

**The Call of the Kingdom of God
and the Call of Business.
The Testament of Ignacio Ellacuría S.I.,
a Basque Martyr in El Salvador**

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1. A double call

The Christian, whether a man or a woman, who works in the world of business receives a double call in life.

On the one hand, as a Christian, he feels within himself the call of Jesus of Nazareth, a call inviting him to work actively on the construction of the Kingdom of God begun by Jesus, witnessed to in the New Testament, and announced by the Church from generation to generation. In this call, which is of a spiritual nature, although it has important historical bearings, the Christian is invited to step out of himself, to look around his world, at his historical present, to detect where the major human shortfalls lie, and to work to fill them with life and with justice. Where there is violence, he brings peace; where there is hatred, he brings love; where there is poverty, he brings a life of dignity; where there is oppression, he brings freedom.

On the other hand, the same Christian, now as a person interested in economic matters, hears the call of business, which comes from the economic system in which we operate, where everyone has the right to seek wealth for himself. This time he looks out, not so much to do good to others, but to determine where to do business in order to bring a significant margin of profit. That call is not of a spiritual order, but of a historical, economic one. No one in particular calls that Christian; rather, he belongs to an economic system based on the search for profit in the free market. That Christian feels called or impelled to live (or survive) within the system, with the system's own laws.

It is no good believing that one of the two calls does not exist. To deny one or the other of the calls leads only to two possible simplifications or self-deceptions:

- the *deception of non-historical Christianity*, blind to the current economic system: "*all that matters is the Call of God*".
- the *deception of non-Christianised economics*, blind to the nucleus of Christianity, which consists of constructing humanity with a life of dignity: "*the economy has its own logic, which has nothing to do with the Gospel*".

Both the affirmation of the autonomous logic of the economy and the affirmation of the autonomous logic of our faith break the relationship between history and theology. This rupture is ultimately a very bad thing, because it leaves faith out of history, leaving hope blank, and because it leaves the economy out on a limb, isolated from the hopes of Mankind, so that the economy becomes merely a factory for monetary wealth... or poverty.

2. The nature of each call

That there are two calls does not mean that the two are of the same type.

The call of the Kingdom of God calls to the *totality of the human being*. No dimension of man is excluded from this call. This fact is already present in the Old Testament, when the formative experience of Israel is within a political event, the liberation of the tribes living under exploitation in Egypt, a fact that occurred in the middle of the thirteenth century BC, and was committed to writing around the tenth

century BC. We also find that fact in the New Testament, when we see Jesus helping people suffering from illness of all kinds or social exclusion. It has been the Latin American Theology of Liberation and European political theology that have recovered this fact, one that had been lost down the road of the history of theology: the liberation that God offers is offered *to all men and to all humanity*, with *no one and nothing* left out.

The fact that the call of the Kingdom of God is to all human beings responds to the Old Testament image of a "Jealous God": "*Thou shalt have no other gods before me*", Ex 20,3; Jer 2,11: "*Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit*"; Jer 11,4: "*Obey my voice (...) according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God*"; and the allegory of God as a jealous husband, deceived but merciful in Hos 2,4-3,5. It also responds to the words of Jesus in the New Testament about the impossible duality of his domain ("*No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money*", Mt 6,24). God asks for the complete delivery of man to his plan of Salvation. It is not possible for "part of the human being" to follow the call of the Kingdom of God, while "the other part" follows other calls that oppose it. The *whole being* is affected by the call. And *all men* are called in one way or another: the call to the Kingdom leads to happiness for all men, not just for a group of them ("*There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus*", Gal 3,28). Nevertheless, this universality of the New Testament is reached through a historical progression of the Revelation, as Karl Rahner analysed it: there is a progression from the people of Israel to all humanity.

For its part, the call of business belongs to a different order to that which we have just seen. It is a way to define, in the capitalist system, the search for a life of dignity. To live, we need material goods, which we obtain through business. *Business is a norm of the system, a rule of the economic game*. It would not make sense in another system. It does not call the totality of the human being. For example, the businessman does not do business with his wife and his children, but loves them freely.

3. Existential levels in the human being

These calls of different orders correspond to an anthropological reality. In human life, there are *different existential levels*. The human being is complex, since he shares the inorganic material of the universe, of organic life, of animal life, of free life and of life in society and the State, characteristic to "humanum". The human being is a structural reality formed of an organised network of different orders. None of these on its own provides the totality of the human being, and the human being does not exist if one of these is missing. They are organised hierarchically, so that each includes that which goes before, from the inorganic to the political. All of this was amply analysed by the Spanish philosophers Xavier Zubiri and Ignacio Ellacuría. In this structural reality, historical reality is the maximum expression of the "realidad intramundana" ("the reality in this world"), that which comprises all others. And at this last level, there is no locking out of the transcendental, rather an opening to the sense of Rahner's otherwise little evident "supernatural existential".

