

BY JÜRGEN MOLTSMANN*

The Liberation of Oppressors

I. THE TWO ASPECTS OF OPPRESSION

The oppression of human beings by human beings is *sin*. It is a crime against life, for life means: "Love your neighbor as yourself because he or she is like you." It is a destruction of the love of God: "For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (I John 4:20). The oppression of other human beings is a perversion of love because it wounds, offends, and destroys the image of God on earth.

Oppression always has *two aspects*: on the one side stand the oppressors, on the other the oppressed. On the one side stands the master, on the other side the slave; on the one side the exploiter, on the other his victim; on the one side the victor, on the other those who are subjugated.

Oppression and the system of oppression destroy humanity on both these sides: oppressors become inhuman, while the oppressed are dehumanized. The inhumanity of the former brings about the dehumanization of the latter.

Oppression ruins the communion of human beings with one another. In place of communion in life appears a deadly hostility.

Oppression destroys humanity on both sides but in different ways: on the one side through evil, on the other through suffering. The evil of the one is the cause of the suffering of the other, and the latter is the consequence of the former.

If oppression has these two aspects, then the process of *liberation* from oppression must begin simultaneously on both these sides: the liberation of the oppressed from suffering under oppression occurs simultaneously with the liberation of oppressors from the sin of oppression, and vice versa. Otherwise there is no true liberation into freedom. The goal can be nothing other than the new and true communion of humankind, in which there are no longer either oppressed or oppressors. This is the meaning of "life against death."

Liberation creates humanity on both sides but in different ways: the liberation of the oppressed—of those who are the victims of power, the innocent sufferers—is a moral duty and in many situations self-evident, in any case for the oppressed. However, in most cases the liberation of the oppressors is not self-evident, in any case not for the latter, who realize advantages from their sin. Oppressors are for the most part blind: they do not see the suffering of their victims, which they have brought about. They justify their evil on many grounds; they are blinded.

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The liberation of the oppressed corresponds to the interest and desire of the oppressed. But the liberation of oppressors contradicts the interest and desire of the masters.

Thus the liberation of oppressors is a religious task that transcends all moral power: the inhuman must die in order that humanity might be reborn.

For the liberation of the oppressed the biblical traditions contain the well-known and always inspiring symbol of the Exodus. Through hope and struggle the oppressed enter upon the way to freedom. By contrast, the liberation of oppressors comes about by means of the suffering and death of Christ on the Cross; it means the forgiveness of sins, repentance and rebirth to new life in discipleship to the Crucified.

The well-known "theologies of liberation" are without exception theologies of the "liberation of the oppressed," whether they be black, feminist, or socialist theologies. At their best, they give expression to the faith of the victims and awaken their hopes. It is obvious, then, that they should be "onesided." They *must* be onesided, for how else could the hope of the victims of racism, of masculinism, and of capitalism be expressed than by the victims themselves standing up and giving more to their faith?

It is obvious that the problem of evil, the power of sin, and liberation from the burden of guilt should take second place to the analysis of suffering and of the cry of those who suffer.

Nor should the fact be criticized that liberation theology is a theology of Exodus and Resurrection, not a theology of Cross and Judgment. For what else do Exodus and Resurrection mean than salvation for the oppressed? We would be chasing after the ideal of a "heavenly theology" if we were to seek in every respect of multifaceted and balanced theology. In the conflicts of this earth theology must be prophetic; i.e., it must be one-sided, critical, and liberating if it is to save all together.

But we may rightly criticize the fact that so far no theology of liberation has emerged on the other side of the oppressive situation. That we allow ourselves to be frightened or supported by the black, feminist, and socialist theologies of liberation, and have become tolerant and benevolent toward them, is a mark of callousness, not of intelligence. We need a "liberating theology for oppressors."

Thus far we have arrived at no insights for a theology of oppressors from the theology of the oppressed. The reason for this is that we members of the white, masculine, rich world are indeed able to acknowledge the liberation of others, but are not willing to recognize ourselves as "oppressors." Thus we display good intentions but no insight. We want to be liberal and neglect thereby our own liberation. Whoever wishes to help the oppressed to gain their freedom must begin with himself: he must cease being their oppressor. He must liberate himself. This is not a question of a bad conscience that allows itself to be blackmailed by demands for reparation. It is rather the question of one's own future.

