a foreign god which came to be enthroned on the altar, together with the ancient gods of Europe, a god which one fine day would have them all bowing and .scraping." This is to say that that money that came from the colonies was going to be much more powerful than all the other little gods of the pantheon. It comes to this: It is perfectly right to be an atheist as far as idols are concerned. But one who is not sufficiently alert can fall into an error that Marx, almost inevitably, fell into-the error of denying the idol without affirming the "God-Other ." The danger, then, is of attempting to construct a perfect system, without contradictions. If I divinize such a system, I am allowing for bureaucratic

domination that is above all criticism. This is what happened in Russia.

Marx is not heterodox because he is an atheist (in regard to the idol, to money). He is heterodox because he is not enough of an atheist, because in his failure to affirm the "God-other" he is left with a system that has no outside support and no radical critique. Christianity is atheistic in regard to every idol-this it shares with Marx; but it is more critical than Marx because, in affirming the "God-other," it is critical of every *possible* system and will be until the eschatological times, until the end.

Although people believe Marx to be intelligent-and he was-they do not know that Jesus is even more intelligent, that he goes far beyond Marx because his method is more critical.

#### SIN AS A TOTALIZATION OF THE SYSTEM

Sin, all sin, is by nature a totalization. When we sin, we think we are all that there is and are therefore divine. We deny the Other and believe that our own totalized order is the kingdom of heaven. Those who would say, "I am in the kingdom" are really in sin. Those who know and believe that the kingdom is not only *here* but also *yet to come* has the kind of readiness and openness that will enable them to receive Jesus in the Parousia. Those who think they already have it "in their pocket" and consider it their own will be told by the returning Lord, "I do not know you." Nobody has Jesus in their pocket; no one is yet in the eternal All. We have one foot in and the other out, in such a way that there is a now but also a not-yet. And the not-yet is basic, because the true kingdom comes later. This means then that sin, paradoxically, is to totalize, and to totalize is to create an idol. And this is evil, the only kind of evil.

That original evil is exactly what is described in the four symbolic accounts in the first eleven chapters of Genesis. A symbolic account is a myth in the sense that a myth is an account of reality that is expressed rationally in symbolic form, valid for all people and for all epochs. These myths, in a way, are a message that God has for humanity-not only for primitives but also for persons who land on the moon and who work with computers.

The first and most concrete myth is that of Cain and Abel; the second and most abstract is that of Adam. The next two are less important-those of Noah and of Babel. Each one treats a different aspect of evil.

Beginning with the first myth, we learn that Cain was in his world, and Abel in his. And Cain killed Abel. Cain was an urbane city-dweller, whereas Abel was a shepherd. The shepherd's way with things is to wander about like an outsider, whereas the city-dweller takes over as if an owner of the whole earth.

Thus there was outright rivalry between prophetism, which is nomadic like Abraham, and the Canaanites, who were influential in getting the Jews to live in cities and to worship the baals, the idols. It is a problem of poverty and wealth. The sedentary person-the possessor-is the person of the city, Cain; on the other hand, the poor shepherd who walks the earth a free person is Abel. The latter is the attitude we must always have; it is what the prophets have. The person who is free can adore God.

Cain killed Abel; he killed a brother, the Other. Upon killing the Other he committed fratricide. Every fratricide since the Incarnation has amounted to theocide. Theocide is a prevalent notion at the moment in European thought; the "death of God" is often spoken of. It was Nietzsche who said, "God is dead." Like the genius that he was, he pointed out that "Our hands are stained with the blood of God." In effect, to kill the brother is to kill the epiphany of God; it is not as if God died but that

he disappeared, because Abel-"Holy Abel" as Jesus called him-is the poor person in the Beatitude sense of the word "poor ." Abel is the epiphany of the absolute Other, of God.

