



A JUST ECONOMIC ORDER

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Notes

During 1999 *Cristianisme i Justícia* will be dedicating its booklets to some of the most significant challenges of the next millennium. A probable list of these imperatives will be as follows:

- *A more just economic order;*
- *Listening to what the poor have to say to the Church;*
- *The Ecological Challenge;*
- *Equality –a pending subject;*
- *Violence –humanity's shame;*
- *Unemployment: a chronic illness;*
- *The Third Millennium –a challenge to the Church.*

We begin the series with this booklet. Its author recognises that "neither the churches nor Christianity have in their hands a solution to the problem." However, it would be wrong to object that all we know to do is criticise without offering any plausible solutions." Unfortunately, it is not offering solutions what is most needed today but *convincing ourselves of the necessity of setting out to look for them.* When the epidemic of AIDS broke out, there was no hint of a solution in sight. But the presence of death convinced everybody of the necessity of beginning to look out for one (and in a few years more progress has been made in this field than in several centuries of an unjust economy). If about 35 or 40 million deaths caused by hunger every year in a system characterised by abundance and wastefulness are not sufficient to convince us that the system is sick, how will we ever start looking for a solution? And then it will be easy to proclaim "there is no possible alternative."

Having said this, there are already more and more minds nowadays that, apart from denouncing the current system, are beginning to look for solutions (some of a more radical nature, others with a more immediate effect). The author of this booklet mentions some in his note 27.

CiJ - December 1998

1. INTERRUPTING AND TURNING BACK AN ENDLESS HISTORY OF SUFFERING

"We, the Members of the United Nations,

having summoned an extraordinary session of the General Assembly to study for the first time problems relating to raw materials and development, and to consider the most important economic difficulties facing the international community,

keeping in mind the spirit, purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations which aim at promoting economic and social progress in all countries,

we solemnly proclaim our common determination to work with all urgency for the establishment of a new international order based on equity, sovereign equality, interdependence, the common interest and co-operation of all States, irrespective of their economic and social systems that would permit the correction of existing inequalities, amend current injustices and eliminate disparities among developed countries, guaranteeing thereby to both present and future generations economic and social growth that would gain momentum in peace and justice."

A false declaration

With these words the resolution regarding the "Declaration of the Establishment of a New International Economic Order" was introduced and adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on May 1 1974.

Almost twenty-five years later, the reading of this declaration provokes no small scepticism. History has subsequently shown that the written document has not been translated into practice. The latter half of the seventies denied protagonism to the less developed countries that had proposed that declaration. The eighties will be known as the "lost decade" for those same nations. The nineties which are on the point of closing have neither corrected existing inequalities, nor mended injustice; on the contrary, they have contemplated impassively the scene in which the gap of inequalities between rich and poor countries have been growing wider and wider apart. Nor has the recently celebrated *International Year for the Eradication of Poverty* (1996) served to bring us in any way nearer to a fairer and more solidarity-minded international order.

Today the attainment of this objective for the present and future generations is more in danger than ever.

The insurmountable wall of self-interests

The way things have developed in fact over the years have shown quite clearly that the philosophy of the Declaration is just not working. And it was this way right from the start. On December 12 of the same year 1974, following up on that Declaration, the General Assembly of the United Nations approved by 120 affirmative votes the Charter of the Rights and Economic Duties of States. A unanimous decision was impossible on this occasion. All the dissenting votes (6) and abstentions (10) were from rich countries: West Germany, Belgium, Denmark, the United States, Great Britain and Luxembourg, on the one hand and on the other, Austria, Canada, Spain, France, Holland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan and Norway¹.

That solemn common determination has gradually given way to general discouragement. It has been worn down as a result of having to collide futilely with that invisible wall of *vested interests* rich countries have set up and which has proved more unassailable than the Wall of Berlin.

A disturbing challenge

The century that is about to close poses in its wake a disturbing challenge: *Will the Twenty-first century see the birth of a Just Distribution of Wealth?* We don't know if this will happen, and I must admit, I sometimes harbour my worst fears. The voices that clamour daily in this direction seem to be clamouring futilely in the immense desert of the apathy of the dominating culture. Parodying *Miguel Ángel Asturias*, I would dare to say that the globalisation of our world is rendering it immensely big for the fatigue of the poor and turning it gradually smaller for their anguish.

However, if we take the above formulated question as an expression of a human yearning, we will be able to affirm, without fear of making a mistake, that it does meet an aspiration shared by the entirety of the inhabitants of the "global village", including the neoliberals. We could even take a step further to say that there are many in their ranks who affirm they are neoliberals precisely to satisfy this aspiration. One would have to be cruelly pitiless to exclude oneself from such a noble human aspiration. Unanimity on this point, however, doesn't permit us to be excessively optimistic about the chances that our grandchildren will see this aspiration fulfilled.

For the most part humanitarian feelings towards the poor are just good intentions. And the reason is very simple: Not infrequently do feelings fail to coincide with individual and social interests, nor do they agree on what constitutes solidarity. For this reason it happens that many of the voices that lament insistently the lack of public attention to key issues on the future of humanity as is that of sustainable development, manifest a notable lack of interest for today's poor. I refuse to believe that the reason for this divergence lies in the idea secretly caressed by some that the solution to poverty is maybe simply allowing the poor to die. Some may have read in a Spanish newspaper the cynical comment of a bureaucrat of the World Bank who reportedly affirmed in Nairobi that the solution to Africa lay in the deaths of Africans by hunger and AIDS which, so he figured, would wipe out in ten years time the wretched from the African continent².

There are people who estimate that this type of radical opinions is more frequent than we imagine. Personally I prefer to take into consideration the growing number of economists, sociologists and politicians who are beginning to think that the level of inequality and poverty is such that the planet could eventually reach a total collapse. In their opinion, reduction of the

inequality gap and relief from misery of the impoverished majority constitute, together with the ecological issue, the main problems of the next phase of industrial revolution. Very slowly the full impact of data and the insistence of joint responsibility thinking is paving the way to the idea that it is "us" who are the solution to poverty and that looking for a solution as though it were the problem of "others" is incorrect both from the humanitarian as well as the political point of view.

The eradication of poverty and the distribution of wealth are the great Utopian yearning which is going to guide this reflection. I will put forward my theory which consists of a double conviction in the form of a thesis which I will expose as such:

— **1.** Neoliberalism is the greatest obstacle one encounters when attempting to translate one's good desires of a New Economic Order into historically viable reality.

— **2.** Christianity offers a mystique and perspective on the one hand and practical guidance on the other in the pursuit of our objective.

2. NEOLIBERALISM AND THE DISORDER OF POVERTY

We are still far from surmounting what has come to be known as "*the long neoliberal night*" of the eighties (that of Reaganism and Thatcherism). Despite its failure (economic recession, financial instability, the alarming increase in the number of poor people, etc.) neoliberalism remains the most influential ideology in the world.

And let us not deceive ourselves: this doctrine is social darwinism "*which exalts the necessity and convenience for the whole of society (and of the human race) that some of its members, those better and more abundantly endowed to compete economically, should have all the chances of surviving and coming out victorious in the confrontation of Man against Nature and of Men among themselves in the fight to maintain control over the creative resources of wealth*"³.

2.1. THE GROWTH OF HUMAN SURPLUSES IN THE INTERIOR OF THE WORLD SYSTEM

One of the most important social and cultural events characterising the end of this century is the increase of human surpluses inside the world global system. The current Market Economy System is built on the logic that defends and leads to the existence of a *dual world* of rich and poor, in which the unlimited desires and the ever higher quality demands of a minority (the rich) gain advantage over the needs for survival of the majority (the poor).

There's no need to repeat here data that is already sufficiently well known or to re-summon to the memory pictures that would offend the sensibility of any well-born individual. We will limit ourselves to two issues:

1. According to **the PNUD Report** (1966) the Gross Domestic Product of our Planet ranged around 23 trillion pesetas. The Developed Countries consumed 18 of these and only 5 trillions remained for the remaining 80% of humanity.