Corresponding to the freedom of the oppressed on the one side is a

liberating conversion in the case of the oppressor. Corresponding to the "daily bread" of the oppressed is the forgiveness of the sins of the oppressor. Corresponding to the Exodus is discipleship to the Cross, and corresponding to class conflict is a "betrayal" of one's class. A "liberating theology of oppressors" is not simply a transposition of the liberating theology of the oppressed into another situation. Nor is it an ideological exploitation of the oppressed. Rather it is the counter-image to that theology. In order to understand that theology, we do not ask ourselves, "In what respects are we also oppressed?" Rather, in order to understand our own salvation, we ask, "How, why, and in what respects have we shared in their oppression?"

Because many persons are oppressed while at the same time they share in the oppression of others, and hence are "oppressed oppressors," it is important to recognize liberation on both sides of the oppression-situation.

II. PHENOMENA OF OPPRESSION AND FORMS OF SELF-JUSTIFICATION

We begin with an analysis of the most difficult forms of oppression today, directing our attention not to the oppressed but to the oppressors. What do they do? How do they do it? Why do they do it? We shall treat in representative fashion the phenomena of *racism*, *sexism*, and *capitalism* in order to inquire after the cause for these phenomena of inhumanity.

A. *Racism*. We understand racism in the way defined by UNESCO and the World Council of Churches in 1968:

By racism we mean ethnocentric *pride* in one's own racial group and preference for the distinctive characteristics of that group; belief that these characteristics are fundamentally biological in nature and are thus transmitted to succeeding generations; strong negative feelings towards other groups who do not share these characteristics coupled with the thrust to discriminate against and exclude the outgroup from full participation in the life of the community.¹

In the enumeration of attitudes that are called "racist," this definition is comprehensive, but it is certainly not complete. Regardless of that, it is clear in the case of each of the aspects of this definition that the characteristics of one's own race are identified with human being itself: e.g., to be human means to be white. Persons of other races are therefore perceived as "subhuman," as persons of lesser value and smaller capabilities: they "descend from apes," it used to be said. They are "underdeveloped," we say today. The characteristics of one's own race are utilized for the purpose of self-justification. The feeling of self-value is based on one's own skin-color. The right to domination is legitimated by one's own race: the northern or white races are destined to rule over "mixed peoples" or "slavish peoples" or "underdeveloped" peoples. In racism one's own identity is always defined by means of discriminating against other races. For the racist identity is a negative, cramped, and aggressive identity.

¹Norman Goodall, ed. *The Uppsala 68 Report* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968), p. 241.

One can observe forms of this racism that have not yet become dangerous in all peoples and social strata [*Bevölkerungsschichten*]. Group egoism and fear of what is strange are found everywhere. However, this latent racism becomes dangerous when the potential for anxiety and aggression stored up in it is applied to the construction of systems of mastery and oppression, of enslavement and exploitation of persons of other races. Then racism is not simply a group phenomenon but a means of psychological warfare waged by the dominant against the dominated. Then persons of other races are banished to a lowly caste. As "second class citizens" they are deprived of fundamental human and civil rights. As slaves and workers they are condemned to a perpetual dependence. The superiority feelings of the dominant race engender inferiority feelings in the subjugated races.

In its concrete form racism always has two aspects, an inner and an outer: it is a psychic mechanism for self-justification and an ideological mechanism for the subjugation of other persons. Therefore it can be overcome only (1) when people surrender the racist identification of their human being and find a nonaggressive identity "as human," and (2) when a "redistribution of power" from the powerful to the powerless and from the dominators to the oppressed gives everyone equal economic, legal, and political opportunities for the realization of their human being.

Racism as self-justification and self-assertion manifests a superhuman pride and in fact is nothing other than an inhuman anxiety. Whoever identifies being human with being white destroys himself. And because he always transposes his anxiety into aggression against others, he destroys community. He sees in the other person only the other race, not in the other race a person like himself. His despising, insulting, and subjugating of others is basically self-hatred. And his self-hatred is in truth hatred of God, a miscarried love of God.

B. *Sexism*. By masculine "sexism" we understand the mastery of men over women on the basis of privileges that they see in their manhood. By analogy to the definition of racism, masculine sexism is to be conceived as a masculine pride in one's own sex, favoring the special characteristics of masculinity in culture, the conviction that these characteristics are fundamentally of a biological nature and therefore are determined, combined with the depreciation of women to the "weaker sex," the devaluing of presumed "feminine" attributes, and the exclusion of women from full participation in the life of society.

