



National Library of Canada  
Collections Development Branch

Canadian Theses on  
Microfiche Service

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada  
Direction du développement des collections

Service des thèses canadiennes  
sur microfiche

## NOTICE

The quality of this microfiche is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us a poor photocopy.

Previously copyrighted materials (journal articles, published tests, etc.) are not filmed.

Reproduction in full or in part of this film is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30. Please read the authorization forms which accompany this thesis.

**THIS DISSERTATION  
HAS BEEN MICROFILMED  
EXACTLY AS RECEIVED**

Ottawa, Canada  
K1A 0N4

## AVIS

La qualité de cette microfiche dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de mauvaise qualité.

Les documents qui font déjà l'objet d'un droit d'auteur (articles de revue, examens publiés, etc.) ne sont pas microfilmés.

La reproduction, même partielle, de ce microfilm est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30. Veuillez prendre connaissance des formules d'autorisation qui accompagnent cette thèse.

**LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ  
MICROFILMÉE TELLE QUE  
NOUS L'AVONS REÇUE**

JUAN LUIS SEGUNDO: A STUDY CONCERNING THE RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN THE PARTICULARITY OF THE CHURCH AND THE  
UNIVERSALITY OF HER MISSION (1963-1977)

by Gerald J. Persha, M.M.

This thesis is presented to the Faculty of Theology of  
St. Paul University as partial fulfillment of the re-  
quirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Ottawa, Canada, 1978

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	v
CURRICULUM STUDIORUM .....	vi
INTRODUCTION .....	vii
Chapter	
One: THE CONTEXT AND WORKS OF JUAN LUIS SEGUNDO..	1
1. The Genesis and Development of Liberation Theology .....	2
2. A Survey of Juan Segundo's Theological Enterprise .....	36
Two: CHRISTIANITY: THE RELIGION OF AUTHENTIC LOVE .....	52
1. Pre-Christian Stages of Faith in the Old Testament .....	56
2. God's Definitive Revelation in Jesus Christ .....	72
3. The Finality of Human Freedom .....	85
Three: THE CHURCH: A REALITY PARTICULAR AND UNIVERSAL .....	99
1. Two Differing Conceptions of the Church	100
2. The Dimensions of the Incarnational Mystery .....	108
3. The Church: A Reality Particular and Universal .....	113
4. The Church and the Means of Salvation.	124
5. Conclusions .....	127

Chapter			
Four:	THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH .....		129
	1. The Necessity of the Church for Humanity .....		130
	2. The Function of the Church Within Humanity .....		144
	3. The Dependence of the Church on the World .....		157
	4. Conclusions .....		162
Five:	THE MINORITARIAN DIMENSION OF THE CHURCH ...		165
	1. Christendom: Christianity of the Masses .....		169
	2. The Minoritarian Character of Chris- tianity .....		180
	3. The Minoritarian Character of the Church .....		203
	4. Conclusions .....		211
Six:	THE FAITH ACTIVITY OF THE CHURCH AND THE 'CONSTRUCTION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD WITHIN HISTORY .....		215
	1. The Practice of Faith and Ideology ...		217
	2. The Construction of the Kingdom of God		231
	3. Conclusions .....		250
Seven:	SYNTHESIS AND-CRITICAL ELEMENTS		253
	1. The Functional Perspective of Juan Segundo's Thought Concerning the Re- lationship Between the Paricularity and Universality of the Church ....		254
	2. The Principal Theological Focus of Segundo's Thought .....		259
	3. The Relationship Between the Particu- larity and Universality of the Church: Focus for Clarifying her Reality and Mission .....		268
	4. Implications for a Theology of History		280
	5. The Value and Limitations of Juan Segundo's Reflections .....		289

CONCLUDING REMARKS .....	298
BIBLIOGRAPHY	
I. PRIMARY SOURCES .....	301
Books Written by Juan Segundo .....	301
Articles Written by Juan Segundo ...	303
II. SECONDARY SOURCES .....	311

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis was prepared under the supervision of Professor Achiel Peelman, O.M.I., D.Th., of the Faculty of Theology of St. Paul University.

We want to express our appreciation to Fr. Peelman for his guidance, interest, and helpful criticism during the writing of this study. His co-operation was both insightful and generous. For this, we offer to him our thanks.

## CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

Gerald J. Persha was born September 21, 1943 in Chicago, Illinois. He received the Bachelor of Philosophy degree from Maryknoll College, Glen Ellyn, Illinois, in 1965. He received the Master of Divinity and Master of Arts degrees in theology from the Maryknoll School of Theology, Ossining, New York, in 1970. He has served as a member of the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America in Venezuela for six years.

## INTRODUCTION

This study is an inquiry into Juan Luis Segundo's attempt to discern the proper relationship between the Church's particularity on the one hand and her universal destiny on the other. The relationship between the Church's diminutive proportions in time and space and her mission to the entire world is a prominent theme which runs throughout almost all the works and writings of Juan Segundo. A Jesuit priest and a Uruguayan by birth, he writes from within the context of Latin America of the past fifteen years and attempts to construct an operative ecclesiology which responds to the needs and changing social conditions of the Latin American continent but which also seeks to base itself upon the Christian revelation found within the New Testament message and Catholic tradition.

The ecclesiology of Segundo is intimately tied to the problem of the Church's particular and universal dimensions within the world. It is a problem that the Church herself has never fully resolved. The Second Vatican Council affirmed that the Church was constituted by the Spirit as the universal sacrament of salvation--a salvation offered to all men as their one ultimate vocation. What the Council Fathers affirmed was a universality and, at the same time, a particularity: the existence of a

universal and divine vocation to salvation for all humanity and the existence of a particular reality, the Church, as a sign of that salvation. But the problem remains. What is the Church supposed to do within the vast community of mankind? How could God give an exclusive privilege relating to man's salvation to a community which is so small compared to the whole human race?

The problem appears to be as old as the origins of the Church herself. In the early days of Christianity, Christians were a tiny, insignificant group and identified themselves at first as a dissident sect of the Jewish religion, itself a minority group amid the religions of the Roman Empire. The Church was limited from her very beginnings, and history has shown that she always was a particular community in the midst of mankind. The world has not been converted to Christianity; the human race had not entered the Church. And yet from her very beginnings, the Church, composed of the followers of Jesus Christ, claimed to embrace the dimensions of humanity itself. The name Christians chose for their small community was catholic, which means nothing less than universal. The very message of the New Testament gives evidence of an early insight into the universality of Christ's message and work, and the new-born Church was marked almost immediately by a thrust outward towards all of humanity. Her members appeared to affirm a universal character of their community as a permanent attribute from the beginning. In short, they

understood the Church as a particular reality embracing a universal dimension.

But how was the Church to exercise her universality? On the one hand, she proclaimed the universal dimensions of Jesus Christ's salvation and redemptive victory, but on the other hand, membership in the Church and conversion to the gospel message were often looked upon as the means to this victory. Segundo contends that it is not surprising that this apparent contradiction caused an ambivalence that marked twenty centuries of Church history. On the one hand, the Church laid down for her members heroic and even radical demands, calling them essential and indispensable elements of the Christian message--demands which pointed to the cross. But on the other hand, she was to use at times unscrupulous means to ensure the participation of the masses, that is, of vast numbers, in some minimal level of adherence to the gospel message, to the faith and the sacraments. The 'system' known as Christendom perhaps best represents this latter tendency.

Our study will analyze the manner in which Segundo treats and develops his theological reflections as he attempts to explore the Church's two dimensions and their relationship. We have chosen an historical approach to our analysis of Segundo's ecclesiology. We will consider the major influences of others to appreciate the background of his own theological thinking, strive to discern the progression and development of his thought, and describe the

way Segundo deals with major points of theology related to the problem. In the first chapter, we will explore the social context of Segundo's theological enterprise and survey his works and writings to emphasize the principal themes and focus of his theology. In the second chapter, we will discern Segundo's response to a question that is perhaps prior to any other theological issue: what is the basic core of the Christian message? It is only after analyzing the novelty of the Christian revelation that Segundo attempts to explore theologically the reality of the Church. In the third chapter, we will investigate Segundo's own theology of the Church as a reality particular and universal and discern the manner in which he has defined the particular limits of the Church in relationship to her universality. Segundo's understanding of the mission of the ecclesial community within the world will be the subject of our fourth chapter. In this section of our study we will explore how Segundo has defined and described that mission. The fifth chapter, we believe, represents a very fundamental focus of Segundo's ecclesiology. In it we will attempt to understand what he considers to be the intrinsically minoritarian character of the Church as well as the operative significance of her minoritarian dimension regarding the rest of humanity. In the sixth chapter we will examine the relationship Segundo perceives between the faith activity of the Church within the world and the achievement of her mission. Here we will examine practical considerations

concerning Segundo's attempt to explain faith's activity in the relative context of history. And in the last chapter we will consider the manner in which Segundo has dealt with the problem by reflecting upon its coherency, completeness and scope and by offering certain criticisms regarding the limitations of his thought.

A significant number of Segundo's works, especially his 'early' writings of the sixties, have not been translated from the Spanish. The translation into English of pertinent texts from these works is ours, but we have placed the corresponding Spanish texts in our footnote citations. Wherever possible, however, we have used the English translations already provided but have checked the latter against the original Spanish. That is why in our footnote citations we have referred in such cases only to the English version of Segundo's writings. In the bibliography at the end of our study, the titles of these writings in the original Spanish can be found in chronological order together with their publications in English.

We have confined our study of Segundo's writings to the years 1963-1977. Our reason for doing so is twofold. Segundo has written very little before the opening of the Second Vatican Council, and almost all his works and publications date from the beginning of the Council to the mid-seventies. Secondly, because our author is still living, we thought it would be more convenient and even necessary to limit our study to a fixed date. We were not aware

during the writing of this study, however, of any major works or articles published by him after 1977.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE CONTEXT AND WORKS OF JUAN LUIS SEGUNDO

In order to appreciate and understand more fully the ecclesiology and the theological perspective of Juan Segundo it is necessary to examine the historical context of which the former form an intimate part. All sound theology must not only be diachronic, linking itself with the faith tradition of the Church, but synchronic as well, grounding itself in contemporaneity, in the age and history of the present. With regard to Segundo's work and theological reflections, the synchronic element is undeniably the Latin American reality itself. But more particularly, it is the social context of the Latin American continent of the past two decades from which has emerged a new current of theology called the theology of liberation. In this chapter we will first study the genesis and development of this theological current in order to situate better Segundo's own theological enterprise and then determine his own particular involvement with it by surveying his major theological interests and concerns.

1. The Genesis and Development of  
Liberation Theology

The Latin American Church had largely lived in her own ghetto world since the time of her establishment and initial development in the colonial days of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. She was born at a time when the Catholic Church was involved in leading a Counter Reformation in Europe and had always been marked by a defensive posture and attitude.<sup>1</sup> This posture was only to be reinforced in the era of independence of the nineteenth century when the emerging Latin American republics wished to introduce radical social changes based on a national consciousness of needs and priorities and often looked upon the Church as a vestige of colonial days preserving the older, established order.<sup>2</sup> The ideological pluralism of the new national republics of Latin America would no longer reflect the religious oneness of the earlier period. The Church was no longer seen as embracing the entire social order, as its foundational pillar, as the necessary and ultimate social tribunal whose judgments and opinions were sought after and revered as if decreed by God Himself. The

---

<sup>1</sup>Gustavo Gutierrez, "Introduction," in Between Honesty and Hope, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1970), p. iv.

<sup>2</sup>Enrique Dussel, Historia de la Iglesia en América Latina (Barcelona, Nova Terra: 1972), pp. 94-95. This is one of the best synthetic Church histories of Latin America published in recent years. Its Bolivian author is an internationally recognized Church historian of Latin America.

spirit of liberalism which had pervaded the new republics in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth increased the deteriorating role of the Church, at times inflicting upon her almost mortal wounds.<sup>3</sup>

The Church was to gain breathing space only when the anti-Catholic liberal class lost its governing power in the 1930's. Catholic Action was gradually implemented throughout the continent and an attempt to revive Catholicism as a 'new Christendom'<sup>4</sup> was initiated. The Church began to move out of her own closed world and to possess a broader attitude toward the new social realities of the continent. Based on a vision of society founded upon justice and Christian principles, Catholic lay men and women sought to infuse the social order with Christian values while asserting the autonomy of the temporal sphere. The motivation of their Christian witness would no longer flow primarily from the defense of Christianity or Church interests but from a desire to promote a lay city that was vitally Christian, or a lay state constituted along Christian lines.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 117-24.

<sup>4</sup>The term 'new Christendom,' under the primary inspiration of Jacques Maritain, refers to a theology for a profane Christendom, whose social ethics and Christian politics are designed to establish and guide a lay state of Christian inspiration. For an excellent treatment of this topic, see Alfredo Fierro, The Militant Gospel (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1977), pp. 48-75.

<sup>5</sup>Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973), pp. 54-58.

This new mentality took for granted the desacralization of the political order but did not mean the elimination of an ethical and religious cast to temporal society. It assumed that Christians would be the official agents of society and the holders of important political roles. To achieve these goals Christians would either have to unite themselves to already existing political groups bearing Christian names or create new ones. Catholic Action followed naturally the political movement of Christian Democracy which had antedated it.<sup>6</sup> This entire lay movement was ordered to the aims of a Christian politics. The presumption behind this ordering was that it was possible to have a specifically Christian social doctrine with its own distinctive solution to the existing problems of the social order.

The autonomy of the temporal order was thought to be safe-guarded with the fostering of the 'new Christendom.' The Church's official commitment to social reality was now to be only indirectly affirmed. Indeed, with the direct involvement of committed Christians in the social order, the official Church could more earnestly commit herself to the supernatural order. It would no longer be her role to intervene directly in temporal realities but to appeal to the supernatural destiny of men, especially through her moral teaching acting through the mediation of the conscience

---

<sup>6</sup>Fierro, The Militant Gospel, pp. 51-52.

of the individual Christian.<sup>7</sup>

The fading of the 'new Christendom' ideal in Latin American society could already be seen in the late fifties and early sixties. Christians did not in fact fashion a new social order based on some gospel morality nor did they provide Christian solutions to the ever increasing social problems of the continent. The Church's official non-commitment to the political and temporal order was increasingly thrown into suspicion either through her silence or the friendly relationships she enjoyed with often oppressive and dictatorial governments. It would be the Second Vatican Council, however, that would sound the death knell for Catholic Action in Latin America by offering a fresh horizon and vision for living the Christian faith.<sup>8</sup> The Council's aftermath would spawn critical reflections on the part of Latin American bishops and theologians in an attempt to apply the conciliar documents to the complex social reality of Latin America.

Enrique Dussel, a prominent Latin American Church historian, traces the beginnings of the theology of liberation to the Second Vatican Council itself.<sup>9</sup> He divides the

---

<sup>7</sup>Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, p. 57.

<sup>8</sup>Dussel, Historia de la Iglesia en América Latina, p. 147.

<sup>9</sup>Enrique Dussel, "Sobre la Historia de la Teología en América Latina," in Liberación y Cautiverio: debates en torno al método de la teología en América Latina, ed. by Enrique Ruíz Maldonado (Mexico City: Organizador, 1975), p. 49. This article is a very fine synthetic treatment concerning the history of Latin American theology.

period within which emerged what would later be called the theology of liberation into three discernible moments or stages: the time of preparation, from the beginning of the Second Vatican Council up to the international meeting of Latin American bishops at Medellin, Colombia (1962-1968); the time of formulation, from the Medellín Conference to the meeting of theologians of liberation at El Escorial, Spain (1968-1972); and the time of maturation, leading to the progressive development of its thought and a growing awareness of the complexity and difficulty of the process of liberation in general (1972 to the present).<sup>10</sup> Although other chronological orders concerning the birth and development of liberation theology have been put forth,<sup>11</sup> we will use the one presented above because of its usefulness in understanding better both the historical context of Segundo's works and the gradual theological development of the meaning of the term 'liberation.'

a. First Stage: The Period of Preparation

According to Dussel, then, the first stage of the theology of liberation was rooted in the event of the

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 49-50.