This world situation of asymmetrical dependence becomes especially blatant when we consider how it affects Food Commerce in the world (more than two-thirds of the world's exports and imports of Food Products correspond to Developed Countries), and this explains the geography of hunger. Today's starvation and malnutrition are not the result of global food scarcity, but the fruit (partially, at least) of Protectionist Policies of those countries, which have contributed to

creating and increasing the dependence for food of many chronically poor areas of the Third World. To the point of having 800 million people deprived of being able to satisfy their primary need of feeding themselves, and are obliged to suffer starvation⁴.

2. The reverse side of *increasing globalisation* of economic relations and the unstoppable advance of *science and technology* offers the image of millions of human beings thrown by the railroad, watching the train of prosperity pass them by. And with them, suddenly destined to disappear with few alternative perspectives for their future are many and varied forms of life (ranging from indigenous and tribal towns with their ancestral cultures, to self-sufficient farming societies, to traditional crafts and small family enterprises, all of which total some thousands of millions of human beings concentrated for the most part in Africa, Asia and Latin America)⁵.

These enormous human contingents are trapped in an authentically diabolical vicious cycle, that of *unemployment and insolvency*, which condemn them to social discrimination and exclusion since as they have no buying capacity, they cannot "be" people who are recognised as such by the world community⁶. The shutting out of people who are on the border of the world system is thus rendered inevitable. These are the effects of *the hurricane of globalisation* which has swept for over two decades through Latin America as it does through the whole world⁷.

2.2. THE NEOLIBERAL CATECHISM

With the upsurge of this panorama of inhumanity, the result of what F. Fernández Buey calls "*the cruelty of our people*"⁸, the singsong of the Neoliberal Catechism is constantly heard, a singsong that insists it is senseless and outdated to expect qualitative changes in the World Market system, and all that must be done at this point are just a few adjustments and channelling of efforts that the improvement of its functioning demands. Care must be taken, however, never to interfere systematically with the system.

"*The end of history*" (F.Fukuyama) has been decreed. In the conservative ranks there are voices that claim the concourse of moral values with the idea of mitigating the undesirable effects of competition based on the exclusive criterion of profit, and recognising formally the evidence that no democracy or liberty exists without a certain minimum of social cohesion.

Among these voices is to be heard that of the well known Spanish banker and outstanding member of Opus Dei, R. Termes. In his opinion, capitalism will give all the fruit that we expect of it if, instead of trying coercively to correct its functioning, we were to push ahead with the improvement of the ethical-cultural and juridical-institutional systems in whose framework the economic system is set, adapting them to an anthropology based on the nature and value of man as a rational and free being. The challenge and effort would lie in establishing a juxtaposition – their mutual independence being kept in tact– of the liberal economic system alongside *a system of values* rooted in *norms that are permanent and objective* from the moral and rational viewpoint⁹.

This position is very similar to that put forward by the North American neo-conservatives.

Money, the driving force of history

We are confronted here with one of the lies that has been implanted by neoliberal ideology and practice.

This position ignores or conceals the fact that mutual independence of the systems is possible. What is even more, the economic system has colonised the ethical-cultural system to the extent that the "monotheism of money" and the "myth of economic growth" have invaded all human spheres (private life, work, political life, etc.), despite the fact that they are incapable of granting the happiness they promise, not even to their beneficiaries.

Money has been converted into the driving force of history, of an inhumane history to be more exact. It was a long time ago that it ceased to be an instrument of interchange to convert itself into the *depository of a value* that guaranteed satisfaction of future needs (health care, an unforeseen accident, children's education, old age care, etc.). But in our culture of satisfaction, money functions mainly as *a depository of meaning* (it gives recognition and salvation, that is to say, real existence and the possibility of satisfying as yet unimaginable future desires) to those who pile up money or attempt to do so in an unlimited way. We are referring naturally to the rich and to financial powers.

I see no other reason why its owners should be so willing to sacrifice for money's sake all other values: not only in the private sphere: personal health but in others as well including world peace¹⁰ and the dignity and life of millions of impoverished people on this planet¹¹. Paradoxically enough, only the poor (those 3,000 million people who manage to survive in the world on less than two dollars a day¹²), and who are bereft of this deposit (money), look upon it as *a depository of a value*, capable of satisfying their many needs (food, drink, appropriate housing, basic education, etc.).

2.3. THE CRUELTY OF A MARKET ECONOMY

The approach to a moral regeneration of the economy is necessary if we are to mitigate some of the outrages of "this necrophiliac order", though this approach will be totally insufficient to correct their causes. One should take care not to mistake market economy for market, since they are not synonyms, much as neoliberalism would like us to consider them so! The physiognomy of market economy, as it is practised today, possesses certain traits that are judged very negatively by *John Paul II* and do not form part of the Pontifical theory regarding "good" capitalism¹³.

Capitalism without a human face

The institutional and juridical framework of Nations and of supranational organisations instead of guaranteeing the integral liberty of the citizens of the world, serve as a safeguard of

globalisation with a view to facilitating the flow of goods and capital and promoting these by means of huge subsidies which are far superior to those granted by the social Nation¹⁴.

The *mechanisms* of the global market –as the Pontifical teaching reminds us– function almost automatically making each one of these situations of poverty and wealth increasingly more rigid with the passage of time (SRS 16c). Its internal logic favours a model of *vicarious growth* in which the rich exercise the function of representing the whole of humanity in the enjoyment of the material goods of creation¹⁵, and in which it is considered normal that millions of men and women live and die in misery. Their arguments remain unshaken in the face of mass starvation, nor do they feel scandalised before the lack of protection of the increasing pyramid of human surpluses of the system. The system is heartless and *presupposes a cruel mystique of accomplishment and a cult to efficiency*¹⁶.

It is sterile, it would seem to me, to introduce here a debate on "good" *versus* "bad" capitalism. Neither will I refer to the known (and clumsy) use of Christian symbolism to legitimise democratic capitalism (M.Novak) or the intent to find Christian roots for the Free Market Economy¹⁷; there are opinions for everybody in the neo-conservatives' vineyard.

But one point I do wish to underline is that the struggle for the life of the poor and the contribution to the historic viability of a just distribution of wealth in the world (this fight I do consider fecund) involve resistance to the neoliberal ideology. Belligerence to this ideology begins with the clear perception and rigorous comprehension of its nature.

2.4. NEOLIBERALISM AS A "RELIGION"¹⁸

Referring to this aspect, I would like to call attention to one characteristic of neoliberalism, the *fundamentalism* or *economic fanaticism*¹⁹ of its ideology of the market, which has given rise to it being spoken of as a "religion"²⁰.

The intense process of Messianisation of the market and the proclamation of a triumphal gospel that disqualifies any other alternative to the neoliberal option²¹ are two of the manifestations of the prevalent *economic fundamentalism* which claims for itself faith in the absolute value of its economic proposals and demands a blind acceptance of all the rules that people, who consider themselves as the authentic depositories of "*that revelation*", *derive from its doctrine*. "*The admission of propositions of economists as absolute truths is to confuse economy –which is a scientific discipline among others– with "economism" which turns out to be a fundamentalism as devastating as the many other forms of religious fundamentalism*"²².

Neoliberal faith versus the weight of reality

All world reports during the last twenty-five years have been denouncing the mythological character of the neoliberal faith, namely, that greater economic accumulation (*growth*) will be accompanied by a better distribution of wealth and an improvement in the lives of poor nations (*development*), and that greater economic *efficiency* will result in greater *legitimation* of the

system. Have these denunciations mattered at all? And has it made any difference really when it has been pointed out that *"the danger today does not arise from Malthusian pessimism (the fear that the growth of food production will not match population growth) but from Malthusian optimism (the false belief that if we solve the problem of food production, we will have resolved the problem of starvation)"*²³. Whatever be the case, neoliberals will stick to their principles, that is to say, to their faith.

Under pretexts of *"modernisation"*, *"realism"*, *"responsibility"*, they affirm the inevitable character of the processes on track, accusing of intellectual capitulation and condemning as utterly irrational, all those who refuse to accept that *"the natural state of society is the market"*²⁴.

