

**RELIGION**

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**Hypertexting the Gulf War**

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## Mission Statement

### The Association for Religion and Intellectual Life

The mission of the Association (ARIL) is to be an agent of change at the intersection of religion and intellectual life. ARIL seeks to discover, create, nurture and network communities that are theologically informed, spiritually disciplined, morally engaged, and collegially led. It works to engage those committed both to the intellectual life and to their religious traditions in sustained discourse, deepened by serious exploration and re-examination of our Jewish and Christian roots.

ARIL focuses in particular on higher education as a critical place where the work of understanding, criticism and transformation must be carried out. Its membership, interests and goals are not confined to the academy.

ARIL engages Jews and Christians as foundational members and partners in a common task; it also welcomes collaboration with other faith communities and world religions in pursuit of that task.

ARIL currently accomplishes its mission by these programs:

- *Cross Currents: Religion & Intellectual Life*, a quarterly journal, provides an outlet and resource for individual and group reflection on critical issues;
- The Coolidge Research Colloquium offers fellowships for twenty-five selected Jews and Christians engaged in individual research on themes related to religion and intellectual life in the context of a supportive and critical interfaith community;
- The Consultation annually brings Association members together with highly qualified resource persons to consult on selected significant themes and fosters communication across boundaries of age, discipline, ideology, and religion in search for common intellectual ground;
- The ARIL Newsletter serves as an occasional vehicle for reaffirming and reinforcing communities of discourse and action through the exchange of information, resources, news, points of view.

Enrique Dussel

## 1492: the Discovery of an Invasion

As we approach the fifth centenary of Columbus's historic voyage, we are being deluged by different interpretations of 1492, each the result of an ideological position adopted explicitly or implicitly by the respective exponent or institution. It is important, therefore, to probe and clarify their different ideological starting points.

For example, when Felipe Gonzalez came to power in 1982 as Spain's Social Democratic prime minister, he said that in ten years Spain would celebrate the event of 1492 in a special way. Spain, which was seeking entry into the European Common Market, would exhibit 1492 as one of its glories, putting it on an equal footing with the other European countries. This "glory" is being advertised by Spain today even more widely than ten years ago in order to promote integration into Europe—not, of course, in order to benefit Latin America.

The fact that 1992 has been selected by Europe as the year of economic unification tells us clearly that the Quincentennial has a special meaning. The event of 1492 represents Europe's escape after more than eight centuries from the wall that the Islamic world had built around it. Thirteen

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ENRIQUE DUSSEL teaches philosophy at the University of Mexico and is president of the Study Commission for Latin American Church History (CEHILA). He is the author of *The Philosophy of Liberation* and of *The Ethics of Latin American Liberation*. From his earliest writings in 1964, he has tried to reformulate world history in order to discover the place of Latin America, and especially of the Indians in it. The theme of the Indian as Other was suggested by Emmanuel Levinas, Dussel's professor in Paris in the 1960s. This essay first appeared in *1492–1992: La interminable conquista* (Mexico City: Joaqua-Planeta, 1990).

centuries have now passed since the Islamic Berbers from North Africa began their occupation of the Iberian peninsula. The year 1992 thus closes a cycle of world history. It is useful to consider its meaning from the viewpoint of different ideologies, all of which, though "objective" and capable of scientific description, nevertheless contradict each other because they derive from and are based on different kinds of praxis.

When I dealt with this subject at a 1984 seminar in Mexico on "The Idea of Discovery," I suggested that discovery includes the idea of "coverup," and emphasized the need to make historical amends to the Indian.<sup>1</sup> Discovery also lends itself to philosophical clarification. Karl Otto Apel suggests that events take place within a "community of communication,"<sup>2</sup> a concept that Jürgen Habermas later develops as "communicative action."<sup>3</sup> This idea allows us to formulate the problem accurately. In the past the Indian, and even today the reality and thought of the so-called Third World, with its sociology, philosophy, theology, etc., have been excluded and distorted by the consensus reached by the exercise of European (now including North American and Japanese) rationality.<sup>4</sup>

For obvious reasons, I have first brought together ideological positions from Europe. This "from" is meant in an ideological, not a geographical sense. It indicates the stance from which the question is formulated, both existentially and effectively, whether the questioner is Spanish, German, or Mexican. The second section of my essay starts from a different viewpoint, and everything changes as if in a Copernican revolution.