In biblical thought are two basic categories; the first is totality, or flesh, and the second--essential for understanding the whole Bible-is the Other, who is not only God but also the other brother by our side. Jesus once asked, "Who is in the neighborhood?" In the New Testament this is ordinarily translated, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus answers with a parable. Do not believe that Jesus was a simple or ignorant man, a moralist for the crowd. Jesus was a Hebrew theologian who had a method, the method of the prophets, and he used this theological method with perfect preciseness.

The theology born later in the West was not in accordance with the Hebrew method. When Jesus was asked who was the perfect person and who the poor person, he taught them the parable of the Good Samaritan. There was a man lying wounded along the side of the road, the Other, the poor man; he had been assaulted. There passed by the Other a Levite, who, because he was so totalized, so wrapped up in his affairs, saw nothing. He was totalized, his flesh was blocked off, he was in sin. Later a priest came by, so absorbed in his worries that he did not see the poor man either. Lastly a Samaritan – utterly despised by the Jews-came along. The Samaritan was also flesh, totality, but although he rode a mule and carried possessions and money with him, he was open, he was able to establish the original experience of Judeo-Christianity, the face-to-face. Therefore he accepted the fact that the wounded man was the Other, that he was worthy of being ministered to. The Samaritan's service is the fulfillment of Christian existence, as it was in the beginning and will be until the kingdom of heaven comes. In the kingdom there will be no theoretical

vision but a face-to-face, which is something much more profound. We are confronted here with one of the great distortions of Christian thought—the distortion of no longer knowing the meaning of the face-to-face experience, the kind of experience one has with a loved person. This is the highest form of wealth, beauty, joy, happiness—to be face-to-face with her, with him.

"Moses was face-to-face before God." In Hebrew, when a word is used twice, the meaning is intensified, much as we might say, "Years and years ago."

Face-to-face indicates proximity; "Moses was mouth-to-mouth with God." And in the Song of Songs, the loved one cries out, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." Face-to-face, mouth-to-mouth is the fundamental experience through which I respect the Other as other, I love the Other as other; it is *agape*. Charity is not merely friendship among brothers, because then it would be a totalized *we*, a house tightly closed. It would not be charity, love for the Other as other, for John says, "*He first* loved us." The one who loves first does not yet have friendship, because to love the Other as other comes before the love is returned. Friendship is mutual well-wishing, allowing us to be self-centered. To love the Other without receiving the Other's love is not mutual well-wishing but pure well-wishing toward the Other. It does not matter whether the Other reciprocates—I love that person for himself; only this makes it possible for that person to love me some day. This is how friendship really comes about. Charity is not merely comradeship, it is love freely given. How can parents come to love a child? Before the child was begotten, it did not exist. The parents love the child *before* they have it and that is *why* they have it. Procreation is similar to creation. God creates us while we are still unable to love him. He stands before us face-to-face, in the sense of love for the Other as other and not just as one of us. To see others as just one of us

may be a kind of group selfishness; it is not love. Love for the Other as other is charity, *agape*, it is a revealed concept found only in Judeo-Christianity, the most revolutionary approach to love in all history.

Cain was face-to-face with Abel and killed him. His action was just the opposite of the Samaritan's. The Samaritan was of service to the wounded man, and "service" is a technical word in Hebrew. Upon killing Abel, Cain was left alone. After killing the Other, who was there to reveal the Word of God to him? The Word of God in our lives comes to us only from the Other. If you tell me that the Word is in the Bible or in the liturgy, I shall believe it, but all I want to say here is that we are touched by the Word only when a poor person summons us. (The church also summons us as the Other.) I can read lovely Bible texts from the depths of my sinful totalization, and thus can, with my false approach, become more and more divinized. But someone suddenly charging into my world and telling me, "I have rights that are not yours" upsets me, disconcerts me, challenges me, demands that I go "beyond" myself. That which makes me go beyond is service. "The Servant of Yahweh," Jesus, practiced that kind of service. So, if I kill Abel, I am alone, I am unparalleled, and thus I am a god. It is a fratricide coupled with pantheism, because I divinize myself as the Unparalleled One. And at the same time it is an apparent theocide of God the Creator. This *is* the sin of Adam. The rational structure of the Cain-and-Abel myth is rather simple, but that of Adam is a bit more complex.