Taking refuge in the impenetrable complexity of economic laws that "the profane" will never be able to comprehend, they turn a deaf ear to those who from the same scientific community as them discover the fallacies in their economic sciences²⁵. They, furthermore, ignore those who from other disciplines denounce their epistemological limits²⁶ or put forward a new and more balanced vision of economy or simply speak of alternatives to capitalism²⁷.

2.5. CAPITALISM – THE PEOPLE'S OPIUM

Through the very powerful means of mass communication and the equally efficacious mechanisms of persuasion, sustained and controlled by the economic orthodoxy, the neoliberals are indefatigable in their efforts to introduce *"capitalism as the people's opium"* and end up preventing us from perceiving the falsehood of some very simple working principles which I cannot help but transcribe finally in the lucid version of J. M^o Tortosa as follows:

- 1. *The economy can, and must, grow indefinitely;*
- 2. *When the economy grows, all of us are better off;*
- 3. *If each person seeks his own welfare, an invisible hand (the market) will obtain the best for everybody;*
- 4. *The market permits the best distribution of wealth and the lowest prices;*
- 5. *It does not make sense to plan things in the long term since the system requires that profits be made immediately;*
- 6. *The role of human beings is to rule nature, putting it at our service...*

All these principles are false as: 1) growth has its limits; 2) with the growth of the economy it is also possible that the number of the unemployed and poor could grow at the same time; 3) when each person looks solely after his own interests, it happens that the weakest people are trampled upon in this Darwinist struggle; 4) this market of Adam Smith does not exist as there is a lot of privileged information, much power, many personal relations which make the participants in the market very unequal among themselves and at the end only very few people are able to take advantage of the

situation; 5) planning things in the short term could even impede survival in the future; and 6) Not to take nature into account is to commit suicide as a species.

If, despite all this, we accept those principles, it is because they are necessary in order that 1) the rich of the rich countries may become rich; 2) the rich of the poor countries may become rich too; and 3) the rest may resign themselves.

And to resign themselves, there is nothing better than: 1) thinking that things are as they are because such is the nature of things (human nature is egoistic, everybody seeks to maximise their pleasure, etc.); 2) accepting the principles because they are very rational (for which there is nothing better than economic sciences and administrative law...or Marxism); and 3) not posing problems that would threaten the power structure between countries (the rich countries and the Third World) and within the countries themselves (the rich and the poor).

In short, we have to be technocrats, one of the many that watch over our wellbeing, one of those who do not sell themselves but who do rent themselves out. Naturally to the winning side²⁸.

2.6. DO NOT DEMONISE THE MARKET

Having affirmed the foregoing, we have to be capable of getting over the risk of demonising the market. This danger is very real and many talks and progressive Christian practices have not been able to avoid it, hurling themselves "spectacularly" against the reefs of historic inefficacy.

It is true that the market is no magician's hat from which emerge human realities, thanks to the influence of the magical wand of free competition. But the market as an institution and the economic reason as a tool are absolutely necessary to fight efficaciously against poverty in the world and to render possible a more dignified life to the greater part of humanity.

*"We would be committing an error if we reduced the significance of the market to its economic dimension alone; in the concept of the market we also recognise the emblem of liberty both of individuals and of institutions of free affiliation. And again, the market is the symbol of democratic virtualities"*²⁹.

But between the wish and the deed, there is an enormous distance to be covered. These virtualities are captive and need to be freed to be able to convert the market into a setting of solidarity and justice in liberty. This calls for not only an urgent redistribution of wealth, but also a transformation of the productive system which would make this redistribution of wealth possible and profound reforms in the economic and political structures.

But, are we capable of substituting the current "sacrificial" logic of the system (in favour of the interests of a few privileged individuals at the cost of the lives of the poor majority) by another of sympathetic solidarity (against the interests of the privileged few and in favour of the lives of everybody as a whole)? Will we be able to put the system at the service of a truly fraternal human race and not one based on sacrificial victims? Will we be capable of replacing the selfish

*power of hegemony of some nations in the globalisation of the market by the power of globalisation based on solidarity?*³⁰ In this uncertainty is enclosed the main problem of the *whole* of humanity.

In these circumstances, to be conservative implies accepting the condemnation, exclusion and even the death of the great majority of humanity that has been kept out of Modernity and its concomitant benefits³¹.

3. CHRISTIANITY, A MYSTIQUE TO FIGHT FOR AND ESTABLISH AN ORDER OF SOLIDARITY

Neither the churches nor Christianity have in their hands the solution to the problem. Nevertheless, they are bearers of a "surplus awareness" stemming from the confidence they have in the viability of God's unknown and unheard-of possibilities in history.

This conviction serves as the source from which they draw power to resist connivance with the spirit of the times (a "giving in" as a consequence of the complexity of the present), and power to dream emancipating dreams which impel them to get over and above the present economic system, replacing it with another that takes into account and makes viable the life of the poor.

From the viewpoint of the poor, Faith discovers the presence of God on the side of those who are sacrificed but they refuse to accept the soundness of the logical grounds on which they are kept out of the economic community.

Equipped in this fashion, Christianity has to be prepared to introduce itself (in word and in spirit) in the intricate conditions of our world in order to transform it in favour of justice and life.

3.1. THE MYSTIQUE OF TRUST IN UNCONDITIONAL LOVE³²

Without faith it is not possible to transform the world

The human race clamours for a meaning or for a new world order which does not seem possible.

Nevertheless, *"we know practically all that can be known about the functioning of economies. We know how to eliminate hunger. We know how to create employment. We know how to redistribute revenue. We know what is happening to the economically useless. We have the knowledge and the intentions. All that is lacking is the will to do so"*³³.

If it is true that "Where there's a will, there's a way", then we can say: we must be lacking the "will". But the question is much more complex. The conversion of just "wanting" into really "willing" to do something in the cultural, economic and political spheres claims something more than just moral willingness. Today we do our best to discover the motivation that is capable of sustaining collective altruistic ideals among the powerful citizens of the dominant "satisfaction-seeking culture", and to persuade them to pay of their free accord the high price that is entailed in

making effective what is implied by really "willing" something. They will have to renounce their unlimited desires in favour of the basic needs of the poor majority (food, drink, health, housing, work, education, etc.)

When one realises that desires have no limits, one seeks naturally the unlimited. And when one desires the unlimited, there is never anything left over to share, there is always something lacking³⁴.

In these circumstances for the rich to share what they have with the poor is an impossible dream. This then is the great obstacle: the lack of strength of a deep-rooted conviction that can impel the rich to change over to the view held by those in need, and as we all know, without faith one cannot change the world in a responsible way.

Fear of death, the energy that gives rise to solidarity

The objective threats that are posed by the current world situation are of such dimensions that they have begun to affect also –and very seriously so– the interests of powerful people and those of rich countries. This change of situation has converted our problems of the end-of-the-century (poverty, environment, the threat of chaos, etc.) into problems that are relevant to the rich. People have begun to think that "*Fear is now looking after the vineyard*" of humanity. There is nothing with greater power to safeguard life than self-interest or self-love. And this is how it is broadly announced in popular newspapers in some northern countries.

The famous French intellectual, E. Morin, has also joined this current of thought. He suggests a (new) religion without gods, but with a sacred mystic sentiment, open to compassion and the bearer of a gospel of damnation. The human race constitutes a community destined to death and our small lost planet is "*our Motherland Earth*". This necessity is converted into the main driving force that induces people to act morally and avert the onslaught of death before its time. From the certainty that it is not possible to escape damnation on the one hand, and the re-discovery, on the other, of the planet Earth as a roof, home and motherland, there emerges the necessity of a "*communicating and sharing force*" and the need of a re-binding together of human beings, which with a combined fraternal effort can, at worst, avert the disaster of the premature death of humanity, and, at its possible best, carry on the process of humanising and civilising the earth³⁵.