### **The Invention of America**

We cannot overlook the ideological content—unconscious, of course—of the interpretation offered in 1957 by historian Edmundo O'Gorman in *La invención de América*.<sup>5</sup> His thesis, inspired by Heidegger and also influenced by Spanish philosopher José Gaos, an exile from the Franco regime, has the virtue of being an ontological interpretation that rises above superficial anecdotes. If we take Heidegger's being-in-the-world as our starting point, then every discovery (in the sense of the Greek *aletheia*) presupposes (pre-sub-poses) what is already given in daily life as preexistent. This means that the idea of discovery, which was not necessarily present in the historical consciousness of a Christopher Columbus, "is the final and inescapable result of an interpretative development conditioned by the previous idea that America is a being that was always established, a predetermined being for everyone and every-



where . . . a thing in itself."<sup>6</sup> From the *world* (in the ontological, existentialist, Heideggerian sense) of Columbus or Amerigo Vespucci, O'Gorman argues elegantly, things revealed themselves in historical development. The "American-being" gradually emerges in that concrete world from the previous existence—in the mind of Columbus and the Europeans of his generation—of the "Asian-being" of the islands and lands encountered in the ocean sea. Columbus himself, however, never actually overcame, either historically, biographically, or consciously, the Asian-being of the lands he "found"—nor did he want to, since that would have meant the failure of his project. For O'Gorman, in consequence, Columbus did not discover America in the ordinary meaning of the word. Even awareness of the American-being of the recently found lands did not constitute a discovery. (Such an awareness developed only about 1507, a year after Columbus's death, thanks to the *Cosmographiae introductio* and other works published that year.) O'Gorman expresses the situation perfectly: "When we say that America was discovered, we have found a way to explain the appearance of a being already established in its American way of being, but when we state that America was invented, this is a way to explain a being whose essence depends on the way it enters into the space of that [Western] culture . . . America is essentially an occurrence that depends on the way it appears, . . . as a result of a happening that, when it occurred, constituted the being of a *being*."<sup>7</sup> Western culture thus has "the creative ability to endow with its own being a being that it itself conceives as distinct and alien."<sup>8</sup>

O'Gorman has established, perhaps for the first time so clearly, the real and historical experience lived by the protagonists of the event that took place between 1492 and 1507. During this period there was nothing of what we today call America, but only something like the geographic and cultural finding—or encounter, or recognition—of an eastern part of Asia, what O'Gorman accurately calls the Asian-being of the future America.<sup>9</sup>

In other words, from the European perspective—which O'Gorman assumes, without saying so explicitly, is only one of the possible perspectives—there was first an Asian-being of America. As I said, Columbus held fast to this interpretation because, if the lands he identified were not Asia, all his dreams of greatness and wealth would collapse, especially in the light of the poverty he was finding in the Caribbean. Only later did there develop an explicit awareness of a "new" continent, which was given the European name of the Italian geographer who had an absolute awareness, within the community of communication of



the old world, of what Columbus had merely encountered but not discovered.

O'Gorman uses "invention" to describe the Asian-being of the future America, and also to describe the American-being itself, since only in the European world could such a kind of being exist. What he does not seem to realize is that even the American-being subsequent to the Asian-being was European, and continues even today to be a reductionist interpretation of 1492.

### **1492: the Dis-discovery of America**

For Heidegger as for Husserl, endowing an object with meaning signifies the encounter of two moments. "A true being means a discovering being."<sup>10</sup> "In the state of having been discovered, beings reveal themselves as beings that already were before . . . Such an understanding of beings in their relations from the point of view of being is possible only on the basis of a state-of-openness, that is, of the being-discoverer of the being-there."<sup>11</sup>

We cannot establish the meaning of American-being by thinking of it as part of Columbus's communicative world; only later did Europe fill American-being with meaning. Nevertheless, I believe that what O'Gorman calls invention corresponds precisely with what Heidegger names "dis-discovery." In the Heideggerian sense, America was first dis-discovered as Asiatic, but not invented. The being of the lands found or merely encountered was a synthesis of what became manifest (islands, climate, inhabitants, palms); the Europeans added their meaning to what they were seeing (already existing, without a European meaning).<sup>12</sup> This added meaning came from the European world, from which the object found was interpreted.

America, therefore, was not invented out of nothing but discovered from the world of Europe. This discovery (the unveiling of what was under covers), or the making sense<sup>13</sup> of what was found, was, historically, a prolonged process that lasted not only for the period of moving from the Asian-being to the American-being but for the much longer history of what this American-being came to mean for the European. It extended from contacts with a few ethnic groups of indigenous Caribs who lacked an urban culture to the encounter with the Mexican and Peruvian worlds with their highly developed cultures, all the way to what the U.S. today often calls its backyard.

