

# The Politics of the Total Market, Its Theology and Our Response

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On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Barmen Declaration and the founding of the Confessing Church in Germany, I want to analyze our present situation in the following paper in order to demonstrate the dramatic parallels now emerging between our situation and that of the thirties. We neglect these parallels at our peril. At the same time, however, we must not allow ourselves to be intimidated by these parallels but rather keep in mind the differences that exist between the situation then and now. Even though there is continuity with that period, what confronts us today is something new.

In the first section, I shall try to analyze the contemporary politics of the total market,\* its connection with the concept of national security and the total war\*\* on subversion, and thereby its development into an ideological dualism of a Manichean\*\*\* kind. In the second section, I will examine the mechanisms of aggression which arise from the politics of this total market, with particular reference to the war against Nicaragua and the religious and liberal-democratic arguments used to justify it. In the third section, I want to look more closely at the theological aggression emanating, in particular, from the Institute on Religion and Democracy in the USA, concluding with a brief consideration of liberation theology.

## I. The Politics of the Total Market and the War on Subversion

There is an obvious parallel between the historical situation in which the Barmen Declaration was produced and our present situation, namely, the existence of a worldwide economic crisis whose effects threaten to lead us into social and political disaster.

The contemporary worldwide economic crisis marks the end of an economic policy which has been labelled "Keynesianism." As the crisis deepened, the more the logic of that economic policy threatened to lead into socialistic economic experiments, the more the economic policy described as neo-liberal and anti-interventionist has been imposed. The consequence of this strategy has been the unrestrained subjugation of all economic and social policies of the state to the logic of capital accumulation. In reality, this is not an anti-interventionist economic policy at all but rather a new form of state intervention directed against the welfare-state of the Keynesian period. Fiscal deficits and subsidies, once re-

garded as unacceptable implications of the Keynesian policy, increased under this "anti-interventionist" policy (especially in the USA) to an extent which only a decade earlier would have been quite unthinkable. What has changed is the focus of this intervention. Instead of small social welfare deficits, we now have huge military deficits; instead of small social service subsidies we now have huge subsidies for the international finance system. These subsidies have reached unprecedented levels and were imposed by the International Monetary Fund by compelling debtor nations to underwrite bankrupt private debts by transforming them into public debts. In Mexico alone, such subsidies amount to about 40 million dollars, i.e., half of the total external debt of that country.

This new interventionism is directed against the welfare state by governments which can, as a result, only find security and legitimacy in a progressive build-up of their police and military apparatuses. These repressive forces are playing an increasingly prominent role, whereas the welfare state structures are being diminished and often eliminated altogether. In the process, a so-called "free-enterprise" myth has developed, with its illusion of the total transfer of all government functions to private market enterprises. Under the cover of this myth, police and military apparatuses become the real centers of political power. In Third World countries in particular, middle class democratic processes no longer result in sovereign parliaments but in elected civilian governments which exercise political power within limits established by police and military power structures. This new situation could very well be summed up in the slogan: "The welfare state enslaves, the police state liberates!"

Underlying this development is an ideology of the total market, which is an ideology of struggle. Viewing society as a whole from the standpoint of progress towards the total market, the mystique of the total market becomes the mystique of market struggle into which all areas of society are forced. So there arises the image of an enemy, an image which is itself the product of this mystique. This enemy is not a competitive rival within the market, nor even a participant in that market, but anyone who opposes the existence of the total market as well as its effects. The enemy is anyone who resists the transformation of the market struggle into the only and basic principle for the organization of the entire society. This explains in turn the overall concept of subversion. Subversion is defined as anything which declares and defends

\*By the phrase "total market" (*mercado total*), the author implies that worldwide capitalist system which operates as a totality in its attempt to control and include all aspects of the market and all consumers thereof. As a totality, it rejects all other market arrangements or concepts and operates in an aggressive manner to control the world marketplace, so that whatever its methods it has a totalitarian intent.

\*\*By the phrase "total war" (*guerra total*), the author once again implies much more than "all out" warfare. He employs the word in its root sense as a totality, an aggressive strategy which seeks to control everything and eliminate all opposition, thus linking the concept to the narrower Western usage of the word totalitarian.

\*\*\*Manichaeism is a religious philosophy held during the 3rd to 7th centuries A.D. and taught by the Persian philosopher Manichaeus. It is based on the doctrine of two contending principles of good (light, God, the soul) and evil (darkness, Satan, the body). It combines Zoroastrian, Gnostic Christian and pagan elements.

values which conflict with the unrestricted activity of the total market and the unlimited accumulation of capital.