Patriarchy has arisen from masculine sexism. And history clearly begins with patriarchy, in so far as we understand by "history" the struggle for power. Thus earlier matriarchal cultures have indeed been called "pre-historical." The struggle for power was clearly foreign to them. From the beginning, patriarchy was aggressive. "Men make history," it is said. The "graveyards of history" show this to be the case—unfortunately!

Judaean-Christian culture has been strongly determined by sexism and patriarchy. According to the Tenth Commandment, the wife is included among the property of the (obviously masculine) neighbor, after which

the other person—also a man—is not to lust any more than he is after the neighbor's "house, slave, maidservant, ox or ass." This is not exactly flattering for the woman as human and as God's image. Indeed according to the Priestly source (Gen. 1), human beings are created in God's image as "male and female." But this memory of original equality is immediately obscured again by the Yahwist (Gen. 2:3): the woman is created second and is the first to fall into sin. As punishment therefore the woman is to suffer "pain in childbearing," have "desire for her husband," and "he is to rule over her" (Gen. 3:16). Thereby on mythical grounds it is established that man is destined to dominate over woman in the eyes of God and the world, and woman is condemned to subjugation and dependence in every respect.

The characteristics of masculine sexuality are turned into a form of self-justification: complete human being means masculine being. Woman is seen as a human being of lesser rank with lesser capabilities. In the language of the Yahwist she is the "wife of the man." The so-called "feminine" attributes are under-valued in the aggressive culture of men. The domination of man over woman is legitimated by his own sex: man is ordained to leadership, initiative, and mastery. Man's place is in the public world; woman's place is the home.

In masculine sexism male identity is always defined by discriminating against the other sex. Sexist identity is a negative, aggressive identity: man defines himself by saying that he is "not a woman," as in the Jewish prayer of thanksgiving, and by not allowing himself to be "feminized," as in the fraternal orders. Femininity is equated with weakness.

Sexism, like racism, is more than a group phenomenon: it is also a means of waging psychological warfare on the part of dominating males against dominated females. Masculine feelings of superiority thus produce permanent feminine inferiority complexes, based on the notion that their dependence is willed by God and determined by nature.

In its concrete form masculine sexism always has two sides, an inner and an outer: it is a psychic mechanism of self-justification and an ideological mechanism for the subjugation and utilization of the other sex. Therefore it can be overcome only (1) when men give up the sexist narrow-mindedness of their manhood and find a nonaggressive identity "as human," and (2) when a "redistribution of power" gives men and women equal economic, legal, social, and political opportunities for the realization of their human being and their human community with one another.

Masculine sexism, which we have here called masculinism, entails self-justification for the sake of self-assertion and self-assertion for the sake of world-mastery. But the superhuman pride of men is in truth nothing other than an expression of an inhuman anxiety. From a psychoanalytic point of view, the second creation story, which describes the creation of Eve from the rib of Adam, represents a remarkable reversal of the natural birth-process. The myth of the fall shows a similar projection of the very opposite of the actual state of affairs. Whoever identifies being human with being masculine destroys himself. Because

he compensates for his self-anxiety through aggression toward the woman, he destroys the human community between man and woman. Masculine sexism is basically self-hatred, and this self-hatred is also a form of the miscarried love of God.

C. *Capitalism*. What the emergence of capitalism has signified for the misery of the proletariat has often enough been discussed. We inquire here into the other side, the self-incurred misery of the middle class. For

the ownership class and the class of the proletariat represent the same human self-estrangement. [But] the former class is content with this situation and recognizes the estrangement to be its own power. It has the appearance of a human existence. But the subjugated class experiences its negation in this estrangement and glimpses in it the actuality of an inhuman existence.²

Max Weber has exhaustively described this "spirit of capitalism" and its religious roots. The self-estrangement of the middle class resides in the religious deification of vocation, work, and success, and in self-sacrifice to them. It resides in the modern works-righteousness of these "inner-worldly" forms. Whoever falls under the compulsion of this works-righteousness becomes "inhuman without rest and repose." As evidence of this, *Max Weber* cites a German immigrant who describes his Yankee stepfather in Ohio as follows:

Couldn't the old man be satisfied with his \$75,000 a year and rest? No! The frontage of the store must be widened to 400 feet. Why? That beats everything, he says. In the evening when his wife and daughter read together, he wants to go to bed. Sundays he looks at the clock every five minutes to see when the day will be over—What a futile life.³

This judgment is correct: activity obsessed by success denies its own life.