Thus the Kingdom of God and that of business are on different levels of what is human. For one, the Kingdom of God is to be found in the *opening to the transcendental*, where only through faith (not evident, although reasonable) can spring the experience of a God who comes forward to the meeting which *returns the subject to the social dimension*. In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10, 25-37), Jesus says that of the three men that passed along the road on which a fourth man lay injured, only the Samaritan behaved like a brother (36-37), the condition on which eternal life is inherited (25-27). Likewise, in the apocalyptic account in Mt 25,31-, Jesus says that those that look to help the smallest will be saved, so that the opening, conscious or not, to the divine Other comes within the opening to the social other. Totality is given in the fragment, even when it is not reduced to it.

For its part, business comes within the order of the *socio-economic organisation*, in which human beings seek to *cover necessities (basic and secondary)*. Business thus affects two spheres of the human being - the satisfaction of necessities and economic organisation. If we conceive them only as the search for the satisfaction of necessities for human life, they will be placed at an important level of the part of the human being that is existential: *the right to life*. However, business is also one way among many, perhaps not the best or the fairest, of seeking this satisfaction of needs. Here we situate ourselves in another order, that of *the theory of economic systems*, which does not include, far from it, the totality of what is human.

4. The unity of what is human

There is only one human, made concrete in thousands of millions of individuals. Every individual is one. There is unity of what is human in each individual. The fact that each individual may have different existential levels does not mean that this can be divided into different parts, as it is a question of levels structured together as one. *The same person* believes in God and does business and asks about life and death and tries to increase his bank account. It is not enough to talk about "existential levels" and then place the Kingdom on one and business on another, as if it were a motorway bridge above a railway track, with no contact between the two. Each "call" has to re-examine itself in depth, in relation to the other; each has to seek its possible articulation with the other, although it must remain clear that one is "divine" (that of the Kingdom) and the other has "pretensions to Divinity", and could thus be idolatrous (that of business).

5. The necessity for hierarchical structuring of callings

There is thus a necessity for a hierarchical structuring of callings. They cannot be juxtaposed, they must be articulated hierarchically and ordered structurally. *Both callings meet in the defence of life*. It is from there that their relationship is constructed. The Kingdom invites life, and business also seeks life. However, there is an incompatibility between the two: *The Kingdom of God looks for life in work in favour of the life of the brother* (Jesus says: "*Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well*", Mt 6,33), while *business pursues the desire for profit, albeit to the cost of the brother*. My objective is not his well-being, but my own. There lies a radical incompatibility between the two callings. The need to give the callings hierarchical structure comes from this historical incompatibility in the order of human solidarity. The Kingdom seeks solidarity, while business tends to forget it.

6. Prophetic Combat and Martyrdom

Making these reflections may lead to rejection by the system and its defenders. The Old Testament kings rewarded the false prophets who prophesied in their favour and ordered the execution of those that spoke against the King and against those that lived a life of privilege and claimed to do so in the name of God. Today we recall only the prophets and those that were executed by the systems they criticised, even seeing in their testimony the Word of God, while we know next to nothing of the others went along with it.

To affirm the priority of the Kingdom of God in human life above business means adopting a prophetic voice, like that of Oscar Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador, or that of Ignacio Ellacuría, Rector of the Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) in the same city. Economic forces then become killers. They silenced Romero in 1980, Ellacuría in 1989. The search for business does not then advocate life, but the death of those who question it. Business, in the range of divinity, is a

divinity which kills. The history of capitalism and political, economic imperialisms are as full of blood as of death by starvation.

Here lies a large part of the spiritual and intellectual testimony Ellacuría left us in his many writings and through his work in favour of social justice throughout Latin America and of peace in El Salvador. Ellacuría defended the lives of the majority against the business of the minority, which led to his murder early on the morning of 16 November 1989. The Army killed him, defending the interests of the Reagan-Bush US government and the country's oligarchy, the infamous "14 families". We should not forget that Christ died on a cross: whoever wants to be a true Christian risks being crucified by the same political, economic, social and even religious forces as those which finished with the life of the master.

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La teología histórica de Ignacio Ellacuría (1999),

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