This overall concept of subversion is synthesized in the term "utopian," or, in political terms, "socialist" or "communist." When such ideas are made criminal, anyone who holds them is indiscriminately considered a terrorist. Thus a Manichaeic dualism arises in which the total market is viewed as the "Good" and as the law of nature, which utopian socialism is categorized as "Evil" and as rebellion against nature. Manichaeic logic makes it possible to assign this overall subversion to an earthly center, which is obviously the Kremlin, the "Kingdom of Evil," as Reagan now describes it. In his election campaign, Reagan has likewise spoken of communism as a "perversion of nature." This implies, of course, that the White House—as long as Reagan is in charge of it—is the center of the Kingdom of Good. In relation to Nicaragua, Reagan has begun to speak of a "reign of terror," in contrast with which he views the interventionist forces supported by the CIA as "freedom fighters" or "commandoes for liberty."

This view of the Kremlin as the "Kingdom of Evil" is merely the political form of the myth that the utopian socialist is necessarily a terrorist who represents the mythical counterpart of the total market. What is involved here is the interpretation of all resistance to and criticism of the market as demonic, a process which finds expression in such slogans as: "Anyone who wants heaven on earth creates hell on earth" (Popper), or, in the words of Reinhold Niebuhr applied to this thesis by an American Enterprise Institute theologian: "The children of light are in many ways a greater danger to the biblical faith than the children of darkness." (Michael Novak)

Within such an aggressive myth, any form of resistance to the total market can be denounced as part of a worldwide conspiracy of the Kremlin as the Kingdom of Evil in this world. Any resistance thereby becomes an act of aggression against the Kingdom of God (i.e., the total market) which can be denounced whenever political advantage is sought from such denunciation.

In this Manichaeic dualism, the total market then appears as the guarantor of everything good in this world, especially peace, the environment, social justice and the development of underdeveloped countries. In order to guarantee these good things, however, all obstacles to the operation of the market must be eliminated; all opponents who would challenge it must be destroyed. Peace is thus secured by a continuous arms build-up and the destruction of all peace movements; the environment is secured by the destruction of ecological movements and corresponding measures; the development of the underdeveloped countries is secured by ending development policy and exposing these countries to the total market. The same thing happens in the case of social justice which is simply understood as a tautological outcome of the world market policy, so that all conflict between justice and market results is *a priori* eliminated. What the market does is justice.

What all this adds up to in the end is a world whose sole and supreme law—natural law—is the market struggle and its results. This law is given by the Creator God in the logic implicit in his/her creation, against which the Kingdom of Evil rebels because, in its arrogance, it refuses to recognize the natural ways of humanity. Those peace and ecological movements, those creative development and social policies which resist the market process are therefore presented as part of a Luciferian revolt against God's law which is

grounded in nature. This revolt, seduced by its utopianism, issues into the Kingdom of Evil.

The more evil this kingdom is made to appear, the more legitimate appear the goals of the total market and all means used to achieve them. Manichaeic dualism thus becomes the absolute legitimation of the total market. In political terms, this dualism is translated into worldwide civil war, a "total war on subversion" (Couto da Silva), as it is presented in the ideology of National Security which has already permeated all Western police and military systems. The term "National Security," another name for the total war on subversion, sounds less dramatic, and is thus more acceptable to those countries which have already lived through an ideology of totalitarian war, a traumatic experience which they still remember.

This total war on subversion has two dimensions: one internal and the other external. The objective in both cases is to achieve the legitimation of the market through its totalization. On the internal level, the war is directed against all social relationships other than mercantile ones. Being a totality, it respects no rights, least of all individual human rights. Since the object is to destroy all autonomy which stands over and against the market, and since the market alone is recognized as the legitimate social relationship, total war on subversion resorts internally to a specific form of terror, namely, individual torture, which has become legitimated in the Third World. How far this process has gone can be seen in the words of the Commander of the Chilean Secret Police (CNI) who undertook to legitimate individual torture by saying: "National security is like love: there is never enough of it."<sup>2</sup> This reflects what Orwell calls the Ministry of Love. The Chilean Commander expressly prided himself on being a Christian. In view of this war on subversion, statistics on political prisoners no longer mean anything and scarcely exist. In this war there is no mercy and no prisoners are taken; they merely "disappear."