It would be complicated but extremely useful to describe phenomenologically how, for example, Hernán Cortés's sense of himself as Eu-

ropean gradually became divinized. We see the process at work in Book IV of Juan de Torquemada's *Monarquía Indiana*.<sup>14</sup> The author follows Cortés to Cuba, then to the Yucatan and Veracruz. Finally, after many vicissitudes, the conquistador changes his self-perception and begins literally to see himself as a kind of divinized superman, engaging in campaigns that he would not have attempted earlier.

From its centrality, Europe begins to discover the unknown world, constituting—recall Husserl's understanding of *Konstitution*—it out of the elements of Europe's experience, and for that reason giving it a variety of meanings. Onto the New World (mythic, speculative, more imaginary than real) will be projected the unrealized desires of the Old. In this respect, too, the discovery is another invention of a European impulse (here we can learn from Freud, Lacan, and others) toward fantasy and the realization of the failed utopias and millennial dreams of Europe. The perspective is always European—first *ego conquiro*, later *ego cogito*. This is the ontological basis of the interpretation of what was encountered, of what was found in 1492.

### 1492: the Experience of the Conquest

To set out to discover is not the same thing as to set out to conquer. Conquest is a form of praxis, a domination by force of arms. Discovery remains an act of knowing, with overtones of the Renaissance, of the lure of science (as in the school of navigation of Henry the Navigator, the fifteenth-century Portuguese prince), and of Mediterranean adventurers. In contrast, conquest reminds us of the more than seven centuries of re-conquest carried out by Christian Spaniards against the Muslims. From 718, the start of this campaign at Covadonga, up to about 1550, when occupation of the Aztec and Inca empires (containing more than 70 percent of the population of the American continent at that time) was completed, Spain and Portugal always had warriors fighting the "infidel" on its frontiers. The spirit of the Holy War against the Muslims was adapted almost unconsciously to the struggle against the native peoples. When Cortés, for example, brandished his sword as a sign to attack the Tlascaltecas, all the while crying, "St. James, at them!" his action combined Christian faith, warlike aggression, and the spirit of the Crusades.

Conquest is thus a new way of making sense out of what happened in 1492. From the world of anti-Islamic Spain and Portugal, the expansion of Christendom is seen as a violent, armed, and warlike necessity. A praxis of total domination is justified by means of a Catholic faith that

legitimizes the praxis of "I conquer." It is the practical basis for the future "I think" of Descartes, which is simply an ontological formulation that has already been anticipated in the historical reality of Cortés, the Alvarados, the Pizzaros, the Albuquerques, and other conquistadores. Ginés de Sepúlveda was the only one in the sixteenth century sincere enough to offer an ideological and theological defense of this position.

Few today, of course, would attempt such a justification; it has no supporters on the ideological level. Nevertheless, in the call for a triumphalist celebration of the quincentennial of 1492, or in such recent actions as the U.S. occupation of Panama, one can see the same warrior mentality in which reason has yielded to violence. The theoretical justification for the quasi-scientific adventure of discovery has been replaced by the Nietzschean will-to-power.

### **1492: the Beginning of Evangelization**

If we were to look at the event of 1492 from the perspective of a history of culture, we could not fail to identify it as the beginning of a process of European transculturation of the Amerindian cultures. From the viewpoint of a history of religions, it was a gigantic process of Christian expansion at the expense of the various Amerindian religions.<sup>15</sup> I recall seeing, in a famous Buddhist temple in Colombo, Sri Lanka, a very old fresco representing the arrival of Buddhist missionaries in the fifteenth century. They came in a boat festooned with decorations; dressed in orange robes, the monks were represented with haloes around their heads and Buddhist scriptures in their hands. Kneeling on the beaches to welcome these messengers of heaven were the primitive Cinhalese who were much darker in color, almost naked, their eyes wide with astonishment. I thought I was looking at the arrival of the "twelve first apostles," the Franciscans who began their mission in Mexico in 1524. From the mental attitude of a Catholic believer, the fresco represented simply the process of evangelization.