Prior to *Weber*, *Karl Marx* had already commented on capitalism in this ironic though striking fashion:

"Self-denial, the self-denial of life . . . is its major dogma. The less that you eat and drink, the fewer books you buy, the less that you go to the theatre, the dance, the inn, the less that you think, love, theoretize, sing, paint, poetize, etc., the more you save, the greater will become your treasure, which neither moths nor dust can destroy your capital. The less that you exist, the less that you express your life, the more you have, the greater is your externalized life, the more that you hoard your estranged essence."⁴

Capitalism is in this respect a self-estrangement, which cheats persons of a vital existence through the appearance of having—a misplaced existence in the literal sense of the word.

Long before *Karl Marx* and *Max Weber*, *Martin Luther* had criticized capitalism in his *Large Catechism* as an especially abhorrent form of idolatry. *Luther* proceeds from the basic anthropological structure of faith:

To have a God is simply to trust and believe in one with our whole heart. As I have often said, the confidence and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol. If your faith and confidence are right, then likewise your God is the true God. On the other hand, if your confidence is false, if it is wrong, then you have not the true God. For the

²*Karl Marx, Frühschriften* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kroner Verlag, 1953), p. 317.

³*Max Webber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, tr. Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 283, n. 115.

⁴*Karl Marx, op. cit.*

two, faith and God, have inevitable connection. Now, I say, whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is really your God . . . Many a one thinks he has God and entire sufficiency if he has money and riches; in them he trusts and proudly and securely boasts that he cares for no one. He surely has a god, called mammon . . . that is, money and riches . . . upon which he fixes his whole heart. This is a universal idol upon earth.⁵

Whoever falls under the compulsion of capitalism will in many respects be alienated from his or her true self:

1. One will be compelled always to justify oneself by means of work, accomplishment, profit and progress: human beings are what they accomplish. One will be judged and valued according to one's accomplishments and possessions. This compulsion always to justify oneself by means of work distorts all trust in human being. Thus children are already put down by saying to them: "You must work in order to be a success. For you are nothing."

2. One will be compelled to worship an idol, for one will find it necessary to place one's faith and one's trust in the increase of capital. Like all idols, mammon demands sacrifice and finally devours its worshippers like a Moloch.

3. Accumulated riches represent a potential but unusable life. This accumulation of possibilities represents the "appearance of human existence" but not its actuality, because these possibilities can be hoarded only at the cost of actuality. Thus riches that have been saved up cheat a person of a loving and vital life. They are supposed to eliminate anxiety for the future, but instead they increase precisely this anxiety because they depend upon the future and are not able to overcome it.

4. Wealth isolates. In so far as the ownership classes are able to enrich and maintain themselves only at the cost of the laboring, exploited, and impoverished classes, capitalism destroys the human community. Society will be divided into classes. The ruling classes live in a permanent civil war with the subjugated classes, who are compelled to work for wages. Even within the ruling classes, the principle of competition divides human beings from each other and causes them to struggle against each other. Wealth isolates groups and finally the individual, who finds him- or herself in an essentially hostile world.

Capitalism has a structure similar to racism and sexism, yet has a different appearance. While in racism it is one's own race and in sexism one's own sex that are misused as the basis for self-valuing and self-justification, in capitalism it is the capital accumulated from one's own labor but mostly from the labor of others. Unlike race and sex, labor and capital are not delimited but rather have an essentially limitless, imperialistic character. The power of labor can exploit every human being. Everyone can be made a consumptive slave of Coca Cola. Through the increase and investment of capital, further power can be accumulated, which is not possible through mere racism or sexism. Thus today racism and sexism become most dangerous through their combination with capitalism, just as in earlier times they became

⁵*Dr. Martin Luther's Large Catechism* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1935), pp. 44-45.

dangerous by being woven into the caste structure and feudalism. Capitalism represents the unlimited, permanent increase of power and therefore the unabated struggle for mastery. The aggressiveness which capitalism encourages in order to build its world must—if we are to pursue this aggression—*anxiety thesis*—have its source in a limitless anxiety, which it presupposes and extends. If this is so, then capitalism must be seen as a form—perhaps the ultimate form—of human self-hatred. For the first time in history, the potential for self-destruction and destruction of the earth lies in the hands of alienated human beings. This is what makes the situation so dangerous and apocalyptic.