Whether fear of premature universal death, or its less harsh version of self love, will be capable or not of producing this promised binding together of human beings or an affirmation of life will reach out to those who massively lose it before their time is something that remains to be seen, but I am not going to be the one who will discredit these proposals. Especially so because, as they have been put forward in an environment that is culturally Christian, the proposals demonstrate the lack of capacity where solidarity is concerned of Christianity based on personal experience and they point to the urgent need of returning once more to a *live* Christianity.

The mystique of a live Christianity

A live Christianity does have the capacity and energy to establish a "*re-binding*" of human beings and can raise among its faithful something similar to a *vicarious solidarity*, that is to say,

a democratic disposition of mind to give away or to lose in advance much of what is habitually considered as high life or splendid living with the idea of constructing the common home of Humanity.

Christian tradition has always prepared its followers to devote their lives to the struggle of eradicating poverty in the world. One should not look for the explanation of this –as E. Morin and many Christians that think like him do– in the promise of the reward of resurrection since the most efficacious Christian motivation for this type of pro-existence is a God who is Good Tidings for the poor. Neither is it correct to affirm that the most radical contribution of Christianity to the world lies in its moral imperatives and its fraternal willingness, as some sponsors of reorientation of rich countries in the matter of solidarity would like us to imagine. Its most decisive resource lies in the possibility it offers to build one's personal and collective existence based on the confidence in a God who is the Friend of human beings.

The Christian religion offers a form of being present in and facing up to reality and was set in motion by the fraternal history of Jesus of Nazareth. Its inspiration for solidarity springs from the meaning of the reality of the world which the Good Samaritan of suffering humanity (cf. Lc 10,25-37) found sown in the field of history (cf. Mt 13, 3-23), and which he communicated to men (cf. Mc 1,15) and valued as the finding of a treasure so precious that not even the greatest of renunciations entailed to acquire it could detract from it being the cheapest and most secure of "business transactions" (cf. Mt 13, 44-46)

The convictions of fraternity and solidarity of Jesus live and are regenerated constantly in the experience of the Coming of the Kingdom of Life, whose origin is to be traced in the proximity with God Who makes Him His Son and in His commitment with the life of the poor, His brethren (cf. Mt 11, 2-6). God enters history offering the possibility of a full human life with universal reach but this full human life sprouts into reality from the moment attention is paid to the historical necessities of this world's "those-without-life". The poor and their cause are the place where God has definitively placed His life-giving glory. Jesus, assuming the condition of the poor and making Himself one of these (cf. Phil. 2, 7), returns His life to the Father, procuring thereby that life flows abundantly among the poor.

Jesus had to confront the abyss of death and assume the uncertainty that brought about the failure of His fraternal cause. The power of an idolatrous system, opposed to what He wanted to bring about, appeared to defeat His purpose definitively. But between the logic of desperation and that of resignation which seemed ineluctable, He chose another alternative: that of dying as He had lived, confiding wholeheartedly His cause and His own personal destiny in the hands of God the Friend (cf. Lc 23,46).

Since then, a rumour about Him has spread through history: God has given Him back life (cf. Hch 2, 23-24; 3, 13-15) and this happening in the form of a promise is within universal reach (cf. Hch, 39). His resurrection announces that His is the "last sacrifice".

A new history has now begun in which all human necessities can be satisfied. The Messianic time has set in, that of abundance for the poor and of grace for the victims. The proximity of the God of the living (cf. Mt 22, 32) has thus opened out a definitive gap in the fatal circuit of death and has impeded reality from being branded as absurd when it is unable to shrug off this calamitous destiny. God the Friend of Life (cf. Sap 11, 26) is greater than Perdition!

The "power" of confidence that arises from the sense of solidarity

When Christianity proclaims and lives off this conviction, it "is not looking the other way". When it takes hold of this conviction, it does not do so to take its mind off the fear that is produced by the inevitable sting of death. When it proposes love to its brethren as its historical verification (cf. 1 Jn 3, 14) it is not inciting to "flee forwards". It simply wants to inform, without any sort of fanaticism, about what it "has seen" from the perspective of God.

The situation of Humanity subject to egoism and death can be contemplated with sorrow but without helplessness, with signs of defeat but without the symptoms of resignation, because *the gift* of the Spirit has inaugurated for it a new regime of affiliation and fraternity.

Consequently, one can be conscious of the failure of reason and of the supposed goodness of freedom of the human species and, at the same time, harbour hopes in the possibilities of brotherhood, since the latter has been set free from decadence by the Spirit of Jesus in order that all may attain the glory of the children of God; one can hear the outcries of the poor and feel sorry for the sufferings of creation, perceiving in all this the moaning and pains of the Spirit of God in the difficult childbirth of a new creation. The secret consists in accepting the invitation to delve deep into the Absolute Mystery of Love which is God (cf. Rom. 8, 1-35).

In Christianity the strength to rebind together human beings does not stem from the fear of premature death, but from the confidence in Life in its fullness. The ties of brotherhood do not arise from the awareness of being irremediably lost, but from the beautiful experience of living united indestructibly as brothers "in good hands". The impulse to share the fortune of the poor does not arise from the problematic recognition of the Earth as the common house, but from the intuition of a believer that the home of everybody has already firm ground on which to build itself: in the lap of God.

The stimulus for compassionate solidarity is not derived from the ideal of converting our planet into a haven of salvation, but from the revelation that God has created Humanity with the idea that it be fraternal communion of happiness and life already in this world, the bright home of the children of the Father, and has destined humanity to the plenitude of the Trinitarian motherland.

The unlimited confidence that Unconditional Love provokes an uncommon "power" of brotherhood and constitutes the deepest fountain of energetic resources to think and act with a sense of solidarity.

3.2. REALITY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

Christianity does not sponsor any free trip to Mount Olympus, but a "mystique with wide open eyes" (J.B. Metz) which dilates as if with collyrium the pupils of the eyes so that they may see (cf. Apoc 3,18) and weep over the horrors of the hell of poverty. Christianity shares in this way the perspective of Unconditional Love which reveals the lie of reality and discloses its historical opportunities.

The converting into messiah and idolisation of the market

The neoliberal ideology tends to regard the market as an absolute value and convert it into the method and end which govern the relations of human beings. The jubilant announcement of victory of the market economy has been accompanied by the promise of consolation for poor countries. The market offered an end to their servitude on the condition that they accept their rules of the game. The sound of the oracle of the new order has resounded everywhere and without rest. A multitude of voices keep on shouting:

In the desert of poverty prepare the way for the free market, clear the path for our "god"; take what steps are necessary to adjust. Here is your "god"!

Look, the market arrives with power and with raised arm orders. Who measured, as he did, the allocation of the scarce productive resources, increasing production to its maximum level and making it most appropriate for the needs of society? Who embraced, as he did, the wisdom of god-market and taught as his adviser? With who did he seek advice, who explained to him and who taught him the science of productivity and who showed him the way of economic rationality?

Nations are nothing before him, they have the same insignificant weight as dust in weighing scales. The lives of nations weigh in his decisions as much as a grain of sand, and all human and natural resources are insufficient as holocaust to him. In his presence governments of all nations are as if they did not exist.

This prophecy is only a crass parody of that made by the prophet (cf. Is 40, 10-17). The results of economic policies have made evident that, unlike the God of Life, "god-market" does not bring along a salary for poor countries, neither has he given them any reward in advance, nor even alleviated their external debt. Quite the contrary, instead of directing or treating them with care or leading them safe in his bosom with a feeling of solidarity to the land of liberty and life, he has humiliated them. After wounding them, he has led them to the guillotine, converting them into the historical figure of the Servant of God announced by the old profit (cf. Is 52, 1-12). We have taken up positions in our fight against idolatry.

The recent history of market economy shows how the unconditional and absolute legitimisation of the system has reinforced and secured its idolatrous tendency. In the name of a "scientific" and rational necessity, it has ignored the existence of goods that, by their very nature, are not and cannot be simply goods. Refusing to take into account the social mortgage of private property, it has built the market as an exclusive setting for profits and capital without the control of social forces or governments. The end result of this system is human sacrifices. The number of the poor has been increasing alarmingly and their situation of humiliating dependence has been aggravated with the passage of time.