If we accept the Hegelian formulation (which Kierkegaard criticized) that the Christian religion was the foundation of the Spanish state and of the state set up in what was first called the Indies (which after 1524 was juridically and politically structured by the Council of the Indies), we are not just dealing with the expansion of the Christian religion, but with a complex system (political, economic, and cultural), the Christendom of the Indies, as Toribio de Mogrovejo called it. What could have been a glory of Catholicism, the evangelization of a continent, was in fact an am-



biguous process justifying violent conquest. As a consequence, we cannot ring bells to salute a festive commemoration of what historically was simply the legitimization of genocide. There was indeed an evangelization; talk about “a second evangelization [as some Catholics are doing now] is at the least poor taste—no country is evangelized a second time. (What would be the reaction be if someone suggested that Poland or Germany should be evangelized again? Only people who don’t know history are capable of proposing such meaningless adventures.) The evangelization that did take place, however, was the result of the special way in which the natives of the New World interpreted the events that took place. Scandal was an integral part of the experience, and it is to the indigenous themselves that credit must be given for the first evangelization—and also to many missionaries who took a stand against the Spaniards and the institutions of Christendom in order to live and die together with the Indian peoples, as did the Jesuits of the *Reducciones*.

Because of their ideological prejudices, many Catholics today seek to capitalize on the glory of that sixteenth-century evangelization, not realizing that, far from being a glory, it is a heavy responsibility, an event that should inspire an ethical awareness of guilt rather than be celebrated with a peaceful conscience. The Indians themselves today regard the 12th of October as a time of mourning and penance. How can the church—from a simple layperson to a bishop or a pope—rejoice over the absent corpses of so many people whose rights have been usurped?

### **1492: the Encounter of Two Worlds**

When the attempt to interpret the significance of 1492 was made in 1892, which was the first time a centenary of the discovery was celebrated, both the Latin American oligarchies—from Argentina’s Julio Roca to Mexico’s Porfirio Díaz—and the Spanish monarchy recognized it as an appropriate moment to strengthen their own power. This objective made it necessary to glorify the figure of Christopher Columbus. Pope Leo II wrote an encyclical stressing the significance of the explorer, and there were even pressures brought to bear on the Vatican to beatify him. It was a time of reconciliation between Latin American liberals (who were generally anticlerical) and conservatives, marking the end of the first stage of establishing national states. The celebrations, European in origin and aim, had little to do with the indigenous.

Our century, marked by the growth of indigenous movements and such populist leaders as Vargas in Brazil, Perón in Argentina, and Cár-

denas in Mexico, developed a more conciliatory ideology that expressed, from the standpoint of a nationalist capitalism, the conflicting interests of workers, peasants, and small business. The resulting encounter of two cultures, looking on each as enjoying its own values, is a great leap forward but continues to embody a profound ambiguity.<sup>16</sup>

How can we speak of encounter when the reality was violent genocide? How can we describe as a glory the racial hybridization, fruit of the relations between Cortés and Malinche (which is continually invoked), and overlook the fact that this was the essence of machismo, which has meant domination of the Indian woman first by the European male, then by the white male, and finally by the Creole oligarch? Populist ideology supports the ideological interpretation of the encounter of two cultures, but the reality is that the Iberian-European culture tore the indigenous cultures apart. They continued only as imitative and scattered elements, quickly reduced to folklore or to survival in the dominated culture of the poor. They are doomed to extinction unless we have a popular cultural revolution—for example, like the one attempted in Nicaragua by the Ministry of Culture under Ernesto Cardenal.

### **The Prophetic Critique of the Conquest**

A new meaning of 1492 was formulated by that generation of prophets—whose successors are found today among representatives of the theology of liberation—who described the discovery, conquest, and so-called encounter as nothing more than acts of domination, as “the destruction of the Indies,” as an unspeakably grave sin.<sup>17</sup> Those precursors of liberation theology, most of them members of religious orders, believed that Europe had defined the indigenous as legitimate objects of plunder, as a means of getting rich—tender lambs exposed to lions “who had not eaten for many days.”<sup>18</sup>

From the world (to speak once more like Heidegger), or from the Spanish community of communication (to adopt Apel’s vocabulary), the native peoples were beings who existed simply to serve the purposes of the conquistadores. They were excluded from the community of communication as barbarians, unlettered children who had to be instructed in order to receive the status of human being through civilization.<sup>19</sup> In practice, it was denied that they were rational. Only a few missionaries raised the issue, for the first time in the modern world, of the right of native peoples to be treated rationally and not violently: “Divine providence established for the entire world and for all times a single and unique way

to teach the true religion to people, namely, the persuasion of the understanding by providing reasons."<sup>20</sup> The prophetic critique of the conquest is a glory of Spain. No subsequent colonial power produced similar prophets who so clearly criticized the European project of violent occupation of the periphery, of what today we call the Third World.<sup>21</sup>

### 1492: the Origins of Modernity

Ideologically, 1492 can be placed in yet another context that has importance for our present discussion. This would be as an interpretation of modernity.