Since subversion is of the Kingdom of Evil with an identifiable source in this world (the Kremlin), this total anti-subversive war also has an external or international dimension. This dimension is that of worldwide civil war. The Santa Fe document, which was produced in May 1980 as a platform for the Reagan administration as a basic policy statement for his government says:

"War, not peace, is the norm in international affairs."<sup>3</sup>

From this the conclusion is drawn:

"War is for the minds of mankind."<sup>4</sup>

It then reflects:

"For World War III is almost upon us."<sup>5</sup>

All is war and everything is now the beginning of World War III. The first phase in this war was containment; its second phase was detente, but "detente is dead." We are now in the third phase of this war, in which "Latin America and South Asia will be the battlefields."<sup>6</sup> For the Reagan administration, World War III means war against the Third World, which along the way will necessarily confront the

1. Michael Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, American Enterprise Institute, New York, 1982, p. 68. Edición Castellana: *El Espíritu del Capitalismo Democrático*, Ediciones Tres Tiempos, Buenos Aires, 1983, p. 71.

2. General Humberto Gordon, according to *El Mercurio*, Santiago, Chile, December 4, 1983.

3. *Cristianismo y Sociedad*, 1982, Santo Domingo. Segunda Entrega, No. 72, p. 63.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 79. 5. *Ibid.*, p. 63. 6. *Ibid.*

Socialist world. From this perspective, the USSR frustrates access to the domination of the Third World by the developed capitalist centers. "The USSR, operating from its base of growing nuclear superiority, is strangling the Western industrialized nations by means of interdicting their petroleum and mineral resources."<sup>7</sup> What this implies, according to the Santa Fe document, is a "metaphysical" crisis against which the "spirit of the nation" is to be mobilized. Everything is urgent. "The hour of decision can no longer be postponed."<sup>8</sup>

In this way, the total war against subversion combines these internal and external elements. That confrontation which characterized the fascist totalitarianism of the 1930s is thus repeated: on the one hand, against the liberalism of liberal democrats; on the other, against socialists and communists.

## II. Mechanisms of Aggression Against the Religious and the Liberal-Democrats

In this second section, I want to highlight two ideological elements in this total war against subversion: a Christian theology of aggression and a secularized theory of democracy. These two elements are combined in the creation of the Manichaean dualistic myth which characterizes this anti-subversive war. I will illustrate both elements from the perspective of the situation in Nicaragua, although I am sure that they are representative far beyond this particular case.

I began with the Christian ideology of aggression. The immediate occasion for this was the papal visit to Managua in March 1983. But its origins lie much further back in a pattern of thinking held more than a thousand years ago: the same thinking that rationalized the medieval crusades and the antisemitism of those times, and which has persisted down to the present, having been used also by the modern German churches to the extent that they supported Nazism.

The drama begins with incidents during the papal mass in Managua, when the people were hoping the Pope would protest the military intervention on behalf of peace, and pray for those who had died in the *contra* war. When the Pope avoided any such comment, the mass was interrupted by shouts of "Power to the people." The Pope tried to silence the interruption by authoritarian commands which only served to intensify the reaction, adding a political dimension to the event.

Basically the incident was a trivial one that could have been settled quite simply if the Pope had adopted the kind of diplomatic attitude he displayed in his subsequent visit to Poland where demonstrations on the part of the trade union Solidarity also took on a strong political tone. Those were not interpreted by the Pope as grave incidents.

In the case of Nicaragua, however, the incident was played up and made the occasion for a concerted strategy of political propaganda throughout Central America, justifying military intervention as a holy war, a crusade. This concerted strategy led to the following steps:

1. *The incident was declared to be blasphemy, a sacrilege, and therefore an offense against God.* It was presented as a desecration of the holy Eucharist. The Pope himself gave countenance to this initial step by speaking of the incident as a "deliberate profanation of the Eucharist."<sup>9</sup> He spoke of the

desecration which the "Jesus of the sacrament" had had to endure. On his return to San Jose (Costa Rica), a service of expiation was arranged. The Episcopal Secretariat for Central America spoke of the need "to expiate publicly the premeditated profanation of the Jesus of the sacrament of which the Holy Father was an object during the celebration of the Eucharist."<sup>10</sup> Expiatory services were then organized throughout Central America, and even in Italy. The Pope himself called for prayers "for the *genuine* Christian brothers and sisters living in Nicaragua."<sup>11</sup>

2. *The interpretation of this alleged blasphemy as a re-crucifixion of Christ.* Jorge Rossi, the former Vice-President of Costa Rica and a member of Opus Dei, clarified this thesis in the following interpretation:

... Never since the death of Jesus Christ has the Holy Eucharist been celebrated in such a dramatically real and living manner. It was the second Good Friday in two thousand years of Christianity. The ambience was such; the very reality was such. It was not merely symbolic of that original confrontation of hatred imbued into persons of good will be forces diametrically opposed to love, understanding, brotherly cooperation, true social justice and real peace. Those gangs who shouted for justice and peace were so blind as to attempt to stifle the voice of Christ's Vicar just as those, who two thousand years ago, cried out against Pilate's hesitant and fatal proposal to release Jesus, shouted: "Barabbas . . . Release Barabbas . . . as for Christ, crucify him, crucify him."<sup>12</sup>