This new religion, under the disguise of science and secularism, is incapable of accepting that *there exists something that is due to man because and insofar as he is man*. Its products are only available for sale. They are designed to satisfy needs of solvent people. Consequently, the (badly called) free market is converted into an ineffectual instrument for investing resources and answering efficaciously the needs of the majority of humanity. To the poor –who are insolvent in the market– no real possibility for survival is offered them. Neither are they given the opportunity to participate actively in the common good of humanity: their present and future is simply death³⁶.

The churches, in the measure they recover their "non-sacrificial" tradition and revitalise that of love towards our neighbour³⁷, will find themselves denouncing the falsehood of this idol of death and will be led by "the zeal of the house of the God of Life" to fight against the power of this idol and in favour of a world society in which poor nations can sit as equals around the common table of Humanity and share in the decisions with the advanced countries of the globe. The idolatrous system makes these Christian practices a risky affair and it usually sees to it that the ones who engage in these practices end up being crucified in different ways.

This is the price paid by a countless number of contemporary men and women who have chosen to lead their lives "*with the power of the truth about mankind, the truth that is contained in the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption*" and "*with the power of love which emanates from it*"³⁸.

The topic of idolatry and that of opting for the poor seem to me decisive for evangelisation. Both condition very closely the announcement of Jesus Christ Alive and the personal encounter with Him. The poor, their perspective and experience, their hope of salvation and liberation, are the criterion of authenticity for every Christian word and action³⁹. And for this reason I fail to understand the absence of the first and the scant importance of the second in so many official documents which alert us to the necessity and the challenges of the New Evangelisation on the threshold of the Third Millennium⁴⁰.

A structural sin

The practice of the economic system renders more plausible the recognition of the existence of a sin in its very structure. For many decades theology has been speaking in this vein. John Paul II alerted us to its nature.

After analysing the situation of extreme poverty in which the greater part of humanity lives, he affirms that the responsibility for this situation is not to be attributed to the poor nations, much less to a kind of fate that is dependent on the natural conditions or the total combination of circumstances but to the existence of economic, financial and social mechanisms which accumulate wealth in certain places while impoverishing the rest. These mechanisms generate *sinful structures* which provoke death in their varied versions⁴¹.

Not only loss of millions of human lives but also other situations of death toll.

— Multiplication of urban masses left unemployed or who eke out a living on unstable or badly remunerated jobs;

— Bankruptcy of thousands of small and medium-sized companies which abort, moreover, the capacity of social agents to interact socially;

— Mobility and pressure of work that leave the worker little time for family and neighbours and wound primary bonds of relationship.

— Forced displacement of farming and indigenous populations that leave vulnerable and destroy their cultural and spiritual traditions;

— Loss of democratic conscience as a result of wasteful spending of the rich, growth of inequality and the scandal of corruption, increase in criminal rates and urban violence provoked

not infrequently by hunger and utter despair;

— Expansion of drug trafficking based on peasant producers whose traditional products have been kept out of market competition;

— Disappearance of food security;

— Destabilisation of national economies by the free flow of international speculation;

— Upsets in local communities due to projects launched by multinational companies that refrain from employing local inhabitants, etc.⁴²

We are confronted with the sacrificial logic of a death-provoking system. The trait of the structural sin of the system is unveiled to us by the eyes of God. God prohibits Christians from taking refuge in a purely personal conception of sin and conversion and maintaining an innocently ingenious passive disposition before economic reality. From the viewpoint of God, the goodness of an economic system does not depend on the room it provides for freedom but is measured by solidarity, or the absence of it, in the way its results are produced (the question of the distribution of wealth), though these results may be less spectacular from the viewpoint of productive efficiency.

A church that takes seriously "*the mystical leadership of conversion, communion and solidarity*" has to learn to practice the law of life of Jesus, his Messiah and Lord: to take away the sin of the world, one has to shoulder the burden of this sin. This is the reason why Christianity puts so much value to the meaning of giving one's life and freedom to the cause of engendering a new economic model.

The experience of living permanently under the care of a benevolent God lets a Christian know that "being-with" and "being-for" is the primary truth of every human being, irrespective of his ethical quality. One's true human condition is revealed in *pro-existence*, that is to say, in the renunciation of the development of one's own will to power at the fatal expense of negation or assimilation of another's, and in the art of *leaving and opening place for another*, for the stranger, for the insolvent (as we would say in economic terms).

It is in the practice of the above that human liberty acquires its highest expression. If human liberty is to be understood in no way *as liberty to force somebody else*, neither does its radical truth correspond to the paradigm of economic liberalism: the *liberty of determination*. Liberty conceived thus has shown itself historically incapable of overcoming the logic of dominion and possession. Christian wisdom speaks of liberty as *liberty of communion*, as capacity to decide to open oneself up to another and to bind oneself to others: man is truly free when he assumes the role of his brothers' keeper and that of the good Samaritan.

History under the Promise

In the depth of historical darkness the look of the God of Life gives way to the presentiment of the possibility of a new future for the poor. God's Promise is not measured by the capacity of human hopes.

This unheard-of gratuitousness permanently gives direction to Christian hope in the sense that it helps recognise that reality is already marked by the imprint of the Gospel, and it invites

Christians to explore and exploit to the maximum the gold mine of the *still* unedited but now viable utopia of universal citizenship. Christianity is a faith that is always open to the possibilities of history and is tenaciously opposed to all attempts to interpret it in an optimistic way.

To believe in the proximity of the Kingdom of God is to allow oneself to be enthused by the Promise that even on the threshold of the twenty-first century this history can offer something different and alternative (that is to say, that it can revert). To believe in the gift of the Spirit is to recover the freedom to disagree with the opinion of the majority ("we can only hope to get along) and to break with common evidence (the future that awaits us will be more of the same").

Amidst this amnesic and post-modern society, Christianity awakens the collective *memory* of the causes that helped mankind to live and die with dignity in the past, recovers hopes and nourishes critical resistance to the forces of cruelty. It modestly attempts to contribute its grain of sand to the construction of a culture characterised by active participation and solidarity. This Christian faith is capable of arousing men and women, expert in the wounded ethics of compassion and skilled in the promotion of a social action of resistance to convert into partial and anticipatory reality, the alternative world we persist in dreaming of with the God of Promise.

Probably all their achievements "*are trifles* –as Eduardo Galeano would say–. *They do not finish off with poverty, they do not take us away from the spiral of violence, they do not socialise the means of production and of change, they do not expropriate the caves of Ali Baba. But perhaps they have the capacity of unleashing the joy of doing something, translating that joy into deeds. And in the last analysis, to act on reality and convert it, however little this might be, is the only way of proving that reality is transformable*"⁴³.

Outside the poor there is no salvation

We are still many who are of the opinion that despite their chants of victory, within the market economy there is no salvation. It strikes us as "*unacceptable* –we repeat here with Juan Pablo II– *the affirmation that the defeat of socialism leaves capitalism as the only model of social organisation*". We prefer to affirm, again with Galeano that "*socialism did not die, because it had not yet existed*", and we believe with him that "*today is the first day of the long life that it has to live*"⁴⁴.

Moreover, the inevitability of the facts and the stubbornness of reality show that without the poor there will be no salvation. As I have repeated on other occasions, this idolatrous, devalued, painless and apathetic humanism which engulfs us, has the dramatic peculiarity of wanting to organise society "*etsi pauper non daretur*" (as though the poor did not exist), without realising that "*extra pauperes nulla salus*" (outside the poor there is no salvation)⁴⁵.

Tying the future of humanity to the fate of the poor has turned into a historic necessity, that neoliberalism either does not know or does not want to acknowledge and for this reason precisely its proposals for the future do not open up the way, rather it holds humanity enclosed in the miseries of the present. Christian wisdom cannot help noticing the poor and their liberation as a historic opportunity of salvation for the whole of mankind⁴⁶. It knows that the eschatological salvation of the God of Life is linked to their destiny and their cause.