The issue of modernity is at the center of much recent discussion.<sup>22</sup> It is generally thought that modernity began either with the Italian Renaissance or the Protestant Reformation, that it received its theoretical formulation during the Enlightenment and its political support in the French Revolution, which came a century after the English Revolution. As is obvious, all these phenomena are intra-European. What this means is that Europeans do not have a world-historical interpretation of themselves.

I believe, on the contrary, that the phenomenon that launched Europe into a completely new mode of self-interpretation was the expansion that occurred following 1492, when a new world—at least, it was new for Europeans—changed the life and thinking of all Europeans at the level of their everyday and geopolitical existence, and when the lives and thinking of its people impacted on the periphery. Europe, almost without knowing it, was transformed into the center of the new, empirically born world history. Up to 1492, the histories of all cultures had inevitably been regional. Even the Eurasian cultures (which stretched from the Roman empire, or the Christendom of the Mediterranean, as far as China, with Muslim kingdoms in between) did not have an experience of history as world history. Only with the Portuguese, who linked Europe with Eastern Asia, and with the Spaniards, who united Europe to America and beyond America to the Asia of the Philippines, did world history for the first time become a fact of daily and scientific life. Europe began to be a center and the rest of humankind was constituted a periphery (first a colonial, later a postcolonial periphery, today an underdeveloped Third World). This date, 1492, inaugurated the centrality of Europe and is the foundation of what is today called modernity.

Such an interpretation involves the adoption of an ideological position, one that is mine personally, and also ours as people of the periph-



eral Third World. If Europe has no awareness of its center-being, it is simply because it confuses its particularity with human universality in general. The unspoken assumption is that the European constitutes the human. In contrast, to recognize oneself as center is to be aware, at one and the same time, of four elements: 1) of being center; 2) with regard to a distinct periphery; 3) on a planet that is the totality, embracing us all in difference; 4) with an ethical call to exercise, as center, domination over the periphery. Those, however, who think that to be European is to be universal fall into four errors: 1) they confuse the center with human universality; 2) they judge the periphery as simply non-human because it is non-center; 3) they fail to recognize true planetary universality with its differences; 4) they deny their own responsibility for a domination that continues to be invisibly exercised.

For the peripheral world, establishing 1492 as the origin of modernity is a big ideological step toward understanding today's world in which East-West tensions have less and less priority over North-South domination. In the practical political application of this analysis, 1492 becomes a crucial date.

#### **1492: Invasion as Copernican Revolution**

We must now adopt a radically different perspective, abandoning the European being-in-the-world, whether as invention, discovery, encounter from Europe of another culture (even as a critique of that conquest by Christian-European prophets), and finally of 1492 as the origin of a European modernity. We move, accordingly, into the world-of-the-other<sup>23</sup>—the world of the native inhabitants of this continent with no name (or rather, with the many names that different peoples and ethnic groups gave to each part of it). We must take our stand, not on the caravels of Columbus to cry "Land!", but on the beaches of the islands, re-living with the eyes of the Tainos or Caribs the experience of seeing those enormous wooden monsters that, like "floating houses" in the ocean (as Moctezuma's messengers described them), were approaching from the east, the point from which "the sun is born." We should adopt as our starting point the indigenous world, which is the perspective of Latin America today. Whether Indian or black, mestizo or white, we all suffer equally the invasion of Panama, and we all must fill in the prescribed forms at ports of entry to the United States, placing ourselves in the category assigned to Latins,<sup>24</sup> a new ethnicity invented by the Anglos of the United States.

The metaphysical limitation of the Heideggerian ontology (as well as Apel's community of communication or Habermas's communicative action) is that, although it speaks of "with-being" (*Mit-sein*),<sup>25</sup> or of community in the manner of Peirce, it always moves from oneself, from ourselves, from the *Dasein* as center of the world. In consequence, the interpretation of the invention of America takes, as its starting point, Columbus and the European *Dasein* as the center of the world. In addition, such an understanding considers what it found in the ocean sea as a being. This is true, historically and objectively. In fact, the European man considered what he found to be a being, a thing. He did not respect it as the Other, as another world, as being *far-beyond* any form that made sense from the viewpoint of Columbus's world. Consequently, O'Gorman formulated the beginning of a discussion with genuine authority. By failing to expand on it, however, he led himself into serious error, neglecting to examine possible alternative explanations.