<sup>11</sup> The most comprehensive and well documented account concerning the origin and growth of the theology of liberation is Roberto Oliveros' work, Liberación y Teología: génesis y crecimiento de una reflexión, 1966-1977 (Lima: CEP, 1977). For Segundo's own description of the development of liberation theology, see his article, "Condicionamientos actuales de la reflexión teológica en Latinoamérica," in Liberación y Cautiverio, pp. 91-101.

Second Vatican Council itself, extending from the years 1962-65. These years would reflect parallely in Latin America an increasing suspicion that profound social and political changes were needed to alleviate the inhuman social conditions in which vast majorities found themselves living. At the Council, the Latin American bishops were noted more for their lack of participation both in conciliar debates and in the development of conciliar themes. They were even considered by some as the 'Church of Silence.'<sup>12</sup> The conciliar documents reflected more the concerns and problems of those bishops and theologians representing the developed countries of the West, especially Germany, France, and Belgium. The concerns of the latter were directed more to the world of modern liberties: the recognition of the autonomy of the temporal sphere, religious liberty, freedom of conscience, and the problem of atheism. This can especially be noted in the pastoral constitution, Gaudium et Spes. A serious understanding of the problems of the underdeveloped countries was not to be found in the conciliar documents.<sup>13</sup> The bishops representing the 'Third World' did not yet appear to have raised a prophetic voice with respect to their churches and the conditions in which their faith communities were living.

---

<sup>12</sup> Oliveros, Liberación y Teología, pp. 49-50.

<sup>13</sup> See Guillermo Barauna's commentary on Gaudium et Spes in Spanish, La Iglesia en el Mundo de Hoy (Madrid: Studium, 1967).

The reasons for this notable silence on the part of the Latin American Church reflected the state of her radical theological dependence upon European theologians. Many of her bishops and priests were in fact trained by them. Frequently Latin American theologians in the past had been no more than faithful disciples, repeating and representing in another continent the thought of their European masters.<sup>14</sup> There was a great abyss existing between the Latin American Church and her message and the expectations of her people.<sup>15</sup> In Latin America the dangers and impediments to the Christian faith did not stem so much from atheism, naturalism, or liberalism, but rather from the inhuman social conditions of the vast majority of its people, their loss of personal and social security through their ever increasing migrations to the large urban centers of the continent, and their felt sense of powerlessness before frequently oppressive and corrupt political régimes. It would only be after the Second Vatican Council that the Latin American Church would begin to enter her 'patristic era'<sup>16</sup> by reflecting upon the reality in which she found herself. She wished to apply the teachings of the

---

<sup>14</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, De la Sociedad a la Teología (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Carlos Lohlé, 1970), pp. 11-28.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 24..

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 28. The term is Segundo's to describe the significance of what took place theologically in the Latin American Church after Vatican II.

Council to the signs of the times, that is, to the particular social context and history of Latin America.

The Second Vatican Council had provided the opportunity for theologians and bishops of Latin America to meet and discuss their common problems in an ecclesial climate of openness and creativity. One of the first meetings to take place among some of her more prominent theologians was celebrated in 1964 at Petropolis, Brasil. This meeting would serve as a point of departure for future theological reflections concerning the problems of the Latin American Church.<sup>17</sup> Segundo was present at this meeting, presenting a paper dealing with the rapid social changes of the continent and the consequent need for the Church to rethink her evangelizing mission and pastoral practice.<sup>18</sup> Gustavo Gutierrez, who would later become the most popular spokesman for the theology of liberation, emphasized the need to study intently the Latin American so as to establish a saving dialogue with him and his reality. At the basis of his concern was the questioning of the Church's mission within the Latin American reality itself.<sup>19</sup> The meeting at Petropolis not only served to awaken the conscience of its participants to the vastness of their future task regarding the study of their social and cultural reality

---

<sup>17</sup> Oliveros, Liberación y Teología, pp. 51-57.

<sup>18</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, "Problemas Teológicos de Latinoamérica," unpublished paper given at Petropolis, Brasil, 1964.

<sup>19</sup> Oliveros, Liberación y Teología, pp. 55-57.

but promoted among them as well a seriousness and an enthusiasm that would lead to many future meetings.

Ronaldo Muñoz has made an exhaustive study concerning the principal documents produced from meetings of theologians and episcopal conferences which took place in Latin America from the years 1965 to 1968.<sup>20</sup> The materials he collected reflect diverse and often uneven levels of theological reflection and social analyses. They nevertheless possess a common bond of unity: they started from the Latin American reality and offered reflections upon events and concrete situations in light of both social and political analysis and the Christian message as well, particularly the conciliar texts of Vatican II.<sup>21</sup> Such reflections were generally oriented to a common task of awakening a sense of responsibility among Christians towards transforming the social situation through the living out of their faith commitment in solidarity with one another.

In the years preceding the Medellín Conference, a new ecclesial consciousness began to develop, rooted in a new way of living the faith. There arose numerous small groups of Christians throughout Latin America who sought to reflect on the social implications of their faith within the conflictual situations they were living. They wished

---

<sup>20</sup> Ronaldo Muñoz, Nueva Conciencia de la Iglesia en América Latina (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1974).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

to understand the 'signs of the times' through the help of the social sciences and thus became more politically aware as they acquired a greater knowledge of the Latin American reality and the causes of its alienating structures. Such awareness engendered among them critical theological reflections based on a commitment to liberate the continent from internal colonialism and external neo-colonialism.<sup>22</sup> These committed groups of Christians challenged the viability of the Catholic Action groups of the past, for the center of the former's concern was to break away from enslaving, dependent relationships and to transform the political and economic structures of society, searching for paths toward liberation. There were, however, no monolithic approaches, either in theory or in practice, which developed.<sup>23</sup> Strategies and tactics were different and in many cases contrary. Latin America represented a complex and changing situation which resisted schematic interpretations. The untenable circumstances of its poverty, alienation, and exploitation, nevertheless, demanded a new approach to its struggle for independence. The new awareness of its dependency became a part of the growing consciousness of the

---

<sup>22</sup>The terms internal 'colonialism' and 'neo-colonialism' would be employed by the Medellin Conference to describe the internal and external states of structural dependence of the Latin American peoples. See "Documento sobre Paz," in Medellin Conclusiones (Bogota: CELAM, 1973), pp. 33-40.

<sup>23</sup>Segundo Galilea, "La Liberación en la Conferencia de Medellin," in Nuevo Mundo, Año X, no. 57 (mayo/junio 1974): 148-49.

Church in her efforts to proclaim the gospel message.<sup>24</sup>

In 1965, during the meeting in Rome of the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM), its president, Bishop Manuel Larrain of Chile, promoted the idea of organizing a general conference of Latin American bishops and theologians to reflect upon and apply the conciliar texts of Vatican II to the Latin American reality.<sup>25</sup> Bishop Larrain's suggestion was welcomed enthusiastically, and in the following year steps were taken for the organization of this conference to be realized at Medellin, Colombia, in 1968. It was decided that the documents which would eventually emanate from this meeting be structured in such a way as to include basically three categories: facts, reflections, and recommendations.<sup>26</sup> The participants, in other words, would develop their reflections, starting from the concrete historical and social context of Latin America itself.

Parallel to the official preparation of the Medellin Conference, other meetings of the various departments of CELAM were realized to reflect upon different aspects of Latin American reality. The conference at Melgar, Colombia, celebrated in April of 1968, treated of the missionary activity of the Church in Latin America. Some would consider

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>25</sup> Oliveros, Liberación y Teología, p. 74.

<sup>26</sup> Hernan Prada, Crónica del Pequeño Concilio de Medellin (Santiago, Chile: I.S.A.L., 1973), p. 15.

this conference as an essential moment in the process toward forming a theology of liberation.<sup>27</sup> The document which issued from the meeting stressed that history possesses a fundamental unity and is the locus of salvation for every man.<sup>28</sup> It also raised questions concerning the need and meaning of the Church's missionary activity and defined her mission from within the context of the regional needs and priorities of Latin America.

The conference at Itapoan, Brasil, realized in May of 1968, brought together the presidents of various episcopal commissions dealing with social action. Their description and analysis of Latin American reality reflected the theory of structural dependency.<sup>29</sup> Underdevelopment was seen in great measure to be a subproduct of the capitalistic development of the western world. The latter was understood as the center of economic power and technology, while the underdeveloped countries of Latin America belonged to the periphery--considered as the satellites who depended upon the center. In describing the general character of the Latin American reality as one of dependence, the participants of the meeting were clearly signaling something more than just the need to develop the already existing social and economic structures of Latin America.

---

<sup>27</sup> Oliveros, Liberación y Teología, p. 79.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 76-79.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

The conference of theologians, meeting in Chimbote, Peru, in July of 1968, marked one of the first prominent, theological usages of the word 'liberation.'<sup>30</sup> At this meeting, Gustavo Gutierrez rejected the concepts and categories of a theology of development because of the latter's failure to grasp the inherent state of dependency of Latin America upon the economic centers of power of the developed world.<sup>31</sup> The theology of development still remained within the project of reforming the western economic system. According to Gutierrez, what was needed was not development according to the model of the developed countries of the West, but human and social liberation which implied radical, social change. He would explore the meaning of the word 'liberation' from the perspective of the Christian faith and inquire into the relationship which existed between the Kingdom of God and human emancipation in history. At Chimbote, Gutierrez would also overcome the exclusivity of philosophy seen as the basis of theology's rationality. He would understand theology as a reflection, as a second act, coming after practice.<sup>32</sup> Theology was to be an understanding of a previous commitment of love and charity and become a reflection upon faith's praxis.

---

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>31</sup>Gustavo Gutierrez, "Hacia Una Teología de la Liberación," Montevideo (miec-jeci 1969): 6. This is the published conference of Gutierrez given at Chimbote, Peru, in July of 1968.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

All the above themes would gather greater clarity especially after the Medellin Conference. What must be said, however, is that the Medellin Conference was a product of at least three years of theological reflections and study beforehand and was born partly out of a new way of living the faith in the Latin American continent. Numerous groups of priests and religious had formed committed to radical structural change both within the Church and Latin American society. Many clearly admitted the need and obligation to make a solid commitment to the poor, and through such commitment, placed themselves at times in a relationship of subversion with regard to the existing social order. Among the bishops there was also detected an awakening to the social dimension of the presence of the Church and a corresponding rediscovery of her prophetic mission. Frequently bishops of the most poverty-stricken and exploited areas were the ones who denounced most energetically the injustices they witnessed.<sup>33</sup>

A new current of theology was born, therefore, not in the academic circles of universities or theological schools but from a felt necessity to give theological support to Christians who began increasingly to search the meaning of their faith as they attempted to practice it for and with the poor, striving to change and rectify unjust social structures. The theory of structural

---

<sup>33</sup>See the anthology of documents from and about the Church in Latin America, Between Honesty and Hope, particularly, pp. 3-12; 47-54; 113-14.

dependency was replacing the theory of development. The phenomenon of underdevelopment was seen more and more as the counter side to development.<sup>34</sup>

The Latin American Church began to speak about concrete social realities, which frequently meant in fact the political, social, and economic order. Preaching became suffused with political overtones, and for that reason it both provoked interest and caused consternation on the part of the faithful. Theology was beginning to discover a dimension hitherto forgotten or previously hidden within the Christian message itself: the historic function of the Christian faith. The Christian message and life were understood as possessing a meaning and purpose for the present history of the Latin American peoples, leading society and history to conditions of life, more and more human.<sup>35</sup> The Church was seen as called to realize God's plan of salvation within history. All that she was and possessed was understood to serve her historical involvement in bettering the conditions of people, in advancing the humanization of man and, through that humanization, his divinization.<sup>36</sup> It would be, however, the international conference of Latin American bishops meeting at Medellin, Colombia, in August and September of 1968, which would give

---

<sup>34</sup> Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, pp. 21-37.

<sup>35</sup> Segundo, "Condicionamientos Actuales de la Reflexión Teológica en Latinoamérica," p. 93.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

the greatest theological impetus to the emerging theology of liberation. We will now briefly describe the basic lines of reflection of that conference which, to Dussel, begins the second moment in the history of the theology of liberation, the period of its formulation.

b. Second Stage: The  
Period of Formulation

There can be no question that the Medellin Conference was a major event in the recent history of the Church in Latin America. Through it bishops committed themselves prophetically and pastorally to the liberation of the peoples of the continent. It was a commitment based on recommendations stemming from an analysis of the Latin American reality, made in light of the exigencies both of the gospel message and conciliar texts of the Second Vatican Council. The bishops' statements, therefore, would start from historical facts and lead to reflections which in turn issued into pastoral directives.

The documents emanating from this conference reflected the tension between those espousing a more developmentalist approach to the complex economic and social problems of Latin American reality and those who accepted the theory of dependence. The latter understood the social reality as deeply tied both to the dominating economic and political structures of the more developed countries of the West and to the often oppressive internal structures of the

Latin American nations themselves.<sup>37</sup> In spite of the apparent ambiguities and even the clear inclusion of developmentalist terminology in some of the final documents of the conference, the fact of Latin American dependence and the focus on human emancipation were emphasized.<sup>38</sup> This emphasis implied that authentic development presupposed self-determination on the part of the peoples and nations of Latin America. All forms of paternalism were to be excluded and progress measured not simply in terms of the model provided by the developed countries of the West. The new model to be sought after would not be a mere copy of others but would rather respect the uniqueness and diversity of Latin American culture and its social reality.<sup>39</sup>

The vision which the attending bishops of the Medellin Conference held concerning the Latin American reality was one of exploitation, injustice, underdevelopment, and frustrated ambitions.<sup>40</sup> They called these negative aspects a 'situation of sin'<sup>41</sup> and 'institutional violence.'<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup>Antonio Alonso, Iglesia y Praxis de Liberación (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1974), p. 29.

<sup>38</sup>This could be clearly seen from two of the major documents of the Medellin Conference: "Documento sobre Justicia," nos. 1-2 and "Documento sobre Paz," nos. 1-13 in Medellin Conclusiones (Bogota: CELAM, 1973).

<sup>39</sup>Alonso, Iglesia y Praxis de Liberación, p. 29.

<sup>40</sup>"Documento sobre Justicia," no. 1 in Medellin Conclusiones.

<sup>41</sup>"Documento sobre Paz," no. 1 in Medellin Conclusiones.

<sup>42</sup>"Documento sobre Paz," no. 16 in Medellin Conclusiones.

The latter term appeared for the first time in an official document of the Church. Social sin and institutional violence were the call through which the Latin American Church wished to identify herself with the poor and struggle with them for their liberation. The bishops described this particular task of the Church as one of her most important and urgent.<sup>43</sup> It was a task by which the Church would incarnate her commitment to liberation, that is, to the total emancipation of man from every kind of slavery so that human growth and maturity and social integration could be advanced.<sup>44</sup> All human and social liberation was seen as an anticipation of the full redemption which Christ Himself had brought and promised.<sup>45</sup>

The word 'liberation' was employed for the first time in an official way at Medellin and from then on its specific usage referred both to the reflection and task of Christians in Latin America.<sup>46</sup> The Medellin documents, however, used more frequently the term Pope Paul VI had employed in Populorum Progressio, 'integral development,' although there can be noted in the conference itself an increasing preference for the word 'liberation' because of

---

<sup>43</sup>"Introducción a las Conclusiones," nos. 4-6 in Medellin Conclusiones.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., nos. 4-6.

<sup>45</sup>"Documento sobre Justicia," no. 4 in Medellin Conclusiones.

<sup>46</sup>Galilea, "La Liberación en la Conferencia de Medellin," p. 145.

its richer biblical meaning and connotations. When the Latin American reality was characterized by the bishops as one of dependence and unfair domination, it was only natural that the word 'liberation' appeared. But liberation presupposed far more than differences in social analysis. At a deeper level it was understood as an ongoing development of man in a particular perspective and in terms of God's call to salvation through history. It can be said with justification that the word 'liberation' had its official origin in the documents of Medellin. Its theological development would be elaborated upon more fully in the years following.