Once the incident in Managua was declared a blasphemy against God, it was then transformed into a symbolic crucifixion of Christ. The true crucifiers are those who demand a pseudo-social justice and a pseudo-peace and compel the civil authorities, against their will, to conform. Pilate wanted to free Jesus but the crowd compelled him to hand Jesus over for crucifixion. What we have here, quite clearly, is that classic Christian anti-messianism which always implicitly contains an anti-semitic dimension, nonetheless real for not being explicit.

3. *The demand for restitution and appeasement of the offended majesty of God.*

Once interpreted as a crucifixion, the offense is definitive. Only a definitive defeat of the Sandinistas can ameliorate the offense. At the expiation ceremony in San Jose on March 4, 1983, therefore, Eden Pastora declared:

... now that the totalitarian materialism of the new Nicaraguan dictators has been discovered, no other way is left for us but to wage "holy war" on behalf of the truly Christian and Catholic people of Nicaragua.<sup>13</sup>

During the remainder of 1983, this atmosphere of holy war against the Sandinistas was promoted. In November, Archbishop Obando of Managua declared that such a war is just:

The Archbishop of Managua, Mons. Miguel Obando, justified the right to employ violence "as an ultimate recourse, once all other means of dialogue have been exhausted," in order to bring about societal transformation.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Cristianismo y Sociedad*, op. cit., p. 64.

9. *La Nacion*, San Jose, Costa Rica, March 6, 1983, p. 10A.

10. *La Nacion*, March 6, 1983, p. 10A.

11. *La Nacion*, March 10, 1983, p. 16A.

12. *La Nacion*, March 10, 1983, p. 16A.

13. *La Nacion*, March 5, 1983, p. 10A.

Obando spoke yesterday at noon before a group of professionals, businessmen and political opponents of Sandinismo, in a hotel of this capital (Managua), where he rejected the use of non-violent methods in Nicaragua, "because that would require a free society."

He added that non-violence "of the Gandhi or Martin Luther King kind" is a good way to carry forward a political struggle, but here it wouldn't work, because it would require full freedom of expression . . . The Catholic leader was repeatedly interrupted by applause from anti-Sandinista businessmen and politicians which shook the hotel salon.<sup>14</sup>

With that statement, the Catholic leader allied himself with armed intervention against Nicaragua and suggested it was the only possible solution. This declaration favoring violence came at the very moment that acts of foreign intervention were clearly escalating, and it provided the Christian ideological umbrella that was so urgently needed to legitimize them.

What we have here, quite clearly, is that central archetypal Christian militancy which was directed against the Arabs, Jews and heretics during the Middle Ages, and against native peoples of America since the Conquest. Down to the present day, it has been used against anyone who is declared to be an enemy of Christianity. The enemies of Christendom are always labeled as crucifiers, as assassins of God. We are faced here with a pattern of thinking which permits love of neighbor to be transmuted into Christian aggressiveness and hatred. Furthermore, this pattern allows any aggression to be presented as a just war, provided it is conducted in the name of Christianity. The original empirical incident loses all significance and plays no relevant role as the starting point of the conflict. If it had not happened, another incident would have been invented. In the name of Christianity, this pattern defines, *a priori*, anyone it wishes to label, as an aggressor.

From a purely empirical standpoint, the murder of Archbishop Romero of San Salvador could have much more legitimately been presented as a profanation of the Eucharist, taking place as it actually did, during a mass. But it was never presented in those terms, for there was no Christian group that would have wanted to use this pattern of aggression against the Salvadoran death squad which assassinated him. Empirical events have no significance whatsoever unless people give them significance in order to legitimate their own aggression.

In this way, the Christian pattern of aggression was taken up and hammered home month after month, by all means available, through the mass communication networks of Central America. Indeed, soldiers who are sent against the Sandinista regime deck themselves with crucifixes and *rosaries*, and have begun to wear shirts emblazoned with a picture of the Pope. The crusade has begun. It has been declared a defensive war for the simple reason that a Christian aggressor became *a priori* a defender conducting a just war against an aggressor who is crucifying Christ.

This whole pseudo-Christian pattern of aggression has been supplemented by another theory which defends the concept of private property and democracy. This is basically a secularization of the former religious theory.

This secular justification of aggression as developed by John Locke has three analogous stages:

1. *Some incident is declared to be an assault on private property which is then declared to be an aggression against human freedom.* Thus the incident is perceived as an assault on human freedom in general.