If we used the same Heideggerian method to put ourselves now in the perspective of the *Dasein-inhabitant* of this continent, the person actually in this our space would be forced to develop a meaning distinct from that appearing on the horizon of his or her own world. Tupac Amaru had written in the proclamation found in his pocket when he was arrested in 1781: "For that reason, and because of the cries which have arisen to heaven from all parts, in the name of Almighty God, we command and order that none of the said persons pay nor obey in any matter the *intruding European ministers*."<sup>26</sup>

From the Latin *intruo* (to force one's way in violently), intruding means penetrating a world, the world of the Other, to interfere without right or permission. For that great Inca rebel, the Europeans were intruders upon our continent. From Europe, when one adopts an extreme position, one comes to the idea of the invention of America; from our world, the same event is experienced as an intrusion, or still more clearly, as an invasion.

The Salvadoran Indigenous Association (ANIS), accordingly, at its first Spiritual and Cultural Encounter (11 February, 1988) rejected "the foreign invasion of America" and called for "a halt to the genocide and ethnocide of subpeoples and cultures, as well as a complete rejection of any celebration of 500 years of foreign invasion."<sup>27</sup>

Invasion is now an existential interpretative category, the same as invention, discovery, conquest, and evangelization. The first emotional reaction of the indigenous brought face to face with the unknown European was one of confusion, an inability to decide what to think or do. In

the world of native peoples, the only reasonable response to all the amazing elements about this European man—white, at times reddish, with a kind of hair never seen before, with bloodthirsty dogs also never seen before, with sticks that spewed killing fire, and metal armor—was to regard him as a god. “They did surely cause fear when they came. Their strange faces. The Lords [Mayas] took them to be gods. Tunatiah<sup>28</sup> slept in the house of Tzympan.”<sup>29</sup>

The Indian Council of South America (CISA) issued a “Declaration of the International Commission for the Human Rights of Indian Peoples” (6 March 1985). If there were an international tribunal that understood the effects of the European invasion, they stated, in comparison “the genocide wrought on the Jews by Hitler’s Nazi regime in Germany would be reduced to a small affair . . . Certainly all the political and church leaders of Spain would be condemned, some to die on the gibbet, others to hard labor for life.”<sup>30</sup>

The indigenous themselves made the following statement in 1987 at a consultation organized by CENAMI (National Center for Indigenous Missions) on “500 Years of Evangelization in Mexico”:

We have been deceived into believing that the discovery was a good thing. We are glad on the *Day of the Race* that we have come to understand what its consequences were. Our communities should be given some book or pamphlet describing what really happened, so that we all would know how we have been enslaved.<sup>31</sup> . . . We don’t want a fiesta on October 12 because we are in mourning for the dead. It has been said that Pope John Paul has requested this novena as a celebration; our answer to that is that he can listen to what we have to say. The pope is chosen to serve the church, and we are the church.<sup>32</sup> . . . The conquest is still going on today; in our view the conquest continues to be a dreadful thing.<sup>33</sup> . . . We don’t want to join in a fiesta, because the missionaries came with the Spaniards to conquer. They did not come as brothers, as the Gospel counsels, but to enslave us.<sup>34</sup>

This is precisely what the old sixteenth-century codices say:

The 11 Ahuau Katun, first on the list, is the initial Katun. It is the Katun on which the strangers arrived, with red beards, children of the sun, white-colored men. Alas! Let us weep that they came! They came from the east, the messengers of the sign of divinity, the strangers of the land. Alas! Let us weep that they came, the great heapers of stones atop stones, the false gods of the earth who cause fire to shoot forth from the ends of their arms.<sup>35</sup>

The invasion was unexpected. In consequence Emperor Moctezuma of Mexico, a man of refined culture, highly educated, consulted his ad-



visors. He "was told by all that, without doubt, Quezalcoatil, his great lord of old who had said he would return and would come from the east, had in fact arrived."<sup>36</sup> From his point of view, the arrival of the intruding strangers was quite different from O'Gorman's subtle description of the change from Asian-being to American-being. The fact is that the native peoples were Asian by race, language, religion, and culture. They had come from Asia by the Bering Strait and they had been influenced by the cultures of the Pacific. From this Asian world of theirs, they lacked appropriate categories to judge the intruding invaders. They could only imagine they were gods; it was too late when they discovered that they were bloodthirsty men.