3.3. INOPPORTUNE PRACTICES OF RESISTANCE AND SOLIDARITY

Christianity, as we have seen gives "reasons" to devote oneself to the service of the unforgettable: the unending story of victims. God Himself has converted the question of responsibility for one's neighbour into the religious issue par excellence. The mission of Christianity in the world rests on its accepting the poor as an absolute value to whom an unlimited and unconditional love is due as is to God Himself, and into whose subjects we have to convert ourselves. The question of salvation no longer consists in looking for the Saviour and recognising Him as such, but in looking after those who suffer necessity and recognising them as someone who has a right over us (cf. Mt 25,31-46)⁴⁷.

But, given the identity and the resistance of the system of neoliberal globalisation, how can Christianity effectively shape the form of service it should give to its victims? The answer is very wide and would probably take us farther –in time and space– than this article would permit. I shall, therefore, limit myself to suggesting a few points.

Solidarity-infused life styles and the Church of the poor

Live Christianity is a living, delicate and subversive memory of the victims of the system. A religion placed at the service of the unforgettable has to know what form it should take to critically interrupt the dominant sacrificial logic. The project of the New Evangelisation which sets as its goal the attainment of a civilisation of love, in the words of John Paul II, should take very seriously the prophetic reflections of Ignacio Ellacuría on *the civilisation of poverty*⁴⁸ so as not to lose ourselves in sublime considerations which never come down to earth –to this poor earth of ours so contaminated by the lethal toxicity of the order which dominates everything.

It is becoming increasingly more urgent and necessary every day to have opposed-to-the-times austere and solidarity-infused lifestyles, both in the personal and community spheres, which could set "rumours" in motion of a Solidarity-loving God. Christianity that serves as a ferment and compelling force in a human community of fraternal destiny would not exist without the solidarity-infused evangelical stories.

The end of this millennium has embellished with the presence of "a big host of witnesses" (cf. Hb 12,1) of the God of the poor, at times at the cost of their lives. The life of the Church, and more especially that of the Latin American Church, has been accompanied and made bright by an abundant harvest of *martyrs*. They have given credit to God's Gospel just as Jesus did: giving their lives for the cause of the poor of God's Kingdom. Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that considered as a whole, the Church needs to convert itself and believe in the Good Tidings of the Gospel of Solidarity. Too often its lucid official speeches are accompanied by institutional and personal practices of solidarity that fall so far short of what they should be that the speeches smack of ridiculous chatter amidst the deafening roar of the victims of the dominant sacrificial system.

This deficit poses a delicate ecclesiastical question: its own condition as sacrament of salvation (cf. LG 48; AG 1) in a world like ours which is structurally unjust. The efficacy of its character

of "*sign and instrument*" of salvation understood as "*intimate union with God*" and "*unity of the whole of mankind*" (cf. LG 1) is not absolutely guaranteed by the Spirit that abides in it. This sacramental dynamism also depends on the quality of solidarity of church testimony.

Once more we must remember that the option for the poor is the basis, *the sign* which unifies and defines *all* the social achievements in the announcement of the Gospel, in the celebration of the Eucharist and in the service within and outside the church. This means that the contents and the central acts of faith go hand in hand with the concrete situation of the poor and are to be understood as a remedy and cure for them. The poor who are in a certain way the "sacrament" of initiation of God's universal saving Will (cf. Mt 25, 40ss) transfer to the Church this sacramental quality⁴⁹.

Coalition with the victims

Declarations against neoliberalism are multiplying. Perhaps the most realistic summons due to its utopian nature is the *Frente Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*:

*To all who, irrespective of colour, race or frontiers, use hope as a weapon and shield... an invitation is extended to attend the first intercontinental meeting in favour of humanity and against neoliberalism. I believe that what is least important is to know the exact date of this meeting. What really matters is to know that this resistance is permanent, poetic (creative), political and eternally in favour of LIFE!*⁵⁰

With enormous far-sightedness and realism, attention has been drawn to the necessity of a world movement in favour of the *economic civic rights*. The solidarity-infused practice of Christianity is oriented in this direction and should contribute to the creation and strengthening, at all levels – local, regional, European and world– of a coalition among victims of the system and social movements⁵¹.

The field of action is very wide and begins by acknowledging the existence of alternatives on a small scale (of informal and self-sufficient economy, of popular organisations, etc.) which one can adhere to.

But I would like to highlight *three especially important struggle areas*:

1. The Educational System

The ideological integration of the masses to the market system is achieved through "mass-media", schools and universities. Combating with success their power and educating people in the matter of solidarity-infused freedom is today no easy task. Nevertheless, there are some voices that alert us to the need to fight and have proffered some guiding hints to the teaching task that we frequently forget or underestimate.

Paulo Freire has defended with enormous vigour and honesty, to the end of his days, that the unavoidable task of a liberating education is to discover the possibilities for *hope* (the "viable completely-new") in extreme situations and in the face of whatever obstacles. Without hope little can be done and fighting will not be easy. If we fight desperately or without hope, our struggle will be sheer suicide or purely vengeful⁵².

The recent Report to the UNESCO of the International Commission on education for the twenty-first century, presided over by Jacques Delors⁵³, has revealed that *wisdom* and *compassion* are essential for knowledge and technology to help us *learn to live together* and *learn to be human* in the twenty-first century.

The Catholic Church through its dense educational network (from school to university) should join this task. It has arguments from its own tradition (namely, hope, wisdom and compassion) to make it feel concerned about the issue at stake, though it must be acknowledged that it very often tends to go hand in glove with the neoliberal system due to the absence in its educational fabric of sufficient resistance cells. I would like in particular to point out that catholic universities, their faculties and institutes of Economics and Business Administration as also their departments of Ethics, could play a decisive role in strengthening the coalition between victims and social movements.

This should make the Church ask itself openly questions such as these: What are its formative goals? Whose interests is it serving? Are its students being trained in solidarity-mindedness that would integrate them in the coalition or are they being trained professionally to strengthen the system? What investigation projects does it propose and approve? In what does it invest its most important human, material and financial resources? It is not a question here of simple and demagogical answers but of being lucid as humans and honest as Christians. On its answers depends in great measure whether or not the Catholic teaching network in general and the university network in particular possesses the quality of the Gospel and whether or not it is at the service of evangelising our world.

2. The Political Sphere

We all know how discredited political activity is, but we need to rediscover it as an indispensable means to achieve a new economic world order. Our discussion should not come to a standstill by an approach in the form of a dilemma between political parties and new social movements. *Promotion of justice* can never be fully achieved without a process of studying democracy in depth, a democracy that will guarantee efficaciously the promotion of life among nations and human groups who are excluded or kept on the fringe of society and do not enter the circle of economic and human development.⁵⁴

It is a question of elaborating a new "economic policy" in which necessary issues such as the following are made workable:

- *Reorientation* of the instruments of social organisation in accordance with an appropriate conception of the common good with respect to the whole human family,
- *International Control* of the economic system which overcomes its deficit of democracy,
- *Dialogue and a concerted effort* among countries, and
- *Democratisation of international organisms* so that the interests of towns and countries that have little weight in the international market can be represented on an equal basis⁵⁵.

To bring about the transition of an advanced capitalist society to Economic Democracy, it is necessary to have a powerful, intelligent and really active political movement, such as the

revitalisation of the syndic movement. It is only in this way that one can endanger a ruling class that is very consolidated as is the ruling class of an advanced capitalist society⁵⁶.

"To ignore Politics" is to renounce in fact these objectives and to abandon to their fate the victims of the system. To rediscover politics, to value it and participate at all its levels (municipal, autonomic, national, European) is essential for solidarity and a way of resisting and slowly defeating the merciless logic of the system. The invigoration of the political calling should be considered as necessary for the historic following of Jesus.

3. The Economic Sphere

Economy is the sphere of reality in which the presence of Christian militancy is practically non-existent. It is true that it is full of Christians of all confessions but in reality they are all militants of liberalism, neoliberalism or simply of their profession, understood in an aseptic way where relations of solidarity are concerned. One of the reasons that accounts for this behaviour lies in the private way the great number of Christians live their faith. But another reason undoubtedly is *the fear of being a victim of the system*. I cannot resist transcribing a text from Luis de Sebastián that confirms my affirmation:

These mechanisms (of orthodoxy and economic orthopraxis) use, in the final analysis, the brute force of money to repress dissidents and to take away the appetite to think differently from young economists who, having finished their doctorate in the best universities, display signs of wanting to analyse in an original way or criticise the problems of our society and the solutions proposed to solve them. For dissidents there is no money available for research, no conferences, no generous consulting fees, nor the fame which "best sellers" give.