2. *This attack against human freedom—defined now as the right to own private property—is declared to be an assault on human rights in all its dimensions.*

3. *Every human being and any government, as representatives of humanity, has the right to punish the aggressor in defending their private property.* Through this punishment the wrong done to the whole human family is redressed.

This aggressive rationale is developed by Locke in his Second Treatise on Civil Government. It legitimizes the unrestricted use of violence and *a priori* transforms any war waged by a capitalist country into a just war. From this perspective, any aggression by a capitalist country is thus transformed into a defense. Conversely, *a priori*, it is impossible for a socialist country to wage a just war.

Just like the Christian theory of aggression which transforms love of neighbor into the driving force of aggression, this secular theory of aggression transforms human rights themselves into the driving force for aggression and the violation of human rights. From this theory, Locke legitimated absolute despotism, the forced labor of slavery, and the torture of those who lose a war to the power of the ruling class, that is, the power which *a priori* has the right to carry out a "self-defensive" and thus a just war. The slogan of St. Just and Popper—"No freedom for the enemies of freedom"—finds its original expression in Locke's writings.

Simply by applying this secular theory of aggression, one can understand the present policy of the USA in Central America. From the most minimal empirical evidence, it is clear that the United States is the aggressor against Nicaragua. But with the application of this theory of secular aggression, everything changes. Empirical evidence (i.e., the facts) play no role whatsoever in the argument, but rather, the United States is transformed *a priori* into a defender. The Sandinista revolution is declared to be an aggression against humanity itself, and whoever attacks it is *a priori* a defender carrying out a just war.

The two theories of aggression analyzed in this section are mutually compatible, reinforce each other, and are easily integrated into the total market strategy. In the national security and anti-subversive war strategies, the two theories are combined and are made to serve the overall goals of the total market.

As this total market domination and total war advance together, increasingly their aggressive acts acquire a new dimension: they become more and more irrational through their aggressiveness. Complete irrationality is reached when destruction itself is justified as an acceptable price to be paid to eliminate the enemy: defensive war becomes the absolute evil it believes it is confronting, a Catch 22.

This irrationality can be illustrated by an editorial published by Jorge Enrique Guier in *La Nacion*, in Costa Rica on June 12, 1983. The article refers to *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the bloodiest book in world history. Guier begins by stating—correctly—that the book was a forgery produced by the Czar's secret police in Russia in the year 1903. He then quotes some passages from the book and says:

14. *La Nacion*, November 25, 1983, AFP.

This paragraph is truly alarming, above all, if we start from the premise that we are dealing here not with Jewish ideas, but with clearly Russian ideas. The ideas quoted from this devilish paragraph are not merely literary inventions but have been actually experienced by our civilization because they were put into practice by Russian comrades through their wicked infiltrations into the West.

He talks of a "logical process of destruction which has been planned by the Russians, in this book attributed to the Jews."

Thus this book, which was the Nazi's principal source of anti-semitism, resurfaces in all its infamy and is now directed against the Sandinista front, as part of the pretense of a worldwide strategy already planned by the *Protocols*.

The destructive theory of Marxism-Leninism and its diabolical offshoots, such as Maoism, Fidelism, the Sandinismo of the "compas," etc., poisons the spirit. To understand how these theories function in the minds of those who share and disseminate them in the West is something we see happening every day. The result is crazy guerrillas, atheistic terrorists, blind propagandists who emerge from the hatred they sow . . . causing all these evils. It is easy to see how the destruction or disintegration of our Western Christian civilization is approaching, which is their primary objective, unless there is a courageous reaction in good times.<sup>15</sup>

So this book, which has already served once to legitimate the *Endlosung* (endtime) against the Jews in Germany, now appears as a new *Endtime* directed against the Sandinistas. The infamy is the same and the same book is used to justify it. Only the actors, who seek a new sacrifice on the altar of their barbarity, are different. This is an apologetic for genocide. Seen in this light, the book returns to serve as an integral part of this anti-subversive war. Clearly, this infamy is based on the earlier Christian theory of aggression and has continuity with it.

The Manichaeon vision of the world is hereby transformed into absolute irrationality. The real conflict between capitalism and socialism, which shares in this Manichaeon dualism, seems to be literally swallowed up. The All or Nothing context clouds the very calculus of the material arguments of each position. The infinite evil projected upon the adversary carries its authors to legitimate any action, beyond all reason. Destruction of the other is converted into a destiny, even though it may end up destroying itself.