As Las Casas wrote—

No sooner did the Spaniards know them [the lambs: the Indians] than like the cruelest wolves, tigers and lions, starving for many days, they leaped upon them. And nothing different have they done for forty years up to this time, and even today they still do the same. All they do is to tear them to pieces, kill them, distress them, afflict them, torture them, and destroy them by strange and new and never-before known or seen forms of cruelty.<sup>37</sup>

From the viewpoint of the Indian, 1492 has its specific meaning. What it asks us is this: What should the Christian theological option be? Should we put ourselves in the place of Columbus or Cortés, in the world of the discoverer, the conqueror, or even of the evangelizer? or in the world of the Indians and their viewpoint? Those are the questions that the present occasion requires us to answer.

I should have liked to expand on the long history of the fundamental historic subject of "the oppressed," the six faces of the poor, the Other of our upside-down history. It would be the history of resistance and rebellion, of the struggles and hopes of many:

1. Of the Indians, the original inhabitants, right up till today.
2. Of the blacks brought from Africa, dragged from their homelands and treated as beasts and merchandise, right up to today.
3. Of the mestizos, children of Cortés (the dominating father) and of Melinche (the mother who betrayed her own people), nobody's children.
4. Of the peasants who, after the Emancipation early in the nineteenth century, would become the vast majority of the population, poor and exploited.
5. Of the industrial workers who, ever since the late nineteenth century, crowded into the industrial slums of Buenos Aires, São Paulo,

or Mexico City, and subsequently all the big cities, victims of exploitation.

6. Of the marginalized, those who left the countryside for the city, where they swell the vast army of reserve labor but can never work because peripheral capital is weak, exploited by the capital of the major powers.

It is from this historic subject, the poor, that we must formulate the question of evangelization. It is they who suffered the scandal that the conquest was simultaneously a missionary process. The violent soldier, like Cortés, accompanied the missionary who claimed to speak to the indigenous about the Christian God, the Jesus who was crucified by the powerful of his time, proclaiming "blessed are the poor," the Jesus in whose name the Indian was crucified on landed estates and in silver mines. In spite of all this, these communities of the poor were able to accept Christianity creatively, identifying with the crucified one. They understood that the Roman soldiers of an earlier time were now the Spanish soldiers, and that Annas and Caiphas were now the Christian authorities who condemned them. On another occasion, we must reflect more deeply on the mystery of the conversion to Christianity of the Indian peoples of Latin America.

These poor should be, all of them as a people, the historic subject of the liberation to come. In the face of the world crisis that has bought North-South contradictions to center stage, it is necessary to return to the distant event of 1492. But we have to look at it from the viewpoint of the Indian, the black, the mestizo, the peasant, all the marginalized people of Latin America, and ask ourselves: What does 1492 mean to us today? How are we to interpret the long history of invasions that began in 1492, and which will certainly not end in 1992?

translated by GARY MACEOIN

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See my article, "Del descubrimiento al desencubrimiento (hacia un desagravio histórico), in *El Día: El Búho*, 9 Dec. 1984 (also in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Apr. 1985, pp. 28–29). See also "Amerique Latine et conscience chrétienne," *Esprit*, n. 7, 1985, pp. 2–20; and "Iberoamerica en la historia universal," *Revista de Occidente*, Madrid, #25, 1985.

<sup>2</sup> See Karl-Otto Apel, *Transformation der Philosophie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973), 2 vols.; *Die "Erklaeren: Verstehen"*—Kontraverse in transzendental-pragmatischer Sicht (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1979); *Diskurs und Verantwortung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> See, among others, these works of Habermas: *Erkenntnis und Interesse* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1968); *Theorie de Kommunikatives Handierins* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981), Vols. I and II; *Moralbewusstsein und Kommunikatives Handierins* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983).

<sup>4</sup>On this point see my *Un comentario a la Introducción de la Transformación de la Filosofía y la Filosofía de la Liberación*, to be published in *Argument*, Hamburg, and *Philosophical Forum*, New York.

<sup>5</sup>Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid*, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid*, p. 91.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid*, p. 97.

<sup>9</sup>On a television program in 1989, O'Gorman attempted to justify his position by explaining that no thinking subjects except Europeans could know America as a totality. The vision of the indigenous peoples was a totally partial one: they know only their own world, their tribe, their region; unlike the discoverers, they had no overall view. O'Gorman is correct about this but he is not right in believing that as a consequence the native peoples had no interpretation of the event. In other words, the indigenous never had the experience either of an Asiatic-being (well described by O'Gorman) or of an American-being (which was a European perception of the event). What they had was another experience.

<sup>10</sup>*Sein und Zeit*, Par. 44, b (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1963), p. 139.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid*, pp. 227–228.