#### THE SIN OF ADAM

While dwelling in the innocence of paradise, Adam ate the fruit of the "tree of life." This wanting to eat "life" is wanting to be God. ("Life" is the life of the All, divine life,

the life of the gods; it is as though one would have the Promethean fire of the gods that the gods did not want humans to have.) Wanting to eat of the tree of life is not so much a sin of pride as it is of idolatry and pantheism. "Adam," meaning humanity as such—we are all "Adam" when we wish to eat of the tree of life—wishes to be God, but in order to be God he has to be the Unparalleled One. This means he must kill the other through some kind of injustice. This is why the prophets say, "There is no God because there is no justice." I can deny God only when I have killed the brother and, in order that my religious conscience not reproach me for his death, I have to affirm myself as God. Once everything is divine, injustice also appears to be perfectly natural.

In Latin America many people say the poor are poor because they are lazy and will not work. This judgment is an original sin. They will not accept that the poor are lazy not because they want to be but because they are the victims of a system whose benefits go to those making this judgment. This bourgeois argument that you hear constantly hides the fact of human and historical injustice and, in doing so, sets up injustice as though it were of divine origin, a natural fact over which we have no control. In this way Pilate washes his hands. The prince of this world becomes the natural law. A great contemporary Jewish thinker and philosopher has said: "War comes to be very reasonable."

Heraclitus, who was not given to being vague, said, "War is the start of everything." If war, then, is the start of everything, this means that injustice is natural. This is exactly what the story of Adam denies. Adam sins and the Bible makes the point that it was his free decision, that evil is not divine but human. In declaring God to be innocent, the Bible blames humankind for all sin. The cause is human freedom and the prince of this world,

that is, the Devil. I had a Scripture professor who confessed that he "could not prove the existence of the Devil but he believed in him." But the essential point is that humankind is also the prince of this world. It would be untrue to think that there is only a demonic person to blame, a fallen angel out there on whose shoulders we can place all our sins and be free of them.

Nor can we put the blame entirely on him for our temptations. People also can be "the prince of this world." An individual goes to a broker's office and says, "I want my investment to net me 5 percent instead of 3 percent annually." The broker replies, "Put your investment in an armaments company stock. They have a higher yield." The following year the broker can very proudly say, "There you are! A 5 percent profit on your investment." "Nice going," says the investor. But the investment helped pay for arms that killed people. That doesn't make any difference to the "princes of this world," who matter-of-factly kill people for economic benefits. They are Cains who kill Abel, Adams who eat of the tree of life and become gods, unparalleled, no Other before them.

God told Noah that, because people had done evil, he was going to destroy them. Noah floated safely on the ark of faith while all other people were destroyed. This tells us that the idol will reign for a time but that it will be destroyed. The destruction of the Beast in the book of Revelation will be like that of Sodom and Gomorrah. All the *systems* of sin in history will end up dead, and the dead will be buried with the dead. Those who play by the system will lose their lives in the system. "But you, follow me," to be of *service* to Abel instead of killing him. Sin owed a confusion of tongues at Babel, whereas the one who searches out the poor will be understood perfectly and will "converge." One thinks of the Latin American

brand of ecumenism between Protestants and Catholics who fight for the poor; they "converge" in their liberation efforts. It is a kind of ecumenism very different from that of the Old World.