The real conflict disappears in the political paranoia of destroying the enemy. The redemption of humankind is defined as the extermination of the enemy of humankind incarnated in the adversary. The sacrifice is perceived as a holocaust which purifies humanity for a new future, a purification which even assumes its own self-destruction as a necessary step towards the great sacrifice on behalf of humanity. President Reagan himself opened up this possibility in the form of a Freudian slip which was announced during a moment of testing his microphones, an apparent joke which revealed an abyss:

My fellow Americans, I'm pleased to tell you today that I've signed legislation that would outlaw Russia forever. We begin bombing in five minutes.<sup>16</sup>

This dream of Endtime through a sacrificial holocaust could well lead to a repetition under different circumstances of the first attempt at Endtime, which the Nazis carried out under their strategy of anti-semitism. What Reagan outlined was "a joke from which we might all die laughing" (*Daily Express*). What was not expressed, though it exists there at its base, is a disposition to self-sacrifice or self-immolation implicit in the above citation. The real threat is the collective suicide of humanity which underlies this type of aggressiveness.

Given the reactionary attitudes of the majority, such a position could become generalized. By emphasizing its aggressiveness, such reaction produces an infatuation with death—that spirit of "long live death"—as today's technology moves society towards collective suicide. Death acquires then an almost invincible attraction which might carry a whole society to its immolation. But this might not necessarily occur accidentally. Subconsciously, it could be transformed into the goal of a whole political movement. Such a movement—as was demonstrated by the Nazis in Germany—could encompass a societal majority, through the same mechanisms used by liberal democracy which, in the United States, has not offered the slightest resistance to such thinking, but rather feeds it.

Nor does Christianity in itself necessarily provide any resistance to such thinking. Indeed, it could encourage such absolute irrationality by giving it a metaphysical dimension as the hidden will of God, who asks for such a great sacrifice. Thus, from the theologian Michael Novak of the American Enterprise Institute we hear:

Nature is not regarded as achieved, complete, finished. Creation is unfinished. There are things human beings have yet to do. Surprises lie in store. If there are horrors yet to face (there always have been), God is with us. The future may not be an upward slant, except as Golgotha had: So be it.<sup>17</sup>

### III. A Theological Rationale for the World Market and Liberation Theology

A theological interpretation of the total market begins with these two aggressive theories and presses them into its service, as an explicit attack on liberation theology. Thus, in the Santa Fe document, the struggle against liberation theology is made a central point in U.S. foreign policy for Latin America:

U.S. foreign policy must begin by opposing the theology of liberation (instead of simply condemning it in retrospect), especially in the form it is used by the clergy of "liberation theology" in Latin America . . . The Marxist-Leninists have, unfortunately, used the Church as a political weapon against private property and the capitalist system of production by infiltrating the religious community with ideas that are more communist than Christian.<sup>18</sup>

Under the Reagan administration, this position has led to many activities directed against liberation theology. The Institute for Religion and Democracy, the American Catholic Conference (ACC) and the American Enterprise Institute came together to found a theological department under the leadership of Michael Novak, whose books are now being

15. *La Nacion*, June 12, 1983.

16. AP report, cited in *La Republica*, San Jose, Costa Rica, July 14, 1984.

17. Novak, p. 73.

18. *Cristianismo y Sociedad*, op. cit., p. 73.

published in Spanish and promoted by Latin American business associations.

Writing about multinational corporations in an article entitled "A Theology of Corporation," Novak says:

For many years, one of my favorite texts from Scripture has been Isaiah 53:2-3: "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; he was despised and we esteemed him not." I would like to apply these words to the modern business corporation, a much despised incarnation of God's presence in this world.<sup>19</sup>

The mere fact that an institute of leading business enterprises in the USA should create a theological department may come as a surprise to us. That such an institute should reach the conclusion that the capitalist enterprise is an incarnation of God's presence is so precisely what we would expect that we are completely surprised when it happens. We would have assumed they would have held off, even if only for reasons of good taste.

But this critique is not sufficient. In fact, such a thesis is necessary in order to provide a subject around which to construct a theology of the total market. The Christian and secular theories of aggression already analyzed require such a subject. The capitalist enterprise has two dimensions in this passage of Novak's: on the one hand, it is an incarnation of God's presence in the world; on the other, it is the crucified Christ. The Isaiah quote about the suffering servant cannot mean anything else since the whole Christian tradition relates to it the crucifixion of Christ.