<sup>12</sup>But with meaning from the viewpoint of the Indian world. O'Gorman cannot see this because of his Europeanism.

<sup>13</sup>This "making sense" of what was "found," which is not a mere discovery of America (as already a being with its later meaning) but a gradual making sense and making it from Europe, is O'Gorman's great and undeniable achievement. What I resist is his claim that it is the only possible perspective.

<sup>14</sup>Ed. UNAM, Mexico City, Vol. 2, 1975, pp. 13ff. "He was a boisterous child whose liveliness caused concern to his parents; as they recognized that he was more attracted to arms than to learning, they gave him permission to go to the Indies."

<sup>15</sup>See the classic work of Walter Krickeberg, Hermann Trimborn, Werner Mueller, and Otto Zerries, *Die Religionen des alten America* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1961).

<sup>16</sup>See my introduction to *Historia General de la Iglesia en America Latina* (Salamanca: Sigueme, 1983), with bibliography, maps, and a description of the so-called "fourteen evangelizing cycles."

<sup>17</sup>Bartolomé de la Casas, in *Cláusula del Testimonio*, in BAE, Madrid, Vol. V, p. 540.

<sup>18</sup>Bartolomé de la Casas, *Brevisima relación de la destrucción de la Indias*, in BAE, Madrid, Vol. V, p. 136.

<sup>19</sup>See my article, "La Christianidad moderna ante el Otro: Del Indo rudo al bon sauvage," *Concilium*, 190 (1979), pp. 498–506.

<sup>20</sup>Bartolomé de la Casas, *De unico vocationis modo* (1536), FCE, Mexico, 1975, pp. 65–66. Bartolomé was thus already proposing rational argumentation as the method of evangelization, anticipating by centuries current positions like those of Habermas or Apel.

<sup>21</sup>Some of my studies on Bartolomé can be found in *Desintegración de la Christianidad colonial y liberación* (Salamanca: Sigueme, 1978).

<sup>22</sup>See, for example, Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979); J. F. Lyotard, *La condition post-moderne* (Paris: Ed. du Minuit, 1979); S. Vattimo, *La fine della modernità: nichilismo ed ermeneutica nella cultura postmoderna*

(Milan: Garzanti, 1985); and J. Habermas, *Der Philosophische Diskurs der Moderne* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988).

<sup>23</sup>This is the basic thesis of the philosophy of liberation I have been supporting since 1969. "The face of the other, primarily as poor and oppressed, actually reveals a people rather than just a single person. The mestizo face, furrowed by the wrinkles of the centuries-long labor of the Indian, the ebony face of the African slave . . . The other, the metaphysical otherness, the outsider quality at the anthropological level, this is primarily social and popular history." (*Filosofía de la Liberación*, Hamburg: Argument, 1988, Par. 2.4.5.)

<sup>24</sup>These immigration forms list Black (not "Latin"), Indian (not "Latin"), white (not "Latin"). This means that whether you are a Mexican Indian or a Black Puerto Rican or a white Argentinian, in the U.S. what you are is a "Latin." We are the most despised segment of humanity. Today, all Latin Americans are the invaded Indians of yesterday.

<sup>25</sup>*Sein und Zeit*, Par. 26. See also my *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*, Pars. 13–15 (Mexico City: Edicol, 2nd ed.), Vol. 1, p. 98ff.

<sup>26</sup>B. Lewis, *La rebelión de Tupac Amaru* (Buenos Aires: Sela, 1967), p. 421.

<sup>27</sup>*El Día*, Mexico City, 12 Feb 1988, p. 6.

<sup>28</sup>The reference is to the bloodthirsty Alvardao, Cortés' lieutenant, who was called "the sun" (Tunatihua) because he was blond.

<sup>29</sup>*Memorial de Sololá. Anales de los Cakchiqueles*, II, p. 148 (Mexico City: FCE, 1950), p. 156. See Nathan Wachtel, *La Vision de les vaincus, Les Indiens du Perou devant la Conquête espagnole* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971).

<sup>30</sup>Cited in *500 años de evangelización en México* (Mexico City: CENAMI, 1987), p. 27.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>35</sup>*El libro de los libros del Chilam Balam*, II, 11 Ahuau (Mexico City: FCE, 1948), pp. 124–125.

<sup>36</sup>Josué de Acosta, *Historia Natural*, VII, cap. 16 (Madrid: BAE, 1954), p. 277.

<sup>37</sup>Bartolomé de las Casas, *Brevísima Relación de la destrucción de la Indias*, in BAE, Madrid, Vol. V, p. 137.