In making a general analysis of the reality of Latin America, the Medellin Conference spoke simultaneously both of class tensions and internal colonialism as well as international tensions and external colonialism. The changes which it called for implied a transformation of structures as well as persons since both were understood as mutually influencing one another.<sup>47</sup> It insisted that true peace demands a new order based on justice, a peace which must be constructed as part of the daily vocation of Christians and that the Church must face this calling with boldness and courage.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup>"Documento sobre Paz," no. 14 in Medellin Conclusiones.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., no. 14.

The importance of the Medellin Conference for the Latin American Church was comparable to that of Vatican II for the Church universal. Through Medellin the Church of Latin America became aware of her coming of age and began to assume the reins of her own destiny. While Vatican II spoke of the underdevelopment of peoples from within the context of the more developed nations, Medellin strove to deal with the problem from the standpoint of the poorer countries and provided guidelines for the Church regarding her presence within a continent of misery and injustice. It offered an impulse for new commitments and marked the beginning of a new relationship between theological and pastoral language on the one hand and the social sciences seeking to interpret reality on the other.<sup>49</sup> Pastoral statements contingent upon analyses of specific situations of injustice and oppression were seen as necessary if the Church were to respond to the problems arising from the life of Christians seeking to live their faith in concrete social and historical contexts characterized by conflict and deep inequality.

Medellin had attempted, therefore, to define the mission of the Church more from the historical and political context than from intramural ecclesiastical problems. For the Latin American Church, it became increasingly clear that to be in the world without being of the world often meant to be in the social system without being part of

---

<sup>49</sup> Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, p. 136.

that same system. This implied the necessity of breaking with an unjust order through a commitment to build a new society characterized by justice and equality.<sup>50</sup> The demands of this commitment would in turn hopefully lead the Church to a profound revision of her manner of both preaching the Word and living and celebrating her faith.

The theological reflections of the Medellin Conference, however, needed more development and greater depth. Its reflections were frequently vague and general before the complex social reality which they sought to illumine.<sup>51</sup> Medellin had attempted, nevertheless, to articulate a reflected response on the part of the Church to Latin America's social reality and thus initiated the period in which the theology of liberation would achieve greater expression and clarification.

After Medellin, conferences and symposiums on the theme of liberation became commonplace throughout Latin America. In 1971 international meetings of theologians were held in Colombia, Mexico, and Argentina, and in Bogota itself a co-ordinating center was established which began publishing reflective essays and documentation.<sup>52</sup> Virtually all the previously published materials reflecting the

---

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>51</sup> Segundo, "Condicionamientos Actuales de la Reflexión Teológica en Latinoamérica," p. 95.

<sup>52</sup> Hugo Assmann, Teología desde la Praxis de Liberación (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1976), p. 36.

theme of liberation in Latin America concurred that the starting point for a theology of liberation was the present historical situation of domination and dependence in which the countries of the Third World found themselves.<sup>53</sup> The concept of liberation, however, was not to be tied exclusively to the economic and political planes. Liberation signified various levels of meaning, and Gustavo Gutierrez would explore these levels in the first comprehensive and systematic treatment of the theology of liberation published in 1971.<sup>54</sup> Liberation was to signify the political, social, and economic liberation of peoples, the liberation of man through the progress of history, and the liberation of man from sin, understood as the root of all evil--all preparing the conditions in which men could live in communion with one another and with God.

In 1971 Hugo Assmann published an important work analyzing the significance of doing theology from within a commitment to liberation.<sup>55</sup> He stressed theology's need to be in close relationship with the human sciences so that theology's critical reflection upon social and historical practice could become meaningful and offer practical

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>54</sup> Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, pp. 36-37; 176-78.

<sup>55</sup> Hugo Assmann, Opresión-Liberación: Desafío a los Cristianos (Montevideo: Ed. Tierra Nueva, 1971).

orientations.<sup>56</sup> The specific contribution marking the difference between the reflection of theology and that of the human sciences would be that the former would use as the basis for its reflection the Christian faith. Theology was to seek the presence and activity of God within man's social praxis in light of the Christian message.

José Comblin would soon publish his reflections upon the revolutionary and political implications of the Christian message as it sought historical efficacy through the practice of charity and service.<sup>57</sup> He understood Christianity as having no other object than man and the restoration of man. Christianity's specific contribution was to be its manner of restoring man through his divinization in God.<sup>58</sup> According to Comblin, this restoration only could be accomplished through man's historical activities responding in love and service to human and societal needs.<sup>59</sup> It would be incumbent upon Christians to translate the history of salvation revealed in the Scriptures into the concrete history of the present.

In 1972 a meeting of "Christians for Socialism" was convened in Santiago, Chile. The final document of the meeting forthrightly declared that revolutionary praxis was

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>57</sup> José Comblin, Teología de la Revolución, trans. by C. Lizarraga (Bilbao: Gráfica Bilbao, 1973).

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 337.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 339.

recognized as the horizon within which a new theological creativity would emerge.<sup>60</sup> It stressed that Christians could no longer remain politically neutral, for Christian love, with its required note of efficaciousness, impelled them to recognize the specific rationale of the political realm and to accept revolutionary action in accord with a scientific analysis of society.<sup>61</sup>

A Protestant theologian from Brasil, Rubem Alves, emphasized the historicity of man's being and how man develops himself in close relationship with his environment through work.<sup>62</sup> Man must be seen as being with the world and when that world becomes one of exploitation, his very creativity is dulled and man himself becomes dehumanized. Alves would search for a new theological language capable of expressing to man God's saving call to full emancipation.<sup>63</sup>

In 1972 prominent theologians of Latin America met at El Escorial, Spain, to dialogue and discuss the theme of Christian faith and social change in Latin America and to

---

<sup>60</sup> Christians and Socialism: Documentation of the Christians for Socialism Movement in Latin America, ed. by John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1975), p. 174.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>62</sup> Rubem Alves, A Theology of Human Hope (Cleveland: Corpus Books, 1969), pp. 133-58. See also Miguez Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Way (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), chapter five.

<sup>63</sup> Alves, A Theology of Human Hope, pp. 68-74.

reflect upon the theological developments which took place since the Medellin Conference. The documents which this meeting produced emphasized the close relationship existing between the Christian faith and man's historical activity on behalf of social emancipation.<sup>64</sup> The theology of liberation presented itself as original because it included as indispensable to it the historical complexity of Latin America. It understood Latin American reality as a situation of under-development and unjust dependence in which great masses of people found themselves living.<sup>65</sup> It interpreted this situation as one of sin and sought to forge a pastoral effort of committed Christians to overcome and transform this situation. It resisted, however, adopting a particular ideology in constructing its analysis of the historical reality of Latin America.<sup>66</sup> The theology of liberation, rather, accepted the fact of Latin American dependence but not a specific theory of dependency and

<sup>64</sup> An anthology of documents of this meeting can be found in Fe Cristiana y Cambio Social en América Latina, ed. by Alfonso Bolado (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1973). See particularly the article by Gustavo Gutierrez, "Evangelio y Praxis de Liberación," pp. 231-45; and the article by Juan Luis Segundo, "Las Elites Latinoamericanas: Problemática Humana y Cristiana Ante el Cambio Social," pp. 201-12.

<sup>65</sup> See Gonzalo Arroyo's paper presented at the El Escorial meeting concerning Latin American under-development and dependence: "Pensamiento Latinoamericano sobre Subdesarrollo y Dependencia Externa," in Fe Cristiana y Cambio Social en América Latina, pp. 305-33.

<sup>66</sup> Galilea, "La Liberación en la Conferencia de Medellin," p. 145.

strove to remain open to diverse ideological options which Christians might assume according to their particular historical circumstances.

In this second period, the formative stage of the theology of liberation, two essential theological dimensions were uncovered and consciously expressed: that the will of God was that of liberating and humanizing man and that the Church must place herself at this service. There was a heightened awareness and greater theological expression of the fact that sin was also to be found in unjust social and economic structures and that the responsibility for this 'sin' did not necessarily fall solely upon individual persons but upon society itself as an 'historical sin' of Latin America. What typified even more the theology of liberation was the placing of the reality of this sin at the beginning of its theological reflections. The social and political connotations of its theology stood, therefore, in reference to a situation of sin and to the reality of salvation which Jesus Christ brought. The transformation and renewal of the Church which the Second Vatican Council initiated were seen as intimately tied to the process of transforming the social order.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> José Comblin, "Movimientos e Ideologías," in Fe Cristiana y Cambio Social en América Latina, pp. 124-25.

c. Third Stage: The  
Period of Maturation

The third moment of liberation theology, according to Dussel, was the period of its maturation, extending from 1972 to the present. Often facing the consequences of repressive and dictatorial régimes, the Latin American Church became increasingly divided internally and sought at times to control or impede theological and pastoral initiatives.<sup>68</sup> Legitimately elected governments were overthrown in Chile, Argentina, and Ecuador. The military often strove to create a climate of political passivity in their countries by eliminating political parties and imposing censorship upon the press and upon other forms of mass communication. Frequently valuable ideological alternatives and opinions were suppressed, and their authors had to suffer exile or imprisonment. This political situation would remain a characteristic part of Latin America's present day reality.

Many committed Christians were unsure of what to do pastorally, nor were Church leaders united in a common pastoral approach to guide and channel Christians personally committed to the transformation of society. Strong

---

<sup>68</sup>Segundo, "Condicionamientos Actuales de la Reflexión Teológica en Latinoamérica," p. 98.

criticisms of the theology of liberation began to emerge.<sup>69</sup> Meetings under the auspices of CELAM were realized in Bogota in 1973 and Toledo in 1974, directed against the theology of liberation.<sup>70</sup> Frequently the latter was accused of identifying itself with the extreme left and of offering Christian support to insurrectionist groups.<sup>71</sup>

Confronted with the magnitude and complexity of the social reality in which she lived, the Latin American Church often unconsciously reverted to approaches that were most familiar to her traditional role of aiding and serving the spiritual needs of her people. During this period personal conversion and individual renewal were emphasized through the dramatic extension of the Cursillo Movement, pentecostalism, and the practice of spiritual exercises. Christian life was often seen more in terms of working within the Church herself, and such emphasis caused at times a lessening appreciation of the historical and social

---

<sup>69</sup> Perhaps the severest and most well-known critic of liberation theology is the Jesuit Father Roger Vekmans. See particularly his three articles published under the title, "Antecedentes para el Estudio de la Teología de la Liberación," in Tierra Nueva, Bogota, Año 1, no. 2 (julio 1972): 5-22; also Año 1, no. 3 (octubre 1972): 5-19; and Año 2, no. 5 (abril 1973): 15-33.

<sup>70</sup> Enrique Dussel, "The Political and Ecclesial Contest of Liberation Theology in Latin America," in The Emergent Gospel: theology from the underside of history, ed. by Sergio Torres and Virginia Fabellá (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1978), pp. 185-86. See particularly footnotes 32 and 33.

<sup>71</sup> This has been a frequent argument against the theology of liberation. Hugo Assmann has dealt with such criticism in his book Teología desde la Praxis de la Liberación, pp. 238-45.

dimensions of Christian faith.<sup>72</sup> But if the Church of Latin America was at times confused and reluctant to commit herself to transforming the social order, it was because no recipes or well reflected strategies existed to aid her. This also held true for the proponents of liberation theology:

The initial impetus of Medellin regarding the Church's mission of liberation was tempered by the prevailing political climate of Latin America. Liberation was now being understood as a long, arduous process, and sufficient time would have to be allowed for its maturation and for raising the consciences of Christians to their historical task and responsibility. To underscore the difficulty of practicing the Christian faith through transforming the social order, the themes of exile and captivity were emphasized.<sup>73</sup> Frequently Christians engaged in social action were exiled or imprisoned, including such theologians as Hugo Assmann from Chile and José Comblin from Brasil. Through experience, the proponents of liberation theology had discovered the moment of captivity, patience and hope.

---

<sup>72</sup>Segundo, "Condicionamientos Actuales de la Reflexión Teológica en Latinoamérica," p. 99.

<sup>73</sup>The theme of captivity has received particular emphasis from a theologian from Brasil, Leonardo Boff. See his work, Jesucristo el Liberador, trans. by María Rodriguez (Buenos Aires: Latinoamérica Libros, 1976); also "Que es Hacer Teología desde América Latina," in Liberación y Cautiverio, pp. 129-54; and Teología do Cativero e da Libertação (Lisboa: Multinova, 1976).

In 1975 an international meeting of theologians was realized in Mexico City to discuss and share reflections concerning principally the method of doing theology which the theology of liberation proposed.<sup>74</sup> This meeting constituted an important opportunity to share the differences of methodology from European or North American approaches. It in turn would lead to further meetings and reflections, particularly the Detroit meeting in 1975<sup>75</sup> and the Dar es Salaam conference in 1976.<sup>76</sup> Through these meetings and theological exchanges major proponents of liberation theology would clarify their context and starting point and establish a dialogue with theologians coming from diverse socio-political and historical contexts. Comparisons would especially be made concerning the interests and preoccupations of European/North American theology and that of Latin America.

It would be affirmed that European theology had generally been much more interested in explaining the truth of faith and clarifying its hidden meaning.<sup>77</sup> Its function

---

<sup>74</sup>An anthology of the papers presented at this conference can be found in Liberación y Cautiverio.

<sup>75</sup>The presentations and papers emanating from this meeting have been published under the title, Theology in the Americas, ed. by Sergio Torres and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976).

<sup>76</sup>The presentations of this meeting have been published under the title, The Emergent Gospel.

<sup>77</sup>For a very fine synthetic treatment of the differences of interest and purpose between European and Latin American theology, see the article by Jon Sobrino, "El Conocimiento Teológico en la Teología Europea y

had generally been explicative. When the truths of faith were threatened, the function of theology was that of expounding their meaning, thus allowing the Christian message to become comprehensible to modern man. In this way European theology was understood as having accepted the challenge of the first moment of the Enlightenment, symbolized above all by Kant. It strove to free theological discourse from dogmatic arbitrariness in order to allow the truths of faith to be embraced by man's natural reason. European theology had generally defined its task within this challenge and attempted to establish a congruence between faith and reason so as to recover the meaning of the former.

The theology of liberation, however, reflected a different interest stemming from the second moment of the Enlightenment, best symbolized by Marx.<sup>78</sup> The challenge here posed to theology and faith dealt not so much with faith's meaning but rather with its operative value and historical function within the social order. How could theology truly liberate if it only explained or gave meaning to reality while the latter remained unchanged? The theology of liberation spontaneously oriented itself to

---

Latinoamérica," in Liberación y Cautiverio, pp. 177-207. See also the article by J. P. Richard, "Teología de la Liberación Latinoamericana. Un Aporte Crítico a la Teología Europea," in Páginas, Lima, vol. 2, no. 3 (Julio 1976): 1-12.

<sup>78</sup>Sobriño, "El Conocimiento Teológico en la Teología Europea y Latinoamericana," pp. 184-85.

this second challenge presented by the Enlightenment. Theology's liberative character would not consist ultimately in explaining or in giving meaning to existing reality but in transforming reality so as to recover faith's lost meaning.<sup>79</sup> In this way, faith's significance would be understood and made comprehensible only from within the concrete historical situation in which faith sought to exercise itself. Theology would become an intellectual discourse in so far as it would be placed at the service of man's real liberation from oppression and injustice. Its task would not be to reconcile the meaning of faith in the presence of human misery but to transform the latter and in that way to recover faith's significance for contemporary man.

The theology of liberation, therefore, was understood as intimately linked to the historical destiny of the Latin American continent and to the latter's struggle for emancipation from injustice, misery, and oppression.<sup>80</sup> It would challenge the dominating, progressive theology of Europe to define its own historical context and function. Latin American reality posed a different problematic to Christian faith. The question was not how to talk about God in a world come of age, a world perhaps freed from the tutelage of religious and sacral structures, but rather

---

<sup>79</sup>Gutierrez, "Evangelio y Praxis de Liberación," pp. 231-45.