III. *THE CAUSE: UNHAPPY LOVE AND DISTORTED TRUST*

We have described the phenomena of racism, sexism, and capitalism as phenomena of aggression. We have discovered anxiety at the heart of aggression, and the impulse to self-assertion at the heart of anxiety. We now inquire further into the cause for this cramped way of existing. Usually one is concerned with sociological and psychological analyses of suffering and condemns the racist, sexist, and capitalistic aggression against human beings in the name of the victims. However, moral condemnation is superficial because it does not recognize the compulsive forms of action which inescapably befall an unsuccessful and forsaken existence. A controversy has emerged among the liberation theologians over the “root of all evil,” for only when one traces evil to the roots is one “radical” in the literal sense of the word. But whoever regards capitalism or sexism as the root of all evil does not find its root. One cannot explain *why* human beings fall into capitalistic aggression or why men oppress and subjugate women. The secularization of the doctrine of original sin has led us into error: such phenomena are interpreted ideologically, and their removal will bring about a utopia.

Since Paul and Augustine, Christian theology has traced the phenomena of sin back to the origin of sin. The multiple acts of sin (*peccatum actuale*) are rooted in the one sin of existence (*peccatum originale*). This original sin is of transmoral character, for it concerns the *being* of human beings, their vitality, their psychic energy, their elementary life; in brief, they themselves. And because being always precedes action, this being of sin constitutes the origin (*peccatum originans*) for the many sins of commission and omission.

The doctrine of original sin contains three dimensions, which must not be overlooked: (1) Human beings do not merely *have* sins; they *are* sinners. (2) Sin is not a moral error but a *compulsion*; a servitude of the will. (3) This faulted mode of being and this compulsion are universal.

The doctrine of evil as sin is a *doctrine of hope*: sin does not constitute human nature but is a peculiarity of our history. For God, therefore, and through him, it can be overcome. Sin belongs neither to morals nor to tragedy. Where then does it belong? What is intended by this notion of original sin?

1. *Original Sin Is Miscarried Love of God.* This answer of Augustine is theologically and psychologically appropriate. Theologically it means

that human beings have been created for God. Their entire nature is one of passionate love. God is the fullness of their blessedness. The infinite God is the happiness of humankind; and the limitless love of the latter is the joy of God. If this love is withdrawn from God and directed to nondivine beings or things, then unhappiness arises: finite things cannot satisfy infinite love. An infinite love destroys the finite beauty of things. From a love that has lost God arises an unquenchable and therefore all-destructive passion—a passion for power and possession. The love that can find no fulfillment is perverted into anxiety. The love that is disappointed in its expectations is perverted into vandalism. Then the wrath, i.e., the scorned love, of God comes to expression, not in the form of moral punishment but as abandonment: for this reason “God has given them up” to their perverted senses (Romans 1:24, 26, 28). In history, guilt and judgment are combined: those who abandon God in their love are abandoned by God. This abandonment presses upon miscarried love and drives it into a corner. The abandoned God makes himself noticeable in his absence. Therefore the miscarried love of God is spread abroad in the world in the form of unfortunate greed and unhappiness.

Thus it follows psychologically that the essence of historical human being is a passion for love. “In the eyes of all people glistens an unquenchable longing” (E. Cardenal). The anxiety and aggression that dominate human history are forms of this love. “For the sake of this love, all crimes are committed and all wars waged; for its sake, people love and hate. . . . The unquenchable hunger of dictators for power and wealth and possession is in truth the love of God” (E. Cardenal). Sin is a perversion of the love of God. Therefore the hunger after power is unquenchable. Therefore the will to subjugate another is limitless. Therefore abandoned love becomes deadly: “Whoever has lost what thou has lost stops at nothing” (Nietzsche). One must recognize this religious dimension in the phenomena of inhumanity; otherwise one cannot understand the violent passion implanted in such deeds. Racism, sexism, and capitalism are religious perversions and show themselves as perverted religions.