This, then, is what I mean by the Evil One. The Evil One is the totalization of a system that negates the poor. The Indians, Africans, and Asians were negated; the poor, the farmers, the laboring class go on being negated within these systems. Another name for the Evil One is Pontius Pilate. Let us not forget that he was a delegate of the empire. The very idea of alienation is implicit in the notion of empire. The concept and the word "alienation" are very Christian when used in reference to Christ-He "emptied himself" (Phil. 2:7). To alienate the other means that Indians with their world, their possessions, their culture are transformed into tools in the hands of the Spaniards; the blacks, who had their world, were alienated from it and sold into slavery. Alienation is to kill the other; it is to kill Abel. You make the other dependent, at someone else's beck and call. You make the other a thing. The Indian is of value to the European, the person in the center, only as a trained thing. This world order becomes fixed and even claims to be eternal, natural and, furthermore, divine. This fixing of the prevailing order is Evil. The conquest was bad enough but worse still is the claim to be eternal of the established order. This brings us to the question of inheritance. We know, of course, that the system of Spanish land grants came under heavy fire. Therefore King Charles of Spain, in the New Laws of 1542, proposed that the land grants not be hereditary. In this way the Indians could recover their freedom within a generation. But the proposal met with stiff resistance in Mexico, Central America, Peru, and all over. The New Laws faded from

existence. Land grants went on being hereditary in the colonial oligarchy. This means that if the conquest and the murder of the other are unjust, even more unjust is the eternalization of the system, of the *institutions* that perpetuate the original sin. So we can say it is just as bad to inherit what is stolen as it is to steal.

#### INSTITUTIONAL INHERITANCE OF THE SIN OF THEFT

There are three origins of property: ( 1) I work to get my property; (2) I steal, like the English pirates and the modern Europeans, and in this way I get property; (3) I inherit. There is nothing to justify the last two. Only the first is valid. I rightfully have what I work for and it is always relatively little. If I have a lot, it is because I robbed someone, perhaps without even being aware of it. Later on, my children will inherit my property, and, along with it, my original sin.

How is original sin inherited? Along some hidden channel? No. The mother says to her son: "Don't play with that kid down the street. He's dirty and you might get some disease." Later on, a schoolmate wants to borrow that child's eraser and the son says: "Don't let him have it. You'll never get it back." The son becomes totalized without realizing it, a simple matter of inheriting original sin. When we reach the age of freedom-i.e., thirteen, fourteen years of age-when we are really born, we become aware that we have played the role of Cain many times, killing many Abels unknowingly because that is the way we were brought up. Original sin is transmitted through the ontological constitution of our being in the course of our education. On the day the child is taken from the uterus, it is not in the kingdom but neither is it condemned. The child has the potentiality of

being a person, but by adolescence is already in the kingdom of sin because cultural formation has taken place within the institutions of injustice.

There are echoes here, of course, of Rousseau. Rousseau taught the opposite of Calvin and spoke in a very Catholic way when he said: "Man is born neither good nor bad but institutions make him bad." He came close to talking about what the Bible calls "the sin of the world." The sin of the world is the sin of the flesh, and the sin of the flesh is likewise transmitted through cultural conditioning. The fifteen-year-old child of an aristocrat, of an oligarch who despises the poor and seeks only to augment the family wealth, is living in sin and has a share in all the deaths of Abel. Cain is both the agent of the Evil One and the Evil One himself.

"Our Father. ..deliver us from the evil one," "lead us not into temptation." That is the question-for us to be delivered from being one with the prince of this world, from entering knowingly and willingly into the structures of human domination. Deliver us!

When a poor exploited worker comes home and beats his wife, he is also a sinner inasmuch as he is a subjugator of his wife. In spite of the fact that his reaction is fair toward those over him in the factory, he is a sinner toward those who are not at fault-his wife, his child, those he beats up when he is drunk.

It is difficult not to be unjust on some level. But when we are unjust it is precisely because we are caught up in the system determined in history by the princes of this world.

This is the first thesis that I want to propound: the original sin of the prevailing world system has first of all been colonial domination. This is the first sin; all the others in the system spring from it. The greater sins are those that we don't even notice.

And this is the way the devil is present in real history. No one believes in the devil anymore. It is necessary for the devil that no one believe in him. But maybe what happens is that we locate him wrongly. We locate him within the individual conscience where, for example, he might tempt me sexually. This may be important, but not very; the great temptations into which one falls daily are the political and cultural structures of sin. Sin has become a very private affair. But *the* great historic and communitarian sins of humankind pass unnoticed by all. This is how the prince of this world rules.