<sup>80</sup>Richard, "Teología de la Liberación Latinoamericana," p. 6.

how to announce to people who were scarcely human that God is Love and that His love makes all one family.<sup>81</sup> The interlocutors of liberation theology were the non-persons, those men and women ignored by the dominant social order. They were the poor, the exploited classes, and the marginalized races and cultures. The challenge which the poor represented frequently juxtaposed Marxism and the social sciences with liberation theology. The meaning of the Christian message could not be abstracted from its historical context because it was the latter that often influenced and shaped the former. Theology, therefore, was called upon to analyze any historical praxis which claimed to be Christian and become aware of the pervasive connection between ideology and theology.<sup>82</sup>

#### d. Conclusions

The history of the origins and development of the theology of liberation was intimately bound up with the historical and social context of Latin America, especially after the closing of the Second Vatican Council. It is a theology which has striven to take seriously the challenge

<sup>81</sup>Gustavo Gutierrez, "Two Theological Perspectives: Liberation Theology and Progressivist Theology," in The Emergent Gospel, p. 241.

<sup>82</sup>The Protestant theologian, J. Miguez Bonino of Argentina, has treated the topic of the Marxist critique of religion in his two books, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Way (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), and Christians and Marxists: the Mutual Challenge to Revolution (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1976).

which the Latin American reality itself represents, seeking to verify faith's meaning by faith's response of love and service to the human and social needs of the majorities of peoples who live under oppression and injustice. It explicitly rejects all dualism between the temporal and spiritual, the sacred and profane, the natural and supernatural, salvation history and secular history. It has attempted to unite the believing subject with his historical and social existence. It affirms that the Christian faith can never be divorced from man's history-making. Because of this, liberation theology is open-ended and one of constant flux, self-criticism, and development,<sup>83</sup> as it seeks to respond to the ever changing historical and social contexts of peoples.

This, then, in summary is the historical and theological context of Latin American liberation theology. It could not have arisen until the movement had attained a certain maturity, but its roots reach far into the past, and its significance transcends Latin America itself. Local variations and resulting intra-mural polemics are certainly part of its history, but these have helped clarify its primary interests, postulates, and method. It is a theology which holds fast to the knowledge that Christ came to establish not slavery but liberation from bondage, and

---

<sup>83</sup> Alfred Hennelly, "Liberation in the Americas: A Dialogue with Juan Segundo," p. 44. This is a manuscript of a book to be published in 1979 by Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York.

that the core of his message was the Father's saving and liberating love. It affirms that this must likewise be the core of the Christian life and theology itself.

We will now attempt to understand how Segundo's own theological enterprise is related to the social and theological context of Latin America. We will survey his major theological interests and emphases to appreciate better how he has both influenced and been influenced by the historical context of liberation theology. Considered as one of the most prolific writers of theology in Latin America today, he could hardly have escaped the theological and social realities which form so much a part of the Latin American Church's life and presence.

## 2. A Survey of Juan Segundo's Theological Enterprise

Perhaps no other Latin American theologian has expressed more in writing his theological reflections concerning the Church and her saving mission to the world than Segundo. His ecclesiology is developed from a fundamental concern that has pervaded almost all of his works and theological writings: Christian liberty and its involvement in history.<sup>84</sup> It is because of this fundamental interest that the reflections of Segundo concerning the nature and

<sup>84</sup>This is the expression which Segundo himself employs in describing the central concern of his five-volume series, A Theology for the Artisans of a New Humanity, taken from The Sacraments Today, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1974), p. 65.

mission of the Church can be best expressed or described as an ecclesiology within the context of liberation theology. This does not mean, however, that Segundo's reflections concerning the Church merely grew out of the theology of liberation. In fact, to a large extent, they preceded the latter and would later grow and reach fuller maturity within the social and theological climate represented by liberation theology.

a. The Social Perspective  
of Juan Segundo's Thought

One of the greatest contributions of Segundo, even well before the convening of the Medellin Conference in 1968, was his consciousness of the necessity of rethinking the Christian faith and life with respect to the contemporary problems facing the Latin American peoples.<sup>85</sup> At the Petropolis Conference of 1964<sup>86</sup> he discussed the theological problems of evangelization raised by the rapid social changes which the Latin American continent was experiencing. He questioned whether the traditional pastoral and missionary effort of the Latin American Church had any chance of succeeding, with its emphasis on mass allegiance and the external pressure of the once closed environments of the more traditional, rural society from

---

<sup>85</sup> See the article written by Juan Luis Segundo, "The Future of Christianity in Latin America," in Cross Currents, vol. XII, no. 2 (Spring 1963): 273-81.

<sup>86</sup> See page 9 of this chapter for the importance of the meeting at Petropolis.

which great numbers of Latin Americans were emerging.<sup>87</sup>

To Segundo, the Latin American Church could no longer count on the simple handing over of the faith from one generation to the next through birth and upbringing because, through the destruction of the closed, rural society of the past, the Christian faith was now challenged to defend itself in a society grown much more pluralistic and competitive with regard to life's values and meaning. For the Christian faith to survive in secularized society without the support of civil structures, it would have to become personal and interiorly formed in the believer.<sup>88</sup> Faith could no longer simply be taken for granted in Latin America. The destruction of the closed, rural society of the past would obligate the Church to rethink her pastoral activity.

Segundo would accept the challenge that the changing social context of Latin America represented for the Church and theology. He wished to treat the problems of Latin America from two points of view: sociologically, that is from the actual facts and social context of Latin American reality, and theologically from Revelation, reflected upon in relationship to the former.<sup>89</sup> He discovered that there

---

<sup>87</sup> See especially Segundo's article, "Pastoral Latinoamericana: hora de la decisión," in Mensaje, vol. 4, no. 127 (marzo/abril 1964): 74-82.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>89</sup> Segundo, De la Sociedad a la Teología, p. 10.

was a great abyss existing between the message that the Latin American Church was proclaiming and the expectations and needs of her people. Latin American theology had remained separated from its creative font by being rooted to European society. Segundo writes:

Our intent . . . is to reflect on the alienating condition of theology in Latin America. . . . it is evident that a human reality with its own characteristics must not lack a theology, that is, a translation of the Christian message in accord with its own reality. And yet that is what is happening in Latin America.<sup>90</sup>

For Segundo, the most essential element for any authentic theology is to question Revelation with one's own heart and own felt struggle. He contends that the Church in Latin America must never develop as a separate world apart, as a perfect society within her own structures, but must be rooted to the rhythm and needs of her people. To him, the Latin American Church had just entered into her 'patristic era,' into her creative moment, when the expression of her faith, her theological reflections, would mirror the trauma and struggle of her peoples.<sup>91</sup>

And yet it was not merely the changing Latin American historical and social context which provided Segundo

---

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., pp. 11-12. "Nuestro intento . . . es reflexionar en la condición de alienación propia de la teología en el continente latinoamericano. . . . es evidente que una realidad humana con características propias no debe carecer de teología, es decir, de una traducción del mensaje cristiano a la propia realidad. Y, sin embargo, eso es lo que está sucediendo en América Latina."

<sup>91</sup> Segundo, De la Sociedad a la Teología, p. 28.

the climate to rethink theologically the mission of the Church in Latin America but his own theological background and preparation as well. We will now turn to that background to appreciate better the theological perspective from which he writes and the biographical context in which he has developed his thought and reflections.<sup>92</sup>

b. The Biographical Context of Juan Segundo's Thought.

He was born in 1925 in Montevideo, Uruguay, and would later enter the seminary in 1941, completing his philosophy and first year of theology under the Jesuit faculty at San Miguel, near Buenos Aires, Argentina. During his philosophy years Segundo became very interested in existentialism, especially in the thought and writings of Nicolas Berdyaev. Both Berdyaev's conception of the human person and his interpretation of such philosophers as Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger would later become the subject of Segundo's doctoral dissertation.<sup>93</sup> He wrote a short work in 1948 concerning existentialism<sup>94</sup> and would study theology

---

<sup>92</sup>Almost all the biographical material mentioned here concerning Segundo was taken from an extended interview I had with him in July of 1977 in Montevideo. Very little has to this date been written about his thought and even less about his life and biography.

<sup>93</sup>Segundo's thesis is entitled Berdiaeff: Une Réflexion Chrétienne sur la Personne (Paris: Editions Montaigne, 1963).

<sup>94</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, Existencialismo; Filosofía: Ensayo de Síntesis (Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe, 1948).

with a keen concern for the problems which existentialist philosophy raised.

Segundo completed his theological formation for priesthood under the Jesuit faculty of theology at Saint Albert, Louvain. During his years of theological studies at least three persons had markedly influenced his thought previous to his ordination. Leopold Malevez, one of his professors of theology, had awakened an interest in him concerning the reality of grace and the possibility of its operative presence in non-Christians. Through a study and analysis of the decretals of the Second Synod of Orange, Segundo came to the conclusion that every good act is supernatural in so far as it serves others--a conclusion that would later become quite decisive in his own ecclesiology.<sup>95</sup> Another of his professors, Gustav Lambert, introduced him to the great historical stages of the Old Testament redaction which in turn influenced Segundo's theology concerning the progressive understanding of God revealed within Israel's faith tradition. This led him to a deeper appreciation of Christ's revelation in the New Testament.<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> Segundo himself expressed this to me in the interview. See for example, Juan Luis Segundo, The Community Called Church, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973), particularly chapter 3.

<sup>96</sup> See Segundo's two works, Etapas Pre-cristianas de la Fe: Evolución de la Idea de Dios en el Antiguo Testamento (Montevideo: Cursos de Complementación Cristiana, 1962), and Concepción Cristiana del Hombre (Montevideo: Mimeográfica "Luz," 1964). Both of these works have now been published under one title, ¿Que es un Cristiano? (Montevideo: Mosca Hnos., 1971). Both are resúmenes of the courses Segundo

The third major influence on Segundo during his theological preparation for ordination was Rudolf Bultmann and his existentialist interpretation of the Scriptures. Segundo did not wish to remain solely within the science of biblical exegesis but rather desired to interpret the findings of the latter in an existential way. It was particularly the biblical concept 'flesh' which so interested Segundo that it became the subject of his major concern in the eventual attainment of his licentiate in theology. Segundo equated the term 'flesh' in St. Paul's writings with 'inauthenticity.' He translated the biblical concept in an historical manner, applying the term to Christendom, which to him represented the inauthentic, religious behavior of the masses toward Christianity.

The exploration of the meaning of the term 'flesh' and its relationship to the historical form Christianity assumed in Christendom later became the subject matter of Segundo's second doctoral dissertation.<sup>97</sup> His thesis attempted to understand if Christianity, representing the highest and most difficult ideal of human life, could ever hope to be universally accepted by the masses. He examined

---

gave to university students to complement their formation in the faith in the city of Montevideo.

<sup>97</sup>His dissertation is titled: La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía? I Los Hechos, II Los Principios (Montevideo: Mimeográfica "Luz," 1964). For a short, popularized version of the thought of Segundo with respect to this thesis, see his work, Masas y Minorías (Buenos Aires: Editorial La Aurora, 1973).

the reality of the mass acceptance of Christianity which Christendom represented and compared that acceptance to the demands which the Christian message itself reflected. He would conclude that the historical facts of Christendom point out the difference between the ideal of Christianity and the movement of the masses, that Christianity could never pretend a universality proper to the masses.<sup>98</sup> Its universalism must lie elsewhere and be exercised by a creative and committed minority in their very service to the masses.

The conclusions of the dissertation could be widely applied by Segundo in his analysis of the pastoral activity of the Church of his own native country and of the Church's presence in Latin America in general.<sup>99</sup> The theme of the Church's inherently minoritarian character at the service of the masses would somehow be reflected in almost all his writings and particularly in his work, The Community Called Church. Teilhard de Chardin would later help Segundo express this concept of creative minority in evolutionary terms when he became more deeply immersed in his thought after his ordination.<sup>100</sup> In fact, to Segundo, the language

---

<sup>98</sup>Segundo, La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía?, II p. 95.

<sup>99</sup>See Segundo's work, Función de la Iglesia en la Realidad Rioplatense (Montevideo: Barreiro y Ramos, 1962); also Acción Pastoral Latinoamericana: Sus Motivos Ocultos (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Búsqueda, 1972).

<sup>100</sup>Segundo, De la Sociedad a la Teología, pp. 155-73; see also his book, Evolution and Guilt, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1974).

of evolution represented the key to understanding the universal dimensions of sin and grace. And since, to him, evolution reflects the thought and idiom of modern man, the Christian message itself has to be comprehended from within that perspective.

Segundo was ordained a priest of the Society of Jesus in August of 1955. He remained in Europe, however, until 1959, engaged in doctoral studies at the University of Paris, preparing his major thesis regarding Berdyaev's concept of the human person. It was the thought of Berdyaev which led Segundo to reinterpret the realities of sin and grace from man's personal experience of freedom. For Berdyaev, 'person' was the expression of the primacy of freedom over being and nature.<sup>101</sup> Man would be justified if he made liberty the primary focal point of his existence, fighting against an enslaving submission to nature which would render love and sacrifice impossible. Through the thought of Berdyaev, Segundo came to understand more fully how freedom needs nature to realize itself and yet is always susceptible to being dominated by it, thus losing its creativity and primacy. Segundo would further be led to understand the relationship between grace, conceived as God's free gift of self, and man's authentic exercise of freedom which the former renders possible. This would become the subject of a later work wherein Segundo would

---

<sup>101</sup>Segundo, Berdiaeff: Une Réflexion Chrétienne sur la Personne, p. 46.

closely identify grace and the realization of man's freedom in the act of self-giving and reflect upon the dimensions of grace within the human condition.<sup>102</sup>

Berdyaev's thought also allowed Segundo to clarify his own notion of mass lines of conduct and reinterpret sin as the opposite of liberty, as a ceding to passivity, inertia, and non-liberty.<sup>103</sup> Segundo would conclude that grace and mass behavior are opposing forces, for the former is associated with liberty and creative union and the latter with determinism and uniformity.

Berdyaev's influence is especially noted with regard to Segundo's appreciation of man's task or mission within the world. God had endowed man with freedom to act creatively and responsibly so as to offer his Creator something new, a new structure of being stemming from man's creative liberty--something God Himself would have to wait for as novelty.<sup>104</sup> Liberty, for Segundo, would become the absolute value of creation, for its realization implied the union of divinity with humanity. The theme of liberty would suffuse his theological writings, especially concerning both God's relationship to man and his world and vice-versa.<sup>105</sup>

---

<sup>102</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, Grace and the Human Condition, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973).

<sup>103</sup> Segundo, Berdiaeff: Une Réflexion Chrétienne sur la Personne, particularly chapter 4.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., pp. 127-28.

<sup>105</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, Our Idea of God, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1974).

It would also be the major perspective from which he would later reflect upon the Church's sacraments, their celebration and purpose.<sup>106</sup>

In 1959 Segundo returned to Montevideo, Uruguay, and organized courses for university students to complement their formation in the faith. He returned to Europe in 1962 to complete and defend his thesis. In 1965 he became the director of the then newly formed Peter Faber Center in Montevideo where seminars were planned for lay men and women who wished to discuss more profoundly with Segundo and others basic Christian themes. Segundo would extensively utilize the conciliar texts of the Second Vatican Council and try to incorporate their theological implications into the seminars he was conducting. This can be noted from the extensive use he makes of the conciliar documents in his five-volume series, A Theology for Artisans of a New Humanity. The five books published in this series are summaries of the seminars which Segundo celebrated at the Center with his students, and each book appeared usually after the third year of the seminar's realization. Segundo would also write numerous articles in the theological periodical of the Center called Perspectivas de Diálogo. These articles could serve as indices to the development of his thought on many inter-related theological themes covering a span of close to seven years.