It is as an incarnation of God's presence, then, that the capitalist enterprise becomes the subject of the secular theory of aggression, and, as a crucified Christ the subject of the Christian theory of aggression. When the capitalist enterprise is criticized, qualified or even regarded as dangerous, Christ is crucified in it. According to Novak, capitalism is the bearer of Christ's commission and therefore His presence, and has received the mandate: "Go into the world of daily work to carry the peace and love of Jesus Christ."<sup>20</sup>

As God's incarnation, as an exponent of Christ's peace and love, and as Christ crucified, the capitalist enterprise becomes transcendent and exalted, achieving divine status. It becomes an absolute subject, the "moral God" of Hobbes. Since subversion of this enterprise now becomes the crucifixion of Christ, the total war on subversion becomes a holy war, a crusade on behalf of the total market.

Novak is sufficiently consistent, then, to conceive of a corresponding concept of God. It takes the form of a denial of the God who is the fullness of life and his replacement by a God who is transcendent emptiness. This God is not fullness, but emptiness. Novak refers to the slogan printed on the dollar bill: "In God we trust" and says that God here is the sign of emptiness.<sup>21</sup> The slogan could be rewritten to read, "In emptiness we trust." Over against this, he now interprets the idea of God as fullness of life as demonic:

In a genuinely pluralistic society there is no sacred canopy. By intention there is not. At its spiritual core there is an empty

shrine. That shrine is left empty in the knowledge that no one word, image or symbol is worthy of what all seek there. Its emptiness, therefore, represents the transcendence which is approached by free consciences from a virtually infinite number of directions.<sup>22</sup>

Novak contrasts this with notions of the fullness of life which he declares to be atavistic:

By contrast, traditional and socialistic societies offer unitary visions. They suffuse every activity with symbolic solidarity. The human breast hungers for such nourishment. Atavistic memories haunt each free person. The "wasteland" at the heart of democratic capitalism is like a field of battle on which individuals wander alone in some confusion amidst many casualties. Nonetheless, like the dark night of the soul in the inner journey of the mystics, this desert has an indispensable purpose. It is maintained out of respect for the diversity of human consciences, perceptions and intentions. It is swept clean out of reverence for the sphere of the transcendent to which the individual has access through the self, beyond the mediation of social institutions . . . But it is finally centered in the silence of each person.<sup>23</sup>

Knowing that the idea of a God who is fullness leads to the demand for as full a life as possible here on earth, Novak infers the idea of God as emptiness, since he can then infer also an empty life. The suffering of this emptiness is then presented as a necessary sacrifice. The totalization of the total market leads quite logically in this direction. Since mercantile relationships replace all other social relationships, the individual is quite alone in a blind struggle against everyone else. God is transformed into the transcendence of this solitude which is in fact emptiness.

In reality, God becomes a term for the void, for nothingness. He becomes a nihilistic God, hiding and revealing—at the same time—the nihilism which undergirds the political position of the total market. This extreme nihilistic theology is the consequence of the extreme nihilistic political movement which the Barmen Declaration challenged. Whether we declare with Nietzsche that "god is dead" or with Novak that God is emptiness, the result is exactly the same. *The real intention of these theologies is to destroy hope in the Kingdom of God and its consequences for our life here on earth.* That there is no longer any hope becomes the hope of such theologies. They preach a millenium as a situation in which no one any longer dreams of a millennial kingdom. It is in fact Dante's kingdom over the entrance to which are written the words: "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here!"

This transcendence of which Novak speaks is an "empty sanctuary" which humankind approaches as its God and around which a relationship of pity is developed. It is an emptiness which Novak places at the very "heart of democratic capitalism," and which he says is "a battlefield on which individuals wander about confused midst corpses." This battlefield is, at the same time, a "desert," to which Novak gives a mystic character: "the dark night of the soul's pilgrimage."

This mystic battlefield is then counterposed to any attempt to establish some sense of society, that is, one of "symbolic solidarity" between human beings. Such solidarity, Novak

19. Novak, p. 52.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Novak, p. 54.

22. Novak, p. 53.

23. Novak, pp. 54-55.

acknowledges, is "the bread which the human heart longs for." But he rejects this as an aberrant desire, an "atavistic memory." In its place, he offers mankind a desert where God's pity consists of providing the pilgrim a battlefield whereon, with certain destiny, he will also fall one day.

In other words, pity is nothing more than a positive affirmation of death and sacrificial killing on the battlefield. In offering up these two forms of death—to kill and to die—pity is completely inverted: it is transformed into a fascination with death. The result, therefore, is that the God of the "empty sanctuary" is Nothingness, a God of Death. Novak's theology ends up as a great festival to death, a dance of death at the edge of the volcano. It is a theology that acknowledges pure Golgotha, a Calvary without resurrection. Instead of the Good News of resurrection and life which, through human solidarity, gives humankind bread instead of stones, he offers us the Good News of crucifixion and death.