2. *Original Sin Is Distorted Trust in God.* This answer of Luther presupposes the answer of Augustine and takes it further: the reciprocal relationship of God and humankind is trust. In whatever one places one’s heart and wholly trusts—that is one’s “God.” If the trust is right, then one’s God is right. If the trust is false, then one does not have the right God. God and faith belong together and condition each other reciprocally. The lack of trust is also always a basic form of trust. Only when I am able to abandon myself *wholly* to something do I know that I am borne up by it and feel free. But to what can human beings *wholly* abandon themselves? Whom can they trust *undividedly*?

If one trusts in things that can offer no reliability, then one overtakes these things. Because one knows basically that all things are mortal and therefore not secure, anxiety arises in one’s heart. If one represses this anxiety, as one must when one’s heart is placed in unsecure things, then an ostentatious security results. Those things that are divinized by the

trust of the heart throw their own insecurity back upon the superstitious believer and menace him or her. Thus one is compelled constantly to expropriate the security that these things cannot give. This is the form of self-justification. This is the deceptive world [*Scheinwelt*] of idolatry. It is the mode of life of superstition. Whoever withdraws her or his trust from the invisible God and places it in visible things falls victim to an unfulfillable compulsion for legitimation. Such a person must constantly reassure himself and be reassured by others that he is somebody, for in himself he is obviously nothing. In this fashion one becomes a slave to oneself. One's repressed mistrust toward oneself also tyrannizes one's environment. One can develop no other identity than that of aggression.

A perverted trust in God and a compulsive self-justification are both dangerous. Whoever loses his trust in God must place his fundamental trust in his race, his masculinity, or his capital. Because he knows that he *is* nothing, he directs his entire selftrust onto what he *has*. Consequently he experiences himself as a thing and develops an empty ego-identity in order to protect his boundless inner insecurity. The mistrust of things and human relations leads to a self-securing. This mistrust is the power of destruction itself. One must also recognize this religious dimension in the phenomena of inhumanity; otherwise one cannot discover the means by which they can be overcome. Ingrained in racism, sexism, and capitalism is a deeply distorted lack of trust and therefore a self-expanding mistrust. Implanted in a compulsive self-justification is the power of death.

IV. THE LIBERATION OF OPPRESSORS

If the oppressor acts under compulsion, if the sinner has lost his freedom, then moral indictments do not help him. His relationship to the God he has abandoned must be changed. But it can be changed only by God himself. According to the New Testament, in the messianic mission and in the surrender, suffering and death of Jesus there is revealed the *humanity of God*, who humbles himself, allows himself to be wounded, takes deadly aggression upon himself and becomes a victim, in order to liberate oppressors from the compulsion of degradation. According to the New Testament, in the resurrection of the crucified Jesus from the dead into the coming Kingdom of God there is revealed the *divinity of humanity*, which is liberated from sin and suffering and forms that new community in which there are no longer any masters and slaves (Galatians 3:28). In the community of Christ a new fundamental situation is created for human beings who have lost their humanity.

Luther formulated the liberation of oppressors this way:

"Through the glory of his humanity or his flesh, which works in faith, [God] conforms us to himself and crucifies us and makes true human beings out of unhappy and proud idols; i.e., he makes us poor and sinful. That is to say, because in Adam we ascend to the likeness of God, therefore he descends in our likeness in order to bring us to self-recognition. This is the realm of faith in which the cross rules: the divinity that we perversely strive after is rejected, and the humanity and the vulnerability of the flesh that we perversely abandon are given back to us."⁶

⁶H.T. Lehmann and H.J. Grimm, eds. *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 5:128.

Accordingly, the humanization of oppressors is brought about by faith. By faith the oppressor discovers the incarnated, humanized God and discovers in him the humanity that he has persecuted, oppressed, and destroyed in himself and others. He discovers God and himself in the Crucified: *Ecce Homo!* He discovers the God whom he despairingly loves in the victims he has killed out of hatred. The Crucified is the true man and the truth of humanity in an inhuman world. The Crucified is the true God and the truth of God in a godless and idolized world. The humiliated, dishonored, oppressed, and sacrificed Christ is the man who corresponds to God in this world of contradictions. Thus the humanization of the inhuman comes about only through the cross of Christ. In this suffering of God the aggression of the sinner is put to an end. In this suffering of God is revealed the divine love for a creation that has miscarried. This sacrifice of God puts to an end the self-justification of the sinner, which cries for victims. In this sacrifice of God, justification is allotted to the unrighteous person gratuitously. This means the following:

1. The history of the struggle of humanity over power is at the same time the *history of the passion of God*. The despairing struggle over power ends to the extent that humanity recognizes the infinite suffering of God, which has its focus in the victims of power. By this recognition human beings are set free from the anxiety and compulsion of aggression. They are moved by the divine passion which bears this suffering. This passion is the divine love for communion with humankind. As true as it is from the side of humanity that history is the history of class, race, and power conflicts, it is equally true that it is the history of the divine passion: the history of the suffering and passion of the triune God for the freedom of humanity and its unhindered communion with the whole of creation. Without this interpretation of history as the history of the divine passion, all historical interpretations remain under the spell of power conflicts (Berdyayev).

2. The oppressor is loved by no one, and he loves himself in despairing fashion, for the most part in the form of self-hatred. Only God loves the oppressor, because only he can love him with a love that radically changes him and makes what is hateful worthy of love. Only God loves the oppressor with a consuming love, which burns away evil and anxiety in order to let humanity be born anew from the ashes. God loves the oppressor by means of the judgment that he lets fall upon him. This judgment is experienced through the inner sense of being abandoned by God. It is experienced in an absurd existence. Oppressors glimpse this judgment in the eyes of their victims. It is found already in the compulsive mode of existence of oppressors themselves. They are condemned to unfreedom. Only when oppressors accept this judgment, when their inner emptiness and compulsive actions and the suffering of victims are understood as revelations of judgment, will that love of God be experienced that judges in order to liberate. The experience of judgment is grace for the oppressors. In view of this, must one not interpret the history of human aggression against humanity as the *history of divine judgment*? Where this history is understood as the judgment of God,

there begins the liberation of oppressors from the compulsion of aggressive action and their opening to communion with the oppressed.

3. Because he senses that he is acknowledged and accepted by no one, the oppressor must affirm, justify, and praise himself. Thus his anxiety increases and the impulse to self-justification grows boundlessly. In this regard history is the history of human self-justification and its constant failures. The self-justifications by means of race, sex, or accomplishments result in death and are forms of the denial of life. As long as a person bases his identity on what he has, he lacks what he is. Christian faith is essentially justifying faith. It is the trust that humanity has already been accepted by God in the surrender of Christ and has had its sin forgiven by him. In this faith there dies the person who *has* himself, and there awakens the person who *is* himself. Consequently all strivings for self-justification by means of race, sex, or works are vain, useless, and superfluous. They damage the life already accepted, loved, and justified by God. Human and worldly reality can be loved in its relative and broken beauty if it is no longer misused as the means to self-justification. The vain and deadly history of the "glory and misery" of the human race is cancelled out by the history of the divine justification of human being, which without glory and without shame is good and is to be affirmed. The history of human vanity lives basically from the history of divine trust, even when it permanently destroys the latter. The history of human self-*having* lives from the history of human *being*, even when it ceaselessly denies the latter. Whoever grasps this is freed from the compulsion of self-affirmation. He no longer *seeks* himself in another. Rather he begins to *be* in the other. The deadly history of having is ended. The living history of being begins.

V. THE EXODUS OF OPPRESSORS

Whoever is liberated is drawn out of his imprisonment, otherwise the call to freedom remains without an answer. The person for whom God has suffered on the cross of Christ, whom he has graced by his judgment, and who has been justified in his existence, dies to his previous life-world. He "abandons everything" and "follows after him," like the disciples. He can no longer "conform to the schema of this world" (Romans 12:1). He is "dead" to the demands and rewards of the world of oppressors. Therefore he no longer acknowledges the laws and the promises of oppression. This means, however, that he has taken up "his cross."

In the cross of Christ, racism, masculinism, and capitalism all die away. The new, the true human being is born. A person is identified in open identity "as a human being," abandoning the fixed, narrow identifications of his or her race, class, etc.