---

<sup>106</sup> Segundo, The Sacraments Today.

c. The Thought of Juan Segundo  
in the Context of Liberation

Segundo was from the beginning involved with the many international meetings of Latin American theologians which took place after the Second Vatican Council. It would be, however, in a theological conference realized in Santiago, Chile, in 1966 where he, together with Gustavo Gutierrez and other Latin American theologians, would reflect upon the historical dimensions of salvation within the context of the Latin American reality itself. He would identify the word 'salvation' with liberation from all types of death,<sup>107</sup> stressing that salvation realizes itself within the contingent, relative, and ambiguous aspects of history, but always preserving the hope for its ultimate eschatological realization. This meeting served to heighten the understanding of its participants concerning the reality of the Church seen as constituted for service to the world. This ecclesial vocation to service implied, for Segundo, a mission of liberation.

It would only be after this meeting that the actual term 'liberation' would appear more frequently in his writings. Segundo accepted the fact of Latin America's dependent situation and understood the necessity of employing the help of the social sciences to describe and analyze the

---

<sup>107</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, "Intelecto y Salvación," in Salvación y Construcción del Mundo (Barcelona: Nova Terra, 1968), pp. 57-75.

socio-political context of Latin America.<sup>108</sup> He affirmed that the Gospel must be read in intimate relationship to that social context. All authentic pastoral practice of the Church must be concerned with its social significance and depend upon an historical conscience, attentive to the signs of the times in search for concrete signs of liberation.<sup>109</sup> To him, all of the Church with her structures and sacraments must be for the service of finding solutions to the historical problems of men in their quest for liberation.

Segundo participated in the 1972 meeting of liberation theologians at El Escorial, Spain. In a paper given at that conference he reflected upon the relationship between theology and ideology and how the latter unconsciously influences theological concepts and expressions of the Christian faith.<sup>110</sup> He contended that the Medellin Conference proposed a social mission of liberation for Christians but did not seriously take into account the consequences of that mission for theology and Church structure. According to Segundo, the question that Medellin left unanswered was how the Latin American Church could commit herself concretely to liberation while still being

---

<sup>108</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, "Teología y Ciencias Sociales," in Fe Cristiana y Cambio Social en América Latina, pp. 285-95.

<sup>109</sup> Segundo, Acción Pastoral Latinoamericana, p. 39.

<sup>110</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, "Las Elites Latinoamericanas: Problemática Humana y Cristiana ante el Cambio Social," in Fe Cristiana y Cambio Social en América Latina, pp. 203-13.

structured as a religion of the masses whose liturgical and theological expressions often appeared as unconnected with the historical problems of the people.<sup>111</sup> To him, Medellin failed to recognize how ideology could infiltrate Church theology and liturgical celebration and impede the Church's own activity and involvement with human liberation. The relationship between ideology and faith would be a subject of major treatment in Segundo's latest book<sup>112</sup> and one of his distinctive contributions to liberation theology.

Segundo also attended the 1975 meeting of liberation theologians realized in Mexico City. At that meeting theological methodology was the principal theme of discussion. Perhaps the greatest contribution Segundo has made specifically to the theology of liberation was the publication of his book, The Liberation of Theology, wherein he develops and expresses his understanding of the methodology which liberation theology employs. Even in this work, however, Segundo explores the Church's mission and nature in an attempt to construct an ecclesiology that would incarnate her mission of liberation in the service of men. He considers, moreover, the serious implications that this missionary vocation entails for the Church's activity and presence.

---

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., pp. 211-12.

<sup>112</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976), especially chapters 4, 5, and 6.

d. Concluding Remarks

Since 1970 Segundo has been very much involved in giving theological workshops, courses, conferences, and retreats not only in Latin America but in North America as well. In 1975 he lectured an entire semester at Harvard University and in September of 1978 will be a guest lecturer at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. He is considered a principal spokesman for Latin American theology and remains steadfast in his conviction that theology must also embrace history and man's social and political context to be authentic and liberating. He has described his works as an 'open' theology,<sup>113</sup> confronting the problems of human history. They resist any easy, systematic treatment. This does not mean, however, that there are no unifying elements or organizing themes which dominate the body of his work. We have already stated that Segundo has centered much of his theological concern on the nature and mission of the Church from within the context of Latin American reality and from the perspective of man's freedom and quest for liberation. His particular emphasis on the Church as a creative minority in the service of the masses remains a constant throughout the development of his thought. We will seek to understand how he conceives the Church's universality while insisting at the same time on her

---

<sup>113</sup>The title of his five-volume series in Spanish is Teología Abierta Para el Laico Adulto.

particular and minoritarian character. Although the context from which he writes is from within the social and historical reality of Latin America, the themes he treats, especially his ecclesiology, have value for the Church universal, for to a large extent they are reflections upon her nature and function as she lives and attempts to move forward in secularized culture.

In the following chapter we will analyze Segundo's appreciation of the Christian religion itself. It is only after understanding the basic core of Christianity that Segundo attempts to define theologically the dimensions of the Church and her function within man's history. He believes that the reality of the Church can only be adequately discussed if the novelty of the Christian revelation itself is appreciated. In our next chapter we will explore what Segundo believes that novelty as consisting of.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CHRISTIANITY: THE RELIGION OF AUTHENTIC LOVE

In this chapter we will attempt to discern Segundo's response to a question that is perhaps prior to any other theological issue: what is the fundamental core of the Christian revelation? This basic question will serve as a starting point in our analysis of Segundo's own conception of the Church's reality. It is a starting point, however, that has not been arbitrarily chosen by us. In the first of his five-volume series, Segundo himself has stated that he wished to explore the nature of the Church by first understanding the very core of Christian living.<sup>1</sup> In one of his first works to appear in book form, Función de la Iglesia en la Realidad Rioplatense,<sup>2</sup> he attempts to elucidate the contemporary role of the Church in the border area of Uruguay and Argentina. His inquiry leads him to discover two distinct and opposed conceptions of the Church operative among committed Catholics in the two countries. We will

---

<sup>1</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, "Introduction to the Series," in The Community Called Church, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973), p. vii.

<sup>2</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, Función de la Iglesia en la Realidad Rioplatense (Montevideo: Barreiro y Ramos, 1962). This book was published in the same year that the Second Vatican Council opened.

consider these different conceptions in chapter three. What is of interest to us here, however, is the manner in which Segundo attempts to determine which, if any, of the two positions is valid or correct. He approaches a solution to the dilemma by first understanding the source of the Church's true mission: the truth revealed by her founder, Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup> Segundo, therefore, will attempt to discern the essential core of Christianity, its meaning and import before reflecting upon the reality of the Church and her mission.

There is yet another reason why Segundo will first concentrate upon the meaning of Christianity. He would like to distinguish religious attitudes which can properly be called Christian from those which cannot be considered strictly as such.<sup>4</sup> Frequently in the past Latin Americans were called Christian and considered members of the Church by the very fact of their baptism alone with little regard given to analyzing their religious attitudes. For some, Latin American Christianity was very often a disguised form of paganism with a Christian name and ethos. For others, true Christianity still revealed itself but in a defective way because of the pervasive, non-Christian attitudes shared by so many. Latin American theology was not able to respond adequately to this problem for its methods and

---

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>4</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano? (Montevideo: Mosca Hnos., 1971), p. 8.

themes were basically European, reflecting a theology which expressed itself principally in terms of exclusion or inclusion. For Segundo, however, the problem is not well defined when religious attitudes are analyzed in such terms. He stresses, rather, the importance of understanding non-Christian attitudes as pre-Christian and of placing them on a pastoral road leading to a more authentic Christianity.<sup>5</sup> In this way they can be seen as stages of an evolving educational process leading to greater religious maturity. In fact, for Segundo, the pre-Christian religious attitudes recorded in the Old Testament must be seen in the same way.

Segundo considers the whole of the Old Testament as a vast educational process of faith, leading God's Chosen People to a gradual understanding of the message of Christ.<sup>6</sup> He will attempt to analyze the defective religious attitudes of Latin America in light of the Old Testament models. It is essential for him, therefore, to discern the various stages of this educational process in the Old Testament, for he views the latter as an essential propadeutic<sup>7</sup> for

---

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>7</sup>Alfred Hennelly, "Liberation in the Americas: A Dialogue with Juan Segundo," manuscript to be published by Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, p. 101. The word 'propadeutic' is Hennelly's term to describe the manner in which Segundo conceives the Old Testament and its relationship to the revelation of Jesus Christ. In the first part of his work, ¿Que es un Cristiano?, p. 15, Segundo has stated that the entire Bible must be seen as the education of God's people, provided by Him in different stages. Segundo will treat the educative role of the Scriptures in considerably more detail in his latest book, The Liberation

understanding the novelty of the revelation in the New Testament. Thus even before considering the essential meaning of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, Segundo will first analyze what he considers to be the fundamental stages of the educational process of God's Chosen People recorded in the Old Testament concerning Israel's concept of God and her relationship to Him. In this way he will attempt to discern more clearly both the novelty of Christ's revelation and the meaning of Christianity which the former implies.

This chapter, therefore, will first attempt to discern Segundo's thought concerning God's progressive revelation of Himself in the Old Testament and how this revelation has affected, in different stages, Israel's conception both of the human person and man's relationship to God. We will survey the general religious attitudes that Segundo has gleaned from each stage. The biblical references he employs can be found in going to the texts referred to in the footnote citations. In the second part of this chapter we will inquire into Segundo's understanding of God's definitive revelation in Jesus Christ and the conception of the human person that this revelation implies. And finally, in the third part, we will explore the development of Segundo's thought concerning the notion of freedom seen as an essential element for understanding more

---

of Theology, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976), particularly chapter 4.

adequately both the meaning of Christ's revelation and the relationship between God and man which the New Testament message indicates.

1. Pre-Christian Stages of Faith  
in the Old Testament

Segundo employs the accepted results of scriptural scholarship which indicate that the Old Testament writings contain various levels of redaction or editing through the Yahwistic, Elohist, Deuteronomistic, and Priestly traditions, as well as through the prophetic and sapiential movements.<sup>8</sup> Under the influence of Gustav Lambert,<sup>9</sup> one of his theology teachers in the seminary, Segundo distinguishes four stages in the development of the Old Testament which he considers critical to Israel's understanding of and encounter with God. The first and earliest stage is represented by the Yahwistic and Elohist traditions. The second stage embraces all that precedes the Exile, including the first

<sup>8</sup>A classic treatment of this process can be found in Gerhard von Rad's work: Old Testament Theology I: The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

<sup>9</sup>Gustav Lambert had introduced Segundo to the great stages of Israel's tradition. See for example the article by Lambert: "La création dans la Bible," in Nouvelle Revue Théologique, vol. 73, no. 3 (mars 1953): 252-87. Segundo surveys the stages of this Old Testament redaction in the first part of his work ¿Que es un Cristiano?, pp. 17-25.

group of prophets, the reform of Josiah and the second group of prophets.<sup>10</sup> The third period covers the time of the Exile, the Return, and the Restoration.<sup>11</sup> And the fourth stage will refer to Israel's contact with Greek thought, best represented in the Book of Wisdom.

Segundo looks upon these four stages as encompassing a dialectical movement in the course of which previous conceptions are purified and integrated into new syntheses.<sup>12</sup> The indicated stages, therefore, are not meant to be rigid barriers separating one period from the next but rather related transitions leading to more mature and authentic religious attitudes on the part of God's people. After discussing each stage, Segundo will attempt to draw similarities from pre-Christian attitudes reflected among Christians comprising the Latin American Church and indicate how such attitudes are in fact presently operating. We will now turn to the first stage or period of Israel's tradition to follow Segundo's reflections concerning her experience of God.

---

<sup>10</sup>This stage extends from the Yahwistic and Elohist accounts and includes the first group of prophets (Amos, Hosea, Isaiah 1:39, Micah, Zephaniah), the Deuteronomic Tradition, and the second group of prophets (Jeremiah, Nahum, and Habakuk).

<sup>11</sup>Included in this period are the writings of the third group of prophets (Ezekiel, II Isaiah, Zechariah, Haggai), the Priestly Tradition (Ezra, Nehemiah), the fourth group of prophets (Joel, Obadiah, Malachi, Jonah), and a part of the sapiential literature (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Canticle of Canticles).

<sup>12</sup>Hennelly, "Liberation in the Americas," p. 102.

a. First Stage: The God of the Land of Israel

The first and most primitive stage of Israel's tradition is reflected in the Yahwistic and Elohist schools of redaction. In this stage Segundo discerns what he considers major characteristics concerning Israel's conception of and encounter with God. God does not yet appear as a universal power.<sup>13</sup> He is adored and worshipped as the supreme power but looked upon more as the God of Israel and her land. Here is where He concentrates His authority and power, and His rule beyond Israel appears as indirect. Israel first knows God not as a universal power but within the concrete experience of her existence as a people.

Another characteristic of this stage, according to Segundo, is that God is found in the terrible and inexplicable.<sup>14</sup> The mysterious and the terrible are two aspects particularly describing the great theophanies of the Exodus in which God manifests Himself on Sinai to the people, inspiring in them fear and awe. Before God's mysterious presence one cannot come close. This is a theme which will be reflected many times in the writings of this period. To be in direct contact with God is equivalent to dying. Intermediaries are therefore needed to receive His

---

<sup>13</sup>Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano?, pp. 27-28.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

commands and to ask for His mercy on behalf of the people. Ritual purifications are necessary before approaching God and specially designated persons are entrusted to be His spokesmen.<sup>15</sup> God appears as totally removed from the realm of the familiar and secular. Emphasis is focused on carefully prescribed cultic gestures to be carried out in sacred places with sacred objects.

Another characteristic of this stage is the apparent dislike on the part of God for certain elements of creation,<sup>16</sup> which, when touched, profane and make unclean the person. Holiness appears transmitted almost as if by physical contact, and even an accidental violation of sacred regulations is punishable. The sacred is always reserved. To use any sacred element for secular purposes is profanation and sacrilege.

Segundo believes that in this first stage God is discovered more by 'existentially' separating Him from the ordinary.<sup>17</sup> The experience of ritual is an expression of that which is absolute as well as the respect owed to it. Ritual expression makes contact with the absolute possible, but cultic efficacy itself is directed more to the profane necessities of human life: fertility, health, success, victory, and security. It is a mysterious efficacy breaking the normal cause-and-effect relationships of historical

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp. 30-31.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

actions and events and, for that reason, exercises a role of decisive importance in the temporal sphere.

To Segundo, the conception of the human person which Israel's experience of God in this first stage implies becomes readily apparent. The values of human intentionality and freedom are greatly diminished.<sup>18</sup> That which is most personal and intimate before an efficacy which remains mysterious is lost sight of. In other words, the goodness or malice of a person's intention is not taken sufficiently into account. Religion is generally subordinated to external factors, sacred objects, gestures, and regulations. Liberty, love, and the great problems of human existence remain without religious support, since the divine appears alienated from ordinary human existence and is approached only through intermediaries within the sacred sphere, who in turn seek to influence the divine power through prescribed rites.

Segundo, however, is careful to point out the authentic element this first stage contains. Israel's understanding of God and her relationship to Him was quite naturally first conceived in terms of the sensible and tangible. He writes:

We must understand that, in the evolution of conscious human existence, it is very difficult for something of great importance, which totally surpasses man, to develop in any other way. . . . Certainly the first stage is still almost totally

---

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

exterior, but this is the inevitable law of all human education: gradually to penetrate into the interior by means of the sensible.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, Segundo attempts to show how basic attitudes of the first stage are actually operative in the Church, particularly in Latin America. On the sacramental plane, ritual expression very often takes precedence over the intention and personal disposition of those who are its recipients. Frequently sacramental practice is dominated by quantitative criteria concerning the validity of the sacred action performed.<sup>20</sup> What is stressed are more the conditions for sacramental validity rather than the operative and conscience-raising character of the sacraments in those who participate in their celebration.

On the dogmatic and moral plane, Segundo notes similar tendencies.<sup>21</sup> External adhesion to orthodoxy and exact credal formulas appear many times as possessing greater religious importance than personal understanding and assimilation.<sup>22</sup> In morality preoccupation with what is

---

<sup>19</sup>This is a translation of Segundo's text by Alfred Hennelly in his manuscript: "Liberation in the Americas," p. 104. The text he cites has a slightly different reading and pagination than ours but can be found in Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano?, p. 35.