Such a theology is, of course, political, even if it is also the opposite of what is presently called "political theology" in the Federal Republic of Germany. The new theology of the total market inaugurates a change which is epoch-making in a very precise sense. The Santa Fe declaration, and even the earlier Rockefeller Report on Latin America, represent a decisive political turning point. When the war against the theology of liberation is declared to be a matter of national security for the USA and one dimension of the total war on subversion, a theological platform sponsored by the State necessarily comes into existence. Religion ceases to be a private matter. This happens specifically within a liberal democracy or under its influence. The State proclaims itself to be the new guardian of orthodoxy. Political authority takes sides in theological questions. Whether one is Catholic or Protestant is a private matter. But adherence to one or another theological tendency is not a private matter. Theological polarization permeates all confessions and religions.

This is the real reason why business associations suddenly start establishing theological departments and why the secret police in Western countries adopt theological positions. In 1977, the Brazilian secret police conducted an inquiry into the "line of religious ideology" of all bishops and priests in Brazil. Their internal questionnaire began with the following three questions:

- Does he intend to distort the image of the person of Christ?
- Does he intend to distort the image of God?
- Does he speak to base communities?<sup>24</sup>

Cardinal Lorscheider brought a public charge against the secret police on this matter.

The State and the police in the Federal Republic of Germany justified this right with the argument that all critical theologies are inherently doctrines of salvation about this world, and anything that has to do with this world is the State's business. What is involved here is clarified by Hans Albert when he comments on the theology of Albert Schweitzer, who

did not shrink from drawing critical conclusions for the faith as a result of his findings on the quest for the historical Jesus, and even adopted a practical ethical humanism free of religious dogmas. However, Schweitzer returned to the idea of the "Kingdom of God" and tried to demonstrate a continuity with the Christian tradition, albeit in a way which requires critical examination.<sup>25</sup>

Like Novak, Hans Albert is trying to destroy any hope in the Kingdom of God. He thus moves quickly to the key question: how far can a theology which is committed to critical rationalism go and still be constitutional? The positions of Novak and Albert are obviously constitutional (because they are not critical of the State), but what of others? From the perspective of the State and the secret police, anyone who believes in the Kingdom of God is no longer constitutional, i.e., safe.

From a similar angle, the sociologist Helmut Schelsky speaks of a:

fissure in world history—comparable to the rise of the salvation religions in the first centuries of our era . . . With the rise of these new salvation religions, we find ourselves, relatively speaking, in the 2nd or 3rd century *post Marxum natum*, where the appeal to Hegel or the Enlightenment corresponds to the appeal to John the Baptist or the other prophets . . . As these doctrines of salvation and their demands for power gain a foothold and become established in advanced industrialized societies, so they undermine and destroy like a cancer the established institutions of modern society . . . The only thing that can be done is to historically postpone them for a generation or two, so that at least we can preserve our political structures and the forms of existence dependent on them. Beyond that short lapse of time, no one can predict anything about real life with any degree of certainty.<sup>26</sup>

This fear of the potential end of Western civilization leads to an appeal to State power whenever necessary, as happened under Diocletian. Religion becomes again a State matter, certain theological positions are offered aid by its secular arm and these positions base themselves increasingly in the State. Capitalism is fighting for its religion and it will not hesitate if need be to resort to the methods of the Inquisition.

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We certainly cannot close our eyes to these tendencies. To confess our faith in the living God means confessing and affirming the real life of human beings. It means repudiating the deification of any market, any State or any Institution, including the Church. There is no path to God which bypasses relationships between human beings who mutually recognize each other's needs. This implies a recognition of their concrete opportunities for life which cannot be put off by appeals to the negative effects on the market or on other institutions, especially since these effects are always imaginary and illusory. But this does not mean, on the other hand, that the market or the State are necessarily demonic. Concrete alternatives can only be realized through institutional structures. Their existence plays a part in securing life-giving opportunities. We can even say that God is present in such institutions, but never in some automatic way, only as they subordinate themselves to the demands for a real life for all humankind.

For this reason alone, the confession of God as the fullness of life implies a sense of responsibility before God for a politics of social justice, peace, the environment and development. For the same reason, the God of life is the God of the poor. The theology of liberation affirms this, but it goes one step further: it says we must confess this God of life. In conclusion, therefore, let me simply point to the need for a new Church, an ecumenical Church, a Church related to all people and all nations, a confessing Church.

24. *La Republica*, San Jose, May 18, 1977, AP cable.

25. Hans Albert, *Le Miseria de la Teologia*, Edicion Laia, Barcelona, 1982, pp. 167-168.

26. Helmut Schelsky, *Die Arbeit tun die anderen*, Opladen, 1975, pp. 76-77.