Intellectual repression which the profession suffers from, with its one-track thinking" has brought about a lack of imagination and creativity to young professionals, some really intelligent (as the career of Economics attracts very intelligent people). The intellectual style of economists who wish to triumph must restrict themselves strictly to the narrowest definition of "the Economy"... what begins as a methodological decoy ends up as a dogmatic and religious conviction regarding the immutability of the "status quo".

Professional economists fear leaving "the mainstream" as that could entail not finding jobs that are well remunerated (in banks, in consulting offices, international organisms and foundations, universities and governments) and it is this fear that, in addition to fuddling imagination and creativity, has degenerated into structural incapacity or a blocking of the mind to think out real solutions outside the narrow pigeon-holes in which the Inquisitors of supply and demand have put all economic discussion. And, naturally, little success is achieved here⁵⁷.

This text is excellent from start to finish, more so because it is signed by a famous economist and it confirms what I have been suspecting for a long time now, thanks to a suggestion of María López Vigil. The Spirit of Jesus must be arousing in human society and in the Church vocations

that are specially dedicated to the cause of finding alternatives to the current economic model. In the same way as in other epochs it stirred up vocations dedicated to liberating slaves, to educating the poor or to healing and looking after the sick.

We are talking here of a vocation that calls for men and women who are excellently trained to institutionalise themselves in diverse economic organisms but who will not be required by the Lord to take the three religious vows. It is sufficient that they are obedient to the needs of the poor, "chaste with reality" (J. Sobrino), and are content with the salary, for example, of a person in the teaching profession.

4. CONCLUSION: THE ILLNESS AND THE MIRACLE ⁵⁸

Surely our world needs "a miracle" to rid itself of this type of overwhelming globalisation of the human element. But today, as in the times of Jesus, a miracle is not a private affair but something with profound political and social repercussions. The prevalent economic and social theories of the seventies turned a deaf ear to the voices that pointed out that the model of economic growth and consumption in the First World was leading us to a crisis of non-renewable resources, to critical problems with the environment and to the non-viability of the growth model postulated for the South.

The result was the oil crisis, the intensification of ecological deterioration and the declaration of a "lost decade". Then the economic authorities, unable to lay the blame for the situation at the door of the irrationality of their economic proposals, were forced to attribute the illnesses of poor countries to their own behaviours (their oligarchies, their dictators, the apathy of their peoples, etc.) and affirmed that it was their economic "sins" that were responsible for all their misfortunes (*theology of retribution*).

As a last resort, the cure of the illnesses produced by these sins was in the "temples" of the IMF and the World Bank. This meant new burdens in the form of structural adjustments the brunt of which again had to be borne by the poorer people. And in this way the circle of victimisation was closed.

But something inopportunistly interrupts this logic when *John Paul II* asks for the reduction, if not the total condoning, of the external debt⁵⁹ and when a group of world citizens summons people to a *globalisation of solidarity*, or when men and women of goodwill commit their lives to resisting neoliberalism and to partially and fragmentarily constructing an alternative economic model. These acts implicitly forgive or declare non-existent the economic sins of impoverished countries (the "theology of liberation"). These attitudes pose a challenge not only to the therapeutic monopoly of orthodox economists but also to the religious monopoly of the priests of "God-Market".

These acts, like the miracles of Jesus of Nazareth, are subversive from the political viewpoint. In this struggle, dangerous by the way, the Kingdom of God for the poor is making inroads into history.

NOTES

1. Cf. Jordán Galduf, J.M., *Economic Inequalities And The Necessity Of A New International Economic Order*: Iglesia Viva 110-111 (1984) pp. 163-164.
2. Cf. El País, August 20, 1996.
3. Sebastián, L., *The Big Contradiction Of Modern Neoliberalism. Or The Substitution Of Liberal Humanism By Social Darwinism*, Cristianisme i Justícia, Barcelona 1989, p. 7; AA. VV., *The Long Night Of Neoliberalism. Economic Policies Of The Eighties*, Icaria/Ise, Barcelona/Madrid, 1993.
4. Cf., Sutcliffe, B. (coord.) *The Cold Fire. Hunger, Food and Development*, Icaria/Antrazyt, Barcelona 1996.
5. Cf., Stavenhagen, R., *Education Entails A Treasure: A Report To The UNESCO*: pages 146 (august 1997) pp. 18-20.
6. Cf., Jung Mo Sung, *Mimetic Desire, Social Exclusion And Christianity*: Pasos, nº 69, 1997 (January-February) p. 12
7. Cf., Hinkeammert, F.J., *The Hurricane Of Globalisation: Exclusion And Destruction Of The Environment Viewed From The Theory Of Dependence*: Pasos, nº 69, 1997 (January-February) pp. 21-27.
8. Cf. *Cruelty. Theirs And Ours*, Paidós, Barcelona/Buenos Aires/Mexico, 1995.
9. Cf., *Anthropology Of Capitalism. An Open Debate*, Plaza & Janes/Cambio 16, Barcelona, 1992.
10. In 1996 alone 26 armed conflicts were registered in the world.
11. It is estimated that 36 million people die of starvation every year. At the summit of FAO in 1996, 186 countries agreed to reduce *by half before 2015 the 800 million people that suffer from starvation*. This type of decisions, according to the world political rulers, is considered politically correct, although it does not impede deaths by hunger of around 700 million people in the next 20 years. Besides, tomorrow's world reports will probably certify the failure to implement today's commitments, just as today's reports certify non-compliance of yesterday's commitments relating to the allocation of 0.7% of GDP for co-operation. Will there be in the twenty-first century some world tribunal with powers to take civil and criminal action against the lords of the world for failing to comply with their agreements or will these be allowed to carry on signing documents with absolute impunity? How correct *I. Ellacuría* was when he asked to have history turned back!
12. According to the report PNUD-1997, 24% of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean live on less than one dollar a day.
13. "If by *Capitalism* we understand an economic system that recognises the fundamental and positive role of the company, of the market, of private property and of the resulting responsibility with respect to the means of production, free human creativity in the economic sector, the answer is "yes"... But if by *Capitalism* we are to understand a system in which liberty in the economic

sphere is not inserted in a solid juridical context which places it at the service of integral human freedom and considers it as a particular dimension of the same, whose centre is ethical and religious, then the answer is definitely "no" (CA42).

14. Hinkelammert, F.J., art. Cit., p. 23.

15. Cf., Sebastián, L., *Neoliberalism. Arguments For And Against*, Cristianisme i Justicia. *Neoliberalism Under Question*, Cristianisme i Justicia/Sal Terrae, Barcelona/Santander, 1993, p. 28.

16. The sentence of Roberto Campos, Brazil's former Minister, is quoted by Jung Mo Sung, art.cit. p. 11

17. Cf., Chafuen, A.A., *Economics And Ethics. Christian Roots Of Free Market Economy*, Rialp, Madrid, 1991.

18. Hassmann, H., *Religious Fallacies Of The Market*, Cristianisme i Justicia, Barcelona, 1997.

19. Cf., Sebastiaán, L., *Rich World, Poor World*, Sal Terrae, Santander, 1992, p. 102.

20. The importance that the consideration of neoliberalism as a "religion" is acquiring is borne out by the fact that this observation is made not exclusively by circles defending the Latin American Theology of Liberation but also by writers from the northern hemisphere of the American continent: cf., Beaudin, M., *Neoliberalism as a Religion: Relations* October 1995, pp. 238-240; *Soteriology, Capitalism and Christian Salvation*, in Petit, J.C.-Breton, J.C., *Alone or with Others? Christian Salvation put to the test of Solidarity*, Fides, Montreal, 1992, p. 237-281.