<sup>20</sup>Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano?, p. 36. Segundo will treat this mechanistic view of sacramental efficacy at length in his book, The Sacraments Today, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1974), particularly pp. 42-65.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 36-37.

<sup>22</sup>This will be a subject of particular treatment in his work, The Community Called Church, particularly pp. 98-112.

materially licit or illicit, frequently takes priority over the importance of interior attitudes, continual conversion, and personal growth.<sup>23</sup>

For Segundo, therefore, the religious attitudes of this first stage of Israel's tradition are to be found operative in the contemporary Church of Latin America and can frequently lead to an infantile Christianity where profound human qualities are ignored or suppressed. He writes concerning the danger of prolonging such attitudes:

The error of those who wish that pastoral activity "take advantage" of this type of existing religious spirit is that, if it does not lead to maturity, it quickly disappears, fostering rebellion against an imposed and alienating infantilism.<sup>24</sup>

Segundo is then led to discuss and reflect upon the second stage of Israel's tradition, seeking to examine another segment of the educational process embedded within the Old Testament.

b. The Second Stage:  
The God of the Covenant

The second stage is reflected principally in the works of the first two groups of prophets and in Deuteronomy.

---

<sup>23</sup>Segundo will discuss this legalistic approach to morality in his work, The Community Called Church, particularly pp. 98-112.

<sup>24</sup>Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano?, p. 37. "El error de quienes piensan que una pastoral debe 'aprovechar,' mientras existe, este tipo de religiosidad, es que si no se prepara su paso a una madurez, desaparece casi subitamente para dar lugar a la rebelión contra un infantilismo impuesto y alienante."

Segundo discerns that God is still not clearly perceived as a universal power but appears less tied now to a territory or land than to an alliance.<sup>25</sup> The notion of alliance becomes central in this period, indicating a relationship between God and Israel which is both more personal and moral than in the first stage. Israel is aware of a divine vocation, and her historical destiny depends upon her faithfulness to God's covenant. If she remains faithful to God's laws, God will guide her history. Everything, therefore, must be subordinated to this alliance. Ritualistic religion which does not penetrate the heart of men is severely criticized. Moral life and rectitude must now be Israel's principal preoccupation. Historical destiny is entrusted to God.

In this period God appears as a moral providence, and Israel is His collaborator. Segundo writes concerning the significance of this stage:

The evident significance of this stage is, in effect, the great progress made concerning the closeness of the religious element to the intimate and creative center of man. Religion, so conceived, interprets history and history in turn realizes the religious realm. This identity between religion, historic task and interpretation of history has been decisive in the thought of the West.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup>Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano?, p. 39.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 47. "El sentido evidente de esta etapa es, en efecto, ese gran paso de acercamiento de lo religioso al centro íntimo y creador del hombre. La religión así concebida, interpreta la historia y la historia, a su vez, realiza el reino religioso. Esta identidad, entre religión, tarea histórica e interpretación de la historia, ha sido decisiva en el pensamiento de Occidente."

Israel becomes an instrument for realizing God's historical design. This to Segundo signifies greater security and confidence on the part of man before the events of history than mere reliance upon a purely ritualistic religion.

Israel now no longer relates to God principally in the realm of the sacred but in her moral obedience and activity within the temporal sphere. Man's moral activity, freedom, and intentionality are given greater recognition.

Segundo, however, indicates certain limitations concerning this stage.<sup>27</sup> Historical success, whether social or personal, such as wealth, victory, health, etc., can easily be understood as favors of God, signs of His blessing for good actions performed, and historical evils as signs of God's disfavor for bad actions. Such a mentality can quickly equate material comforts with righteousness and divine protection. Overconfidence and zealousness before what is believed to be Israel's historical destiny can provoke a partitioning of the world into enemies and friends, based on a presumed religious justification. Indiscriminate means may even be employed to eliminate the enemy. God appears as interested in Israel and only tolerates 'the others.' Segundo describes this limitation as follows:

---

<sup>27</sup>Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano?, p. 50.

The incompatibility between the very notion of God and, on the other hand, a divine interest localized in a particular group of men, becomes more and more evident, especially when psychology demonstrates how frequently the aggressivity which others inspire in us, not in our clan, is disguised with noble motives.<sup>28</sup>

Segundo will once again maintain that similar pre-Christian attitudes are still found existing within the Church. It is not uncommon to find among the upper classes of Latin America a feeling of religious justification because of their possessions and social rank.<sup>29</sup> The criterion of Christian morality almost becomes, in effect, external as if God had rewarded and blessed them for their conduct of life. Segundo also believes that the period of the Crusades in Church history typifies markedly the dividing of the world into friends and enemies of God according to a presumed religious design which Christians equated with that of God himself.<sup>30</sup> The means they chose were frequently indiscriminate but nonetheless considered justified in view of the righteousness of the project. To Segundo, wars waged in the name of God can easily serve as channels for unbridling man's aggressivity. Historical

---

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 50. "La incompatibilidad entre la noción misma de Dios y, por otra parte, un interés divino localizado en un grupo particular de hombres, se hace cada vez más evidente, sobre todo cuando la psicología enseña al hombre con cuanta facilidad se disfraza con motivos nobles la agresividad que nos inspiran los que no pertenecen a nuestro clan."

<sup>29</sup>Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano?, pp. 49-50.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

successes and evils, however, cannot be so naively explained away, for misfortune and success are characteristics shared by both the good and bad alike. Man can become quickly disillusioned in the belief that God must so tangibly reward good efforts and conduct by assuring him material prosperity and victory. The events of history themselves show the limitations of this stage of religious development.

c. The Third Stage: The Transcendent God of the Universe

This period, according to Segundo, covers a vast expanse of literature which includes the Exile, Restoration, the Priestly redaction, and the Hebrew sapiential books. Segundo believes the conception of God is now purified from all particularism, and His transcendence is conceived as extending over all that which is human, especially history.<sup>31</sup> Divine transcendence and universality are emphasized. God is seen as Creator and Lord, as the only universal power. All of creation is contingent upon Him. His word addresses all peoples, and Israel's election is seen as part of a divine, universal plan embracing the entire world.<sup>32</sup> It is an election which is totally dependent on God's initiative. The creature possesses no justice of his own. God's infinite sanctity stands facing the absolute indigency of the

---

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

creature. Only God puts Himself in relationship to man.

The Hebrew sapiential writings, however, will seek an explanation for the injustices which befall the innocent.<sup>33</sup> There is a recognition that historical events cannot be so easily explained and related to the morality of men. Justice will not necessarily be realized in the lifetime of the innocent. There is an infinite abyss separating God and His creatures who cannot fathom the ways of God and must humbly submit to Him.

This stage, for Segundo, represents an extraordinarily pure religion of the creature who reflects upon his own created existence and orders accordingly his relationship to the transcendent.<sup>34</sup> It is a relationship of total surrender into the hands of divine providence which remains incomprehensible in its designs. Adoration and fear, founded upon the acceptance of man's created condition, become dominant characteristics of the religious attitudes of the period.

The great limitation of this stage, Segundo feels, is the question of how to synthesize the historical understanding of man and divine transcendence.<sup>35</sup> Man shapes his destiny through an historical, horizontal involvement with the temporal sphere, but God's actions appear mysterious and inscrutable. Man cannot readily relate them to his

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 62-67.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

history. God's will remains mysterious, causing man to mistrust his historical undertakings on the horizontal plane. Consequently, history itself appears lacking a coherent and purposeful plan. Patience and passivity can easily become the pervading religious attitudes before historical evils--evils which are accepted in submission and obedience. Man's relationship to God is shaped primarily within a vertical plane, where the religious sphere becomes more privatized and given supreme importance.

Segundo will relate once again the similarities of these religious attitudes to the present situation of the Latin American Church. To a great extent, the privatization of the Christian life had caused in the past a lack of moral outrage before the injustices that so many people have had to suffer in Latin America. Acceptance and forbearance were and still are frequently preached as religious virtues, irregardless of the social context. Evil is understood much more from the perspective of personal rather than social sin, thus man's societal responsibilities towards eliminating historical evils becomes de-emphasized. Segundo writes:

Clearly after the previous stage it was necessary to recover the role of endurance and acceptance which all authentic religious life bears. But when the acceptance appears to invade all, when there doesn't appear in history an effective and coherent design . . . man with his innate creative power, with his inescapable vocation to history and society, either frees himself from the religious sphere, giving his life essentially to an historic task,

shared with others, or establishes two frequently contradictory realms of life between his mission and the individualistic, interior religion by which he relates to God.<sup>36</sup>

The limitations of this period in Israel's tradition will now pass into what Segundo has described as the fourth stage.

d. The Fourth Stage: The God of Universal Justice

Segundo believes this last period is best expressed in the Old Testament through the Book of Wisdom and that the religious attitudes reflected in this book were still quite prominent among the Pharisees of Jesus Christ's lifetime. It is a writing marked with a Hellenistic influence. God is understood as the Creator of only the good.<sup>37</sup> Evil is explained as the sole result of man who sins because of his misuse of the goods of creation. His existence is placed between two alternatives: life or death. Man appears as waging a bet with his life: either death

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 71. "Evidentemente, y sobre todo después de la etapa anterior, era necesario rescatar la parte de pasividad, de aceptación, que tiene consigo toda vida religiosa auténtica. Pero cuando la aceptación parece invadirlo todo, cuando en la historia no aparece un designio eficaz y coherente. . . el hombre, con su poder creador ingénito, con su vocación ineludible a la historia y a la sociedad, o bien se libera de lo religioso y pone lo esencial de sí en su misión histórica compartida con los demás hombres fuera de lo religioso, o establece dos compartimientos en su vida, a menudo contradictorios, entre esa misión y la religión individual e interior con que se dirige a Dios."

<sup>37</sup> Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano?, p. 73.

terminates all or the just will survive death. The great discovery of this religious period is the hope for justice and personal vindication through a future life with God beyond death.<sup>38</sup> Hope becomes an essential religious attitude for understanding the life of the just. Evil, therefore, ceases to be an insurmountable obstacle in the face of freedom.

Segundo believes that God in this stage is presented as extra-terrestrial justice.<sup>39</sup> Man is called to serve justice and in that very service to experience the divine as just. In this way God appears much more related to man's central faculty of freedom, whose use is now seen as determining man's final destiny. Human existence is understood as a test, and man is called to obey God's law. The significance of human freedom, however, is not seen as creative but rather is experienced as risk. With his liberty man can radically deviate from his vocation to justice. A certain attitude of resignation before historical evils is manifested because the future life is believed eventually to settle accounts. Patience becomes dominant. Such attitudes, to Segundo, are clearly present in many Christian Churches throughout Latin America.

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

e. Conclusions

Segundo has tried to analyze the defective or pre-Christian attitudes of the Latin American Church in light of Old Testament models, gleaned from four major stages of Israel's tradition. The first period manifested God as remote and unapproachable. The performance of ritual was emphasized. The second stage indicated God's greater proximity to Israel through the covenant but in such a way that Israel was frequently tempted to think that by means of the covenant she could somehow control God and the events of history. The third period recognized the universality and utter transcendence of God, now called Lord and Creator. His ways become inscrutable and the events of history are not easily explained. And lastly, in the fourth period, God's laws and call to justice were emphasized, and man himself offered the possibility of immortality through a correct use of his freedom.

To speak of the limitations of the fourth stage is, according to Segundo, to speak about the Christian message itself, for only the latter allows us to understand the former. It was, nevertheless, from this historical process that the Christian message first emerged in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus himself did not initiate his teaching from an historical vacuum. Segundo contends that he and the early Church as well had to traverse, however rapidly, many similar attitudes reflected in the four stages we have

just described regarding Israel's tradition. He writes:

It was necessary to overcome the stage of ritualism, be it Jewish or pagan (Cf. Mk. 7:19, 2:27; Mt. 9:13, 12:1-7; Acts 10:9-16). It was necessary, likewise to overcome the narrowness of the group who knew themselves to be the new chosen people (Cf. Lk. 9:55; Jn. 9:2; Mt. 5:45; Acts 10:40-48, 11:11-18; Rom. 3:21-26; Col. 1:15-20). There had to be acquired a certain universality to save religion from becoming disincarnated and individualistic (Cf. Mt. 5:23-24; I Jn. 4:20; James 1:13-15, 1:27, 2:14-19; Rom. 8:19-23; Ef. 1:3). And finally it was necessary to overcome legalism by converting it into a creative morality (Cf. Mk. 7:15-23; Mt. 25:31-46, Jn. 13:34, 15:12-17; Gal. 3:5; Cor. 3:10-15).<sup>40</sup>

We will now consider Segundo's analysis of the 'fifth' stage of Israel's religious tradition, represented by the New Testament in the revelation of Jesus Christ. We will try to discern the novelty of this stage from the perspective of the faith traditions of Israel that we have in this part attempted to explore with Segundo.

## 2. God's Definitive Revelation in Jesus Christ

Segundo attempts to discern the novelty and basic meaning of the Christian message not only in reference to what the New Testament itself indicates, but from the educational process recorded in the Old Testament as well.

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 84-85. The biblical citations have been removed. "Hubo que sobrepasar la etapa del ritualismo, tanto judío como pagano. . . Hubo que sobrepasar la estrechez del grupo que se sabía nuevo pueblo escogido. . . Hubo que adquirir esta universalidad salvando el escollo de una religión desencarnada e individualista. . . Y hubo finalmente que superar el legalismo para convertirlo en moral del hombre creador. . . ."

Novelty will presuppose an advance, a development of what went before. It will be by comparing the new to the old that a richer conception and a more profound understanding of Christianity will be attained.

From the perspective of the New and Old Testament Segundo believes Christianity signifies a double religious revolution, referring both to the conception of God and to the conception of man and his existence in the world.<sup>41</sup> In this part of our chapter we will explore his reflections concerning both conceptions. Segundo examines their meaning in two early works, Función de la Iglesia en la Realidad Rioplatense,<sup>42</sup> where he seeks to illumine the pastoral function of the Church in Uruguay and Argentina, and Concepción Cristiana del Hombre,<sup>43</sup> where he attempts to dialogue with Marxists and existentialists concerning the Christian message. Both works have been developed in chronological proximity to each other. We will now turn to what Segundo considers to be the basic Christian conception of God revealed in the Scriptures.

---

<sup>41</sup>Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano?, p. 94.

<sup>42</sup>See especially the second chapter of this work.

<sup>43</sup>As we have already mentioned in footnote 96 of the first chapter, Concepción Cristiana del Hombre was published in 1964 but can be found as the second part of the more recent publication, ¿Que es un Cristiano?. We will henceforth refer to the former by the following: Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano?.

a. The Christian Conception of God

Segundo believes that the Christian revelation goes beyond the Old Testament by clearly placing as the condition and norm for having knowledge of the divine the human experience of love.<sup>44</sup> He maintains that God who revealed Himself in the Old Testament was shown as entering into a personal relationship with his creatures: He was just, faithful, and good. But the Christian revelation, to Segundo, went further. It affirmed that to know God it was insufficient to begin with a certain conceptual, stylized content of the term 'love' but rather placed as the condition and norm for possessing knowledge of the divine the human experience itself of love. To Segundo, the Christian message stresses that man's encounter with God is within the very dimensions of love that men share and have for one another. He will first turn, however, to the writings of John before coming to this conclusion. Reflecting the thought of Rudolph Bultmann concerning the theological density of these writings,<sup>45</sup> Segundo believes that in John's writings Christian existence is not only lived, but profoundly reflected as well, offering new dimensions to man's life in light of the revelation of Jesus Christ.

---

<sup>44</sup> Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano?, pp. 94-95.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 94. Rudolph Bultmann had described the writings of both John and Paul as "the first phenomenology of Christian existence."