What the new person is or does, according to the standards of racism, entails "racial shame"; what this person is or desires, according to the standards of masculine sexism, is "feminine." What is openly practiced, according to the laws of capitalism, is "betrayal" of one's own class. Yet there is no solidarity with the victims of racism, sexism, and capitalism without the betrayal of their betrayers and oppressors. Whoever desires

communion with the victims must become the enemy of their enemies. If he comes from the ranks of the enemy, he becomes a betrayer. He becomes a "stranger among his own people." Only by means of this estrangement can he show to the oppressors the homeland of love. Whoever in a racist society, whoever in a patriarchal culture, whoever in a capitalistic economy betrays "his own world" for the sake of the victims witnesses to the love of God, lives in discipleship to Christ, spreads abroad the hope of the Holy Spirit, works for life against death.

The way of discipleship leads to self-denial, suffering, and shame (Mark 8:34). For the sake of their Christian faith, many have taken up this "cross." Precisely here it is a question of faith itself and not of something external. It is a matter of the life-praxis of liberating faith. From the experiences of discipleship we draw two examples:

1. When the German Reich became dominated by racial insanity, the Jews were excluded from social life. In succession their jobs, their rights, their property, their freedom, and finally their lives were taken from them. Whoever lived with Jews and maintained contact was accused of "racial shame" and often enough suffered a similar fate. Many went voluntarily with the Jews on the path of suffering. They were accused and condemned of "betraying the people." Janusz Korscak went to death with the children of his Jewish orphanage in Warsaw.

2. The overcoming of capitalism begins in capitalism itself, and indeed in an alliance between the working class and the class-betrayers in the ruling classes. Marx and Engels were "class-betrayers." Lenin and Trotsky, Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, to say nothing of the philosophers Lukacs, Bloch, Adorno, and Horkheimer, were "class-betrayers." Oppression must be abolished simultaneously on both sides. To this end, liberated oppressors and liberated oppressed work together. For the liberated oppressors, the class-betrayers, this is a path leading into isolation from their social stratum, a path threatened by "job-exclusion," and often enough a path into powerlessness and silence. Therefore, they must always ask themselves practical questions: how far can they go, what risks must they assume, in order to extend freedom from class laws and to actualize commonality with the oppressed, without sacrificing possibilities of influence and without manoeuvring themselves into a corner in society. An actual step forward on the path of a "classless society." Class-betrayal must be carried out and endured slowly, haltingly, and effectively. For it is a betrayal for the sake of freedom.

VI. WHICH FREEDOM DO WE SEEK?

In conclusion, we ought to become clear on which freedom it is that we seek and what true freedom actually is.

In previous history we have always understood freedom *as mastery*, and I am afraid that we are not yet liberated from this misunderstanding, whether we are oppressors or oppressed. Whoever understands freedom as mastery can be free only at the cost of another. His freedom consists in the oppression of others. When we say that we are free when we can do and accomplish what we want, we understand freedom as mastery and

orient it to the ideal of the master. When we say that we are free when we are no longer determined by others but rather determine ourselves, we understand freedom as mastery: each person ought to be his or her own master.

Liberalism grants to everyone who bears the human countenance equal rights to freedom: each person is his or her own king or entrepreneur. The freedom of one person has its limits only in the freedom of another. One must respect the freedom of another if one claims his own freedom. Thus even for liberalism freedom means mastery. Each person finds in another person a competitor for his freedom and therefore the limits of his freedom. Each is free for himself, but no one can share in the freedom of another. This is the society of free and isolated individuals. I believe that this represents the untruth of freedom.

The *truth of freedom* I find in unrestricted *communion* [*Gemeinschaft*], for the truth of human freedom is *love*. I am free when I am acknowledged, accepted, and beloved by others. Other persons are free when I acknowledge them and open their lives for them, sharing life with them. By means of a reciprocal participation in life and in communion, a person is set free from the limits of her or his individuality. If freedom is not mastery but rather communion, then unfreedom consists in a hindered, alienated, and distorted communion. Thus liberation leads to an unhindered, solidary, and open communion if it is to be liberation to freedom and not liberation to mastery.

If we understand *freedom as mastery*, then the oppressor is free and the oppressed remain unfree. If we understand *freedom as communion*, then the oppressor is unfree because he isolates himself from communion and destroys it. Those who are involuntarily oppressed show in their communion among one another more freedom than the masters. To reach freedom as communion, the way is longer from the oppressors than it is from the oppressed.

Oppressors will begin their "long march" into true freedom for the first time when they comprehend the extent to which their perversion of freedom into mastery has imprisoned and isolated them.

True freedom is unhindered, solidary, and open communion

- with other human beings
- with one's own body
- with nature
- with God.