21. Cf., Assmann, H., *Economy And Theology*, in AA. W., *Fundamental Concepts Of Christianity*, Trotta, Madrid, 1993, p. 357.

22. Cf., Jacquard, A., *I Accuse The Triumphant Economy*, Andrés Bello, Barcelona/Buenos Aires/Mexico D.F./Santiago de Chile, 1996, p. 86.

23. Cf., Streeten, P., *Hunger* in Sutcliffe, B. (coord.), op. Cit. P. 27.

24. Cf., Ramonet, I., *Hope*, Le Monde diplomatique, January 1996.

25. Cf., Ormerod, P., *For A New Economy. Fallacies Of The Economic Sciences*, Anagrama, Barcelona, 1995.

26. Cf., Assmann, H.-Hinkelammert, F., *The Idolatry Of The Market*, Voces, Petropolis, 1989; Jung-MoSung, *The Idolatry Of Capital And The Death Of The Poor*. DEI, San José (C.R.), 1991; *Neoliberalism And Poverty*, DEI, San José (C.R.), 1993; *Theology And Economy. Rethinking The Theology Of Liberation And Utopias*. Nueva Utopia, Madrid 1996; Santa Ana, J., *The Practice Of Economy As A Religion. A Theological Criticism Of Political Economy*, DEI, San José (C.R.), 1991.

27. Cf., Scwickart, D., *Beyond Capitalism*, Cristianisme i Justicia/Sal Terrae, Barcelona/Santander, 1997; cf., also Zubero, I., *Social Movements And Alternatives Of Society*, HOAC, Madrid, 1996, pp. 89.101. One can find here a bibliography of works in Spanish that defend the existence of economic and social alternatives to capitalism: n.5, p. 93.

28. Cf., *The Poverty Of Capitalism*, Tecnos, Madrid, 1993, pp. 10-11.

29. Cf., García Roca, J. *Compassion, Equity And Justice*: Iglesia Viva 156 (19919, p. 575.
30. From June 30 through July 4, 1997 the First International Symposium on *Globalisation of Solidarity* was held in Lima. Participating in this symposium were economic experts as also more than 150 members from 32 nations of all continents. The final document that was approved by those attending this symposium can be seen on pages 146 (August 1997) pp. 110-112.
31. Cf., Boff, L., *With The Liberty Of The Gospel*, Nueva Utopia, Madrid, 1991, p. 19.
32. I adhere very closely to what was written by me on another occasion: *A Religion At The Service Of The Unforgettable*: Iglesia Viva 184/185 (1996) pp.371-383.
33. Cf., Anisi, D., *The Smile Of Keynes* in AA. W., *The long night of neoliberalism...*, pp. 296-297.
34. Cf., Jung Mo Sung, art. Cit. P. 7.
35. Cf., Morin, E.-Kern, A.B., *The Earth-Our Fatherland*, Barcelona, Kairós, 1993, pp. 205-219.
36. Cf., CA 30-35, 40-43.
37. Cf., Assmann, H. (editor), *On Idols And Sacrifices. René Girard With Theologians Of The Liberation*, DEI, San José (C.R.), 1991.
38. Cf., *Redemptor hominis*, 13.
39. Cf., Kehl, M., *The Church, The Catholic Ecclesiology*, Sígueme, Salamanca, 1996, p. 222.
40. As an example I will give a small clue. In N° 8 of the document *Instrumentum laboris* of the Special Assembly for America of the Synod of Bishops which was held in winter of 1997, the following text can be read: *It is only through a balanced comprehension of the two natures and of the perfect unity of the same in the second Person of the Holy Trinity that the human being can draw near the mystery of Jesus Christ, present in the current moment of history as the Head of the Church which is His Body* (cf., *Meeting with Jesus Christ alive, the way of conversion, communion and solidarity*, Ecclesia 2,863 and 2,864, October 1997 pp. 1540-1550 and 1578-1590; the text can be found on p. 1543; the emphasis is mine). This text, which I suppose was corrected in the sessions of the Assembly, converted the task of initiation of a believer and that of a faith experience into something purely academic and, what is more serious, seems to criticise the work of a God who wished to grant a hermeneutic privilege to the poor and simple in order that they acknowledge the truth of His revelation (cf., Mt 11,25-28)
41. Cf., SRS 9f. 16c. 36.
42. Cf., Letter of the Latin American provincials of the Society of Jesus, *Neoliberalism In Latin America*, N° 8: Letter to the churches from El Salvador, N° 367, 1-15 December 1996, p. 13.
43. Cf., *Being Like Them And Other Articles*, Siglo XI, Madrid, 1992, pp. 84-85.
44. Cf. Ibid., p. 205.
45. I play here with two Latin expressions that I should perhaps explain to those who are not initiated in theological technical jargon. The first of these expressions conjures up again a famous formula of **D. Bonhoeffer**: *"And we cannot be honest without acknowledging that we*

have to live in the world etsi deus non daretur": as though God did not exist (cf. Resistance and Submission. Letters and notes from captivity, Ariel, Esplugues de Llobregat, 1969, p. 209). With this expression he wanted to remind us that the autonomy of the world induced by Modernity was desired by God: "The God who allows us to live in the world without having to subscribe to the hypothesis of God working in the world, is the same God in whose presence we are constantly found to be" (Ibid p. 210). My formula tries to underline the fact that every aspiration to establish a new international economic order which would function without keeping in mind poor nations ("as though the poor did not exist") is not only not honest but is, moreover, doomed to failure and will bring salvation to nobody. And with this purpose in mind I have linked salvation to a second expression which is contained in the old saying "outside the church there is no salvation", and which has been transformed into "*extra mundum nulla salus, outside this world there is no salvation*" by E. Schillebeeckx (cf. *Men, The Story Of God*, Sígueme, Salamanca 1989). For my part I have extended this re-reading to the point of concentrating it in that part of the world, that are victims of the old economic order, whose truly human and democratic future, any new order, whatever it may be, has necessarily to bear in mind and in whose present is to be found, annihilated but still acting, the eschatological salvation of God.

46. *It will be necessary to abandon the mentality which considers the poor –individuals and nations- as a nuisance and inopportune, greedy to consume what others have produced... Promoting the poor is a big opportunity for moral, cultural and even economic growth of the whole human race* (CA 28).

47. Cf., Moingt, J., *The Man That Came From God*, Vol. II, Bilbao, Desclée de Brouwer, 1995, pp. 149-156.

48. Cf., *Utopia And Prophetism*, in Ellacuria, I./Sobrino, J., *Mysterium Liberationis. Fundamental Concepts Of The Theology Of Liberation* /, Trotta, Madrid, 1990, pp. 426 ss.

49. Cf., Kehl, M, op. Cit, p. 222.

50. Cf., *First Declaration Of Reality Against Neoliberalism And In Favour Of Humanity: Letter to the Churches from El Salvador*, N° 377, 1-15 of May, 1997, p. 9.

51. Cf., Duchrow, U./Guck, M., *Alternatives To The World Capitalist Economy. Biblical Findings And Political Approaches To Conquer An Economy Which Threatens Life: Liaisons Internationales* 80 (1994), pp. 2-11. A summary is available in *Selecciones de Teología*.

52. Cf., Freire, P., *Pedagogy Of Hope. A Reunion With Pedagogy Of The Oppressed*, Siglo XXI, Madrid 1993.

53. Cf., *Education Entails A Treasure*, Santillana/ UNESCO, Madrid 1996.

54. Cf., Espasa R., *New Economic Culture, New Poverty*, in AA. VV., 1996, *The Year Of The Eradication Of Poverty*, Cristianisme i Justicia, Barcelona, 1996, pp. 26-27.

55. Cf., CA 58.

56. Cf., Schweickart, D., op. cit., pp. 399-409.

57. Cf., *Prologue* in Schweickart, D., op. Cit., pp. 13-14.

58. Cf., Mc 2, 1-12. Cf., Crossan, J.D. *Jesus: The Life Of A Jewish Peasant*, Crítica, Barcelona,

1994, p. 375.

59. Cf., *Tertio millenio adveniente*, 36.

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