He considers first the way John himself has attempted to synthesize what he has seen, heard, and touched (I John 1:1) by employing a singular expression taken from the language of human experience: "God is love" (I John 4:8, 16). In other words, to Segundo, John has taken love as the reality of man's empirical existence, amid all the other experiences that he would have chosen, to describe what has taken place in the very interior of God and what Jesus Christ has communicated to us (John 1:18).<sup>46</sup> He maintains that John appealed to this human experience of love to describe the interior life of the divinity because he had seen the God-man, Jesus Christ, suffer and die for others. God is love because He gave His life for us (I John 4:9-10, 3:16). Love, for John, is therefore giving oneself, letting oneself be truly affected by what happens to the other. God is He who gives Himself totally, without measure, who makes Himself vulnerable to the lot of those-whom He loves.

Segundo insists, however, that what is most important in John's description of God's interiority is that in loving us, God has made it possible for man to share in that which is most intimate and essential to God Himself, His divine life of love.<sup>47</sup> God places within man's limited being the extraordinary capacity to do likewise, to give himself. Self-giving, consequently, is not a natural capacity of man

---

<sup>46</sup>Segundo, Función de la Iglesia en la Realidad Rioplatense, pp. 32-33.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

but rather is of divine origin, due to God's own self-giving. Segundo writes of this divine possibility in a later work:

Man does not give himself naturally. By nature he is simply a being who needs everything and who seeks out what he lacks on every level of his existence. Because he has divine life in him, however, he is capable of taking what he has, forgetting about himself and what he lacks, and giving it to others. This possibility is so divine that John sees it as an experimental sign of the fact that we are in a new creation, that is, in the supernatural order: "We for our part have crossed over from death to life; this we know, because we love our brothers" (I John 3:14). This for him is the sign that divine life has been passed on to us, because without this life we could not have the capacity to love.<sup>48</sup>

Segundo contends, therefore, that love is the power God has given to human existence and placed in man through His own gift of self. All other images and concepts of the divine must be placed in accord with that reality of man's experience characterized by authentic self-giving. He likewise believes that there is absolutely nothing in the world which could introduce man more into the knowledge of the divine than his very capacity to give himself,<sup>49</sup> for by giving himself man penetrates the very interior of the

---

<sup>48</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 26. Even though this book was first published in Spanish in 1968 under the title Esa Comunidad Llamada Iglesia, it basically reflects the same content as Función de la Iglesia en la Realidad Rioplatense, but from the perspective of the Church universal.

<sup>49</sup>Segundo, Función de la Iglesia en la Realidad Rioplatense, p. 36.

divinity. Love, therefore, becomes the fundamental reality of history, the sacred and religious reality because it is a sharing in the intimate life of God Himself; its origin is strictly divine. Segundo writes: ". . . God is love and all effective love is turned into absolute value, into the only true and absolute of human existence."<sup>50</sup>

Segundo maintains, moreover, that God is not only the origin of all authentic love but also its object as well.<sup>51</sup> Reflecting upon the gospel of John, he discerns that the Christian message reveals something quite extraordinary: Jesus Christ had left men with only one commandment, that they should love one another as he had loved them (John 15:12). The implication of this command to Segundo is quite clear: no one can truly love, give himself, without loving at the same time God.<sup>52</sup> He who loves another loves God, not because of his intentions but because of the ineffable community of love which reigns among men and God--a community in which no one can harm another without harming at the same time God as well.<sup>53</sup> All that men do to one another is, therefore, a matter which truly affects God because of the solidarity which His love for all

---

<sup>50</sup> Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano?, p. 105. ". . . Dios es amor y que todo amor efectivo se convierte en valor absoluto, en el único verdadero valor absoluto de la existencia humana."

<sup>51</sup> Segundo, Función de la Iglesia en la Realidad Rioplatense, p. 33.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

men has created. All authentic love is directed to Him, irregardless of its intention. All authentic love knows God and enters into intimate relationship with Him. Without the real experience of love on a human scale, no man is enabled to become His intimate. It is for this reason that Segundo believes that Paul could also state the same, that he who loves has fulfilled the entire law (Rom. 13:8). Similar expressions as well can be found in other writings of the New Testament (James 1:26, 2:13 and I Peter 2:22-25, 4:8-11).<sup>54</sup>

To Segundo, the concept of God becoming vulnerable because of His love for all meets resistance with Greek philosophical thought through which the Christian God had come to be conceived in the past: the God perfectly sufficient in Himself, unable to be offended or affected by the happenings of men. In a later work, he attributes much deeper motives to men for conceiving God in such terms than the sole use of a particular philosophical language or thought.<sup>55</sup> The employment of static, reifying categories to

<sup>54</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía? II Los Principios (Montevideo: Mimeográfica "Luz," 1964), p. 73.

<sup>55</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, Our Idea of God, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1974), especially pp. 111-15, 139-42. Segundo reflects the thought of Berdyaev stressing the difference between that which can be known about God from His nature and that which can be known about Him from the way He uses His freedom, that is, from His personal history. See chapter 3 of Segundo's work, Berdiaeff: Une Réflexion Chrétienne sur la Personne (Paris: Editions Montaigne, 1963), pp. 146-76 and his article, "Padre, Hijo Espiritu: Una Libertad," in Perspectivas de Diálogo, Año 3, no. 25 (julio 1967): 148, footnote 8.

express God's reality, he believes, reveals more about men and their activity and relationships in the world than it does about the divine reality who joins Himself in solidarity with all by directing His love to all. Segundo writes: "God is . . . the great vulnerable one because He loves all men without measure and the sufferings and joys of each go directly to Him."<sup>56</sup>

This conception of God who is Love and whose activity is found within the very experience of love that men have for one another represents for Segundo the great religious revolution of Christianity, the abolition of the profane.<sup>57</sup> The transcendent invades human history, expressing itself in the spatial and temporal activities of men. The profane is abolished, however, not in favor of the religious sphere but in favor of the absolute religious value of that very reality which is called profane. The religious is already contained within the temporal, in the daily events of men where genuine love is expressed and realized, even when behind that love, there is no awareness of the religious value and meaning it embraces or embodies.

---

<sup>56</sup>Segundo, Función de la Iglesia en la Realidad Rioplatense, p. 34. "Dios es . . . el gran vulnerable, porque quiere a todos los hombres con amor sin medida y los sufrimientos y las alegrías de cada uno van en derechura a El."

<sup>57</sup>Segundo, Función de la Iglesia en la Realidad Rioplatense, p. 35.

b. The Christian Conception of Man

The Christian God who loves men by giving Himself will imply a certain conception of man. Segundo affirms, however, that the Christian revelation does not provide an anthropology, a finished picture of man, but rather enlightens him concerning his human existence.<sup>58</sup> God's love for man reveals man's earthly mission as a summons to love his fellow men. Segundo believes that John, in his writings, actually appears to relegate love of God to a secondary place by stressing the primacy of loving one's fellow men.<sup>59</sup> No one can claim to love God if he does not love his brothers (I John 4:20). It is this love which is the test and proof of the other. All love for the invisible God will be suspect unless first tested by the love of the brother.

Men are therefore called to practice their religious duty to God by loving one another--a love made possible by God's own gift of Himself. Segundo writes: "In this way, paradoxically, the Christian religion appears to de-absolutize

---

<sup>58</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 35. Revelation provides man with an understanding of life by offering a meaning to man's existence. In this Segundo concurs with Edward Schillebeeckx, citing his article, "Foi Chrétienne et attente terrestre," in Schema XIII: Commentaires (Tours: Mame), p. 147. Here Schillebeeckx states that anthropology in its formal structure is fashioned by the terrestrial experiences of men. Revelation, in turn, invites man to carry out his mission of love within the realm of this anthropology.

<sup>59</sup>Segundo, Función de la Iglesia en la Realidad Rioplatense, p. 34.

God so as to absolutize man."<sup>60</sup> God does not wipe away man's history nor does He alienate or benumb man precisely because man's efforts of love to build up the historical existence of others manifest the sincerity and genuineness of his love for God.

Reflecting once again upon the writings of John, Segundo dwells upon the necessarily 'materialistic' note of all genuine love, implying that love cannot rest solely on the level of intention. Because God has actually given Himself to man in Jesus Christ, man is called upon to do the same to his fellow men. His love is to be real, manifested in concrete deed (I John 3:18). Segundo contends that for John, the main thing is to practice self-giving because the man who practices self-giving to any degree exercises the divine life that is in him (I John 4:7).<sup>61</sup> He believes, therefore, that what matters most to John is not the object of love but the fact that it is really practiced. It is for this reason, he contends, that John can logically assert that if God so loved us, we in turn are bound to love one another (I John 4:11, 3:16).

Man is therefore called to give himself concretely, in deed, and respond to the real necessities of his fellow men. The efficacy of man's love is directed toward the real needs of others which elicit it. The decisive efficacy

---

<sup>60</sup>Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano?, p. 97. "Y así, paradójicamente, la religión cristiana parece como desabsolutizara a Dios para absolutizar al hombre."

<sup>61</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 26.

of the Christian religion, therefore, is the actual charity of men responding to their fellow men. In authentic Christianity, Segundo contends, no problem is solved by replacing this efficacy with any other.<sup>62</sup> No form of ritual can substitute for the historical efficacy of love. Christianity becomes a responsibility oriented toward the construction of human history. The Absolute is given through love so that men might live their historical existence through His gift.

Segundo, moreover, insists that to separate the sacred from man's history and temporal projects eventually leads to a magical conception of divine activity and a degradation of man's own involvement with history. He writes:

Sooner or later every separation between the sacred and the profane leads to magic. Why? Because in separating the two realms, it is the realm of the sacred that is given value. And to attain this realm with its values one logically establishes means that have no weight in the realm of the profane.<sup>63</sup>

Christianity, accordingly, invalidates any religion which pretends to introduce supplementary, mysterious, esoteric conditions to man's salvation. God's saving activity is found within man's historical activity of love. Segundo maintains that to search for a divine efficacy in procedures that have no relationship to this historical activity tends

---

<sup>62</sup>Segundo, Concepción Cristiana del Hombre, p. 101.

<sup>63</sup>Segundo, The Sacraments Today, p. 14.

toward magic. He writes:

In the last analysis, magic is the absence of historical realism. It is invoking ahistorical powers to solve the problems of history. So magic is any and every procedure which rejects the criteria of historical causality because it sees them as merely human and sees God as someone who operates through other mechanisms.<sup>64</sup>

To Segundo, therefore, there is an intimate tie-up between God's saving activity and human history. In Christianity salvation is given to those, with or without reference to Christ or God, who love concretely their brothers.<sup>65</sup> Man's historical activity in seeking and achieving a love which efficaciously responds to others is already the progressive realization of his future life with God beyond death where that same love will be realized without limits.<sup>66</sup>

c. Conclusions

Segundo believes that the Christian revelation goes beyond the Old Testament by stressing that man's encounter with God is within the human experience of love itself, which becomes the condition and norm for knowing Him. The Christian conception of God is essentially historical in

---

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>65</sup>Segundo, Concepción Cristiana del Hombre, p. 102.

<sup>66</sup>Segundo reflects upon the 'historical' dimensions of eternal life in two articles under the same title: "La Vida Eterna," in Perspectivas de Diálogo, Montevideo, Centro Pedro Fábri, Año 2, no. 14 (junio 1967): 83-89 and Año 2, no. 15 (julio 1967): 109-18.

that it affirms that God reveals Himself as love in the very history of man. Man's encounter with the divine, consequently, is within the historical dimensions of his very humanity, not in the skies or in the beyond. The God who is Love is not separated from the temporal activities of men, nor can man's historical problems be solved by turning to ritual and cultic procedures in ways which are unrelated to his very efforts of love. Moreover, no human group can presume to locate God or His activity solely within its own particular interests and designs. God's universality encompasses all men for all have been and are the object of His love. All are called to exercise His divine life, and the criterion for its exercise is that men love in deed, serving the concrete needs of the other. Man shapes his destiny through an historical (horizontal) involvement with the temporal sphere which has already been invaded by the transcendent through the activity of man's love. Man's future life with God is the limitless realization of that very activity.

We will now turn to the third and final part of this chapter to discern Segundo's attempt to clarify the essential relationship that exists between human freedom and the God of love. We have already noted in his reflections concerning the fourth stage of Israel's faith tradition that the significance of human freedom resided in its capacity to determine man's final destiny before God. Freedom was consequently experienced as a test, as a risk. It

will be Segundo's contention, however, that in the Christian image of man, freedom is not to be looked upon as sheer risk, that is, as merely the choice man makes in deciding whether or not to accept his vocation and responsibility to love, thereby determining his final destiny.

### 3. The Finality of Human Freedom

Our purpose here is to expose the general dimensions of Segundo's thought concerning the God who is Love and human freedom, so as to clarify what he considers to be the finality or purpose of man's liberty. He explores the subject briefly in the second part of his work, ¿Qué es un Cristiano?,<sup>67</sup> and will dedicate an extensive chapter of a later work to the topic.<sup>68</sup> Segundo's reflections on human freedom, however, are heavily influenced by the thought of Nicolas Berdyaev whose conception of the human person from a Christian perspective became the subject matter of Segundo's major doctoral dissertation.<sup>69</sup> Segundo himself will make occasional references throughout his writings to Berdyaev's thought, and we shall attempt to discern his explicit influences on Segundo's writings dealing with the finality of man's freedom. If, to Segundo, Christianity is the religion of authentic love, then both the freedom of

<sup>67</sup> Segundo, Concepción Cristiana del Hombre, pp. 110-16.

<sup>68</sup> Segundo, Our Idea of God, chapter 3 and Clarifications, pp. 98-145.

<sup>69</sup> Segundo, Berdiaeff: Une Réflexion Chrétienne sur la Personne.

God and man is a necessary dimension to love's reality and, indeed, forms a vital part in the understanding of the Christian message itself.

a. The Value of Human Liberty Before God

Segundo first explores the meaning of the Christian revelation of the God who is Love with regard to divine freedom. He contends that the Christian message reveals a God who freely loved and gave Himself up (Gal. 2:20) despite the fact that He did not have to by His nature.<sup>70</sup> The Christian God is a personal reality whose nature is not a mere mechanism that allows men to predict its functioning. The mystery of His being does not only embrace His nature but His freedom as well. Segundo writes: "A person does not 'function,' a person decides. Hence only a 'revelation' of what he has decided gives us access to what he is at bottom."<sup>71</sup>

Segundo will affirm, therefore, that there is a dividing line between that which can be known about God by virtue of His nature and that which can be known about Him from His personal history, that is, from the way He has freely decided to relate and reveal Himself to man. Reason cannot recount this history by virtue of God's nature alone precisely because it wells up from the mystery of His

---

<sup>70</sup>Segundo, Our Idea of God, p. 105.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 106.

freedom. Segundo writes:

Nature can be the object of positive rational knowledge. But that which relates to liberty, history and personal reality calls for a rational knowledge that is real but negative. It must recognize a limit beyond which reason cannot go without contradicting itself.<sup>72</sup>

Segundo will stress the need for a negative or apophatic theology, following Berdyaev's own thought,<sup>73</sup> for such a theology, he contends, will allow room for a divine relationship to man based on liberty and will say 'no' to the tendency of reason to reduce God solely to the realm of a divine nature wherein God's personal history (of freedom) is not seriously considered.

The consequences, to Segundo, of employing only a positive, rational approach to God, which considers the divine reality more from His nature than from the activity of His freedom, ultimately leads to the questioning of the value of human freedom itself.<sup>74</sup> The rationalist portrait of God becomes that of a being who remains immutable and content, no matter what may be the result of man's history and the use to which human liberty is put. No one or no

---

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., pp. 84-87. For Berdyaev, positive rational theology knows only a God who has been transformed into an object. Apophatic theology attempts to get beyond this objectification of God by stressing God's personal and free relationship with men in love. See Segundo, Berdiaeff: Une Réflexion Chrétienne sur la Personne, chapter 3, particularly pp. 133-34.

<sup>74</sup>Segundo, Our Idea of God, p. 106.

thing can add anything to the infinite happiness and joy of the divine Being or affect Him in any way. Human freedom thus can only be conceived as a test, shouldered by man in his struggle to attain the true Good which is God.

It is for this reason, to Segundo, that existentialism has generally placed man's freedom in opposition to God.<sup>75</sup> It rejects a God who degrades human liberty by making it a cruel test for man, sadly separating him from his finality and devoid of value for his world and history. Human freedom, thus conceived, becomes left without any positive ties to a God infinitely satisfied with Himself, and yet a God who calls man to submit to Himself and to His laws for the attainment of salvation. Segundo contends that existentialism prefers to acknowledge what it conceives as the only positive value that justifies the risk and pain which liberty entails--the capacity to create something new and original, adding to the totality of being.<sup>76</sup> A similar response is given by Teilhard de Chardin when he himself questions the value of man's liberty before God: "What is the point of attaining 'beatitude' if, in the final reckoning, we have made no absolute contribution, through our lives, to

---

<sup>75</sup>Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano?, pp. 112-16. See also Segundo's Our Idea of God, pp. 106-7. In this work he describes the problem raised by Sartre in his play, The Flies, where human liberty is conceived in two ways: as a test shouldered by man in his struggle to attain the Good which is God or as a creative power, capable of producing something truly novel or original, contributing to the totality of being.

<sup>76</sup>Segundo, Our Idea of God, p. 107.

the totality of being?"<sup>77</sup>

And yet, for Segundo, it is precisely man's liberty, understood as a creative capacity, which is most compatible with the Christian God who reveals Himself as love. He contends that genuine love always begins by wishing free the one loved as a condition of its own authenticity.<sup>78</sup> God's love searches for man's free response, but this response on man's part represents for God something utterly irreplaceable and unique precisely because it is free and uncoerced. God had created man so as to receive from him a uniquely creative response in love--something that God Himself must wait for as novelty, something which He could not even give to Himself.<sup>79</sup>

It is precisely for this reason that Segundo believes that God has given the entire world to man who stands before the rest of creation like an artist before the material

---

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 108. Segundo is quoting a hitherto unpublished article of Teilhard, "Christianisme et évolution," (1945), found in Emile Rideau's work, La Pensée du Père Teilhard de Chardin (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1965), p. 379.

<sup>78</sup>Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano?, p. 114. Following the thought of Berdyaev, Segundo contends that human freedom is justified before the God who is Love, for the former is the condition of any authentic adoration and love of the divine on man's part. See his work, Berdiaeff: Une Réflexion Chrétienne sur la Personne, pp. 99-101, 134.

<sup>79</sup>Segundo, Our Idea of God, pp. 102-11. Here Segundo reflects Berdyaev's thought which states that man's free activity offers to God a new structure of being, something absolutely new through which man gives to God that which even God cannot give to Himself. See Segundo's work, Berdiaeff: Une Réflexion Chrétienne sur la Personne, especially pp. 127-28.

components of his future creative work.<sup>80</sup> Man's freedom realizes itself in the world which in turn becomes the creative expression of man's own self-gift to God. For Segundo, this freedom of man, situated before a world given to him by God, represents another important religious revolution of Christianity. He writes:

The second religious revolution of Christianity appears in a certain sense likened to that of the Promethean myth of taking the world from the gods and giving it to man. Only here no one takes it from God. Rather it is God himself who has given it to man. . . . human liberty is worth more than all the structures of the universe.<sup>81</sup>

To Segundo, the world cannot represent the unchangeable and static order to which human liberty must merely submit but rather becomes the medium through which man creatively and freely responds to God in love, offering to Him something new and irreplaceable.<sup>82</sup> Man's relationship to God, consequently, cannot be defined solely in terms of his submission to nature, structure, or law, since it is the latter which can easily enslave and make man unfree. Segundo contends, rather, that the Christian God is He who calls man to freedom--a freedom which is meant to run the

<sup>80</sup>Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano?, p. 114.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 111. "La segunda revolución religiosa del cristianismo se parece, en cierto sentido, a la de Prometeo: quitarle al mundo a los dioses para dárselo al hombre. Solo aquí nadie le quita nada a Dios. Es Dios mismo el que lo ha dado. . . . la libertad del hombre vale más que todas las estructuras del universo."

<sup>82</sup>Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano?, pp. 110-11.

risk of adventure and creation.<sup>83</sup> He furthermore maintains that Paul himself had to warn Christians about submitting their freedom in a servile way to the elements of this world (Gal. 4:1-7).<sup>84</sup> All of created reality has been given to man, and man with his own freedom gives to each element its proper value. To become enslaved to any element is to offend the God of love. Everything must be placed at man's disposal, at the service of his freedom. Man's relationship to God is not measured by his mere passive acquiescence to anything or anyone but rather, to Segundo, is defined by the exercise of man's very freedom in the only way possible, through love. We will now explore this facet of Segundo's thought.

b. The Realization of Human Liberty

Segundo contends that man's relationship to the God of love is not best defined as submission, but rather as a dialogue between God's liberty and man's own. He writes:

God reveals Himself as a Thou vis-à-vis man, not as some vague dimension or transcendence. . . . He is a personal reality who summons us to dialogue between his liberty and our own.<sup>85</sup>

Segundo turns to the writings of John and discovers the Evangelist had sensed Christ's divinity, not in the

<sup>83</sup>Segundo, Our Idea of God, p. 133.

<sup>84</sup>Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano?, pp. 110-11.

<sup>85</sup>Segundo, Our Idea of God, p. 86.

indifference of one who possesses everything, but in the love that turned itself wholly to man.<sup>86</sup> God's love turned to man's liberty as something creative, to his history as the bearer of something unique in the eyes of One who by His nature could have prescinded from it. Jesus Christ who came from the interior of God revealed God in His personal intimacy, in His love--a love which forms the basis of His personal and free relationship with all men.

Segundo contends that it is precisely God's love, His self-gift, that makes man's freedom possible, for man realizes his freedom only when he gives himself to others, only when he himself freely elects love.<sup>87</sup> And it is because man's capacity for self-giving is made possible by God's own prior gift of Self, Segundo can therefore write: ". . . liberty is the gift of God Himself, the presence of divine life within us."<sup>88</sup> Consequently, human freedom, for Segundo, is not constituted solely by man's faculty to choose, that is, by his free will, but rather is realized only when men freely elect to implicate themselves in the lives of others through love and service. He writes:

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 111. Segundo here maintains that according to John the Evangelist, Christ's glory and divinity were most revealed at the hour of his passion when the extreme measure of his love was experienced (John 13:31-33). God's love surrendered itself to man's liberty.

<sup>87</sup>Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano?, p. 114.

<sup>88</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, Grace and the Human Condition, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973), p. 43.

In reality . . . . man's free will chooses between free, personal, supernatural love and the natural, pre-human egotism that is devoid of liberty and personality.<sup>89</sup>

In other words, man can freely refuse to be free, for liberty is chosen and must be chosen continually. In this Segundo follows closely the thought of Berdyaev who makes a clear distinction between man's free will and man's freedom-- a freedom which is only realized and made possible through man's free acceptance of God's life.<sup>90</sup>

Segundo can, therefore, maintain that even when man freely chooses evil, when he refuses to love, such free choice is not a realization of man's liberty but rather man's enslavement to the impersonal forces of egotism and the determinisms of nature which condition his activity. He will, however, turn especially to the writings of Paul to discern the redemptive quality of God's love, leading man out of an enslaving natural condition into freedom.

To Segundo, the entire thought of Paul revolves upon two constitutive forces found in man's structure, spirit and flesh, wherein is incarnated the activity of God's love.<sup>91</sup> He believes that for Paul the flesh represents the

---

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>90</sup> To Berdyaev, freedom presupposes man's faculty of choosing but this faculty, in itself, does not constitute freedom but only its condition. See Segundo's work, Berdiaeff: Une Réflexion Chrétienne sur la Personne, pp. 104-5.

<sup>91</sup> Segundo, La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía?, II p. 44.

natural structure of the creature, submitting man to the world and to nature. The fleshy things of the world dominate man both from within and without, seeking to determine his existence (Rom. 1:28-30; Gal. 5:19-21). By himself man is incapable of realizing his loving intentions (Rom. 7:14-25). But Segundo maintains that Paul also recognized another force within man called spirit or reason (in the Greek, nous) which represents an interior motivation to do the good, an incipient freedom (Rom. 7:22-23).<sup>92</sup> Man, however, in his natural capacity is enslaved to the flesh and cannot carry out the good which he intends and wills. It is only because of God's grace through Jesus Christ that man is rescued from this enslavement (Rom. 7:25). Segundo contends, therefore, that the starting point where God's love finds man and rescues him is in a state of non-liberty. It is precisely through God's self-gift that man is led to freedom. For man to renounce this gift of God is to cede to the control of nature, to the forces of impersonality and egotism. Segundo writes that this redemptive love of God is:

. . . a reality operative in humanity. . . its efficacy does not reside precisely in making us such and such but seeing to it that our liberty, like artistic inspiration, penetrates and suffuses the imposing wall of forces which seem destined to wreck it.<sup>93</sup>

---

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 41. See also Segundo's work, Grace and the Human Condition, pp. 22-23.

<sup>93</sup>Segundo, Grace and the Human Condition, p. 145.

It becomes apparent why, to Segundo, man does not have to sacrifice his freedom by submitting to God as someone who is exterior or alien to him. The only way that man can emerge from his bondage to nature and the world and realize his destiny is to elect freely love. Man's freedom realizes itself precisely in the love that God has given freely to man through His own self-gift. It becomes the gift of God Himself--a freedom which lives in and by love.<sup>94</sup>

Prior to his ordination to the priesthood, Segundo had come to the conclusion that every good act of man is supernatural when genuinely performed in the service of others--that God's gift is universally operative in all men.<sup>95</sup> Analyzing the decretals of the Second Synod of Orange of 529, which were responses to the Pelagianist and Semi-Pelagianist controversies of the era, he concludes that the Church had maintained that God's gift was absolutely essential to man if he were to practice the divine law (of love) that brings him to God, and that man relying solely on

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., p. 75, footnote 14. This is the conclusion that Berdyaev arrived at, defining man's relationship to God as an interior relationship. There can be no opposition between human freedom and God, but on the contrary, mutual implication. True freedom proceeds from grace. See Segundo's work, Berdiaeff: Une Réflexion Chrétienne sur la personne, pp. 103-9, 125.

<sup>95</sup>One of Segundo's professors of theology in the seminary, Leopold Malevez, had led Segundo to discover the universality of God's grace operative in all men while still insisting on its quality as gift. See Malevez's article, "La gratuité du surnaturel," in Nouvelle Revue Théologique, vol. 85, no. 6 (juin 1953): 561-86.

his own powers of free will alone, unaided by God, could do nothing to achieve salvation.<sup>96</sup> Segundo furthermore maintains that what the Church had implied in this response was that love itself was a faith-beginning, for all of love's virtues were not only a preparation for the Christian revelation but, because already performed under the influence of God's gift, faith itself in its beginning stages.<sup>97</sup> He would later distinguish this initial faith from explicit Christian faith by defining the latter as 'love in possession of its mystery.' We will consider this more specifically in the next chapter.

For Segundo, therefore, the realization of man's freedom is not solely dependent upon man's use of free will but upon God's prior gift of self in love which capacitates man to respond freely through his own gift of self. He defines man's freedom as the possibility of defining himself in the creative work of love,<sup>98</sup> and freedom becomes an absolute value in itself. Because of God's gift, man is enabled to journey forward from his natural

---

<sup>96</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, pp. 55-57. Segundo has written no work specifically on this subject but uses the conclusions he had reached in the seminary to strengthen his theological reasoning regarding the close relationship that exists between God's life or grace and the realization of man's freedom. See also his work, Grace and the Human Condition, pp. 46-50.

<sup>97</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 56. For an excellent treatment of this topic, see Harry McSorley, Luther: Right or Wrong? (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1969), pp. 117-22.

<sup>98</sup>Segundo, Grace and the Human Condition, p. 163.

human condition to freedom. Without this gift of God man would be helplessly dominated and enslaved to the impersonal forces of nature and the world which act in and on him.

But man's nature is surpassed by God's gift--a nature which remains the same but now penetrated by freedom to the extent that man himself chooses love.

And yet, for Segundo, man can only realize his freedom in the world and in nature. The Christian God calls him to fashion a history of love in the world, a history which is unedited and not determined by God beforehand because it is constructed in and through man's free gift of self. Man himself must invent the road through his free and therefore uniquely creative response.<sup>99</sup> Herein lies the profound value of man's freedom--not in the risk of determining his final destiny before God's summons but in offering to God something fresh and new, a world recreated through man's efforts of love.

### c. Conclusions

To Segundo, God not only wishes that man be free but that the realization of man's freedom represents the very accomplishment of His love. The Christian God searches for a unique and creative response from man which becomes irreplaceable. Man in turn must realize his response in a world given to him by God, fashioning it anew through his

---

<sup>99</sup> Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano?, p. 113.

efforts and history of love. The realization of man's freedom in the world must, of necessity, become implicated in the lives of others precisely because it accomplishes itself in and through love. And yet it is God Himself who capacitates man to exercise that love through His prior gift of self. The Christian God, therefore, is one who nurtures man's freedom--a freedom meant, in turn, to run the risk of adventure and creation.

In our next chapter we will explore Segundo's thought concerning the reality of the Church as the community of men and women who are conscious of the dimensions of love which the Christian revelation makes known. In that exploration, we will necessarily inquire into Segundo's understanding of Jesus Christ himself as the particular manifestation of God's love, the mystery of His self-giving, to which man has always belonged and in which all his activity has been inserted.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE CHURCH: A REALITY PARTICULAR AND UNIVERSAL

Only after having explored what he considers the essential core of Christianity will Segundo attempt to understand and reflect upon the Church herself as the community of men and women who share through faith that particular vision of God and its corresponding conception of man which the Christian revelation makes known. We have already, in the preceding chapter, alluded to the fact that Segundo had discovered two distinct and opposed conceptions of the Church operative among committed Catholics in the geographical area of the Plate River which borders the countries of Argentina and Uruguay.<sup>1</sup> To determine which, if any, of the two conceptions of the Church was valid, Segundo first turned to the Christian revelation in an attempt to establish criteria for making a sound judgment. In this chapter we will explore these two different conceptions of the Church from the reflections of Segundo to

---

<sup>1</sup>As the title of his book reveals, La Función de la Iglesia en la Realidad Rioplatense (Montevideo: Barreiro y Ramos, 1962), Segundo's principal purpose is to examine the role of the Church in the geographical area of the Plate River. His reflections, however, could easily be extended to the Church universal because of the breadth of their theological reasoning.

establish the perspective from which he will later develop his own theological understanding of the ecclesial reality. Secondly we will analyze his thought concerning the dimensions of both the Incarnational Mystery and the Church herself. In the final section we will attempt to discern the relationship Segundo conceives as existing between the Church and man's salvation.

### 1. Two Differing Conceptions of the Church

The first conception of the Church which Segundo discerns as operative in the two countries could be labeled 'absolutist.' It is a position which understands the Church as possessing the only absolute value and function in human history.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, all other problems of mankind, all other areas of life must be subordinated to membership in the Church where alone salvation can be attained and realized. Under this conception, to belong to the Church means more than just a vague, implicit faith, for baptism is also required whereby one's entrance into the Church is made visible and externalized. It is a question, then, of becoming a member of the Church through faith and baptism and remaining 'alive' through sacramental participation and a life of Christian conduct. For the vast majority of mankind who find themselves outside the visible Church, exceptions are made generally through the theological justification of baptism by desire. Such cases,

---

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

however, are considered exceptional, for the normal realization and attainment of salvation is through visible and active membership within the institutional Church. It is the Church, therefore, and only the Church which saves. According to this conception, the very meaning of the Church's absolute necessity for the salvation of mankind would be called into question if it were thought that men could normally be saved outside her visible community.<sup>3</sup>

The logical consequences of this 'absolutist' vision of the Church become readily apparent. The Church must somehow facilitate the entrance of the masses into her institution. To Segundo, Christendom itself represents most pointedly the Church's attempt to do precisely that: to take in masses of people, applying to Christian membership the same mechanisms that helped secure membership in civil society, hoping to achieve a parallel result.<sup>4</sup> A minimum of requirements is established so as to gain the greatest possible number of people. The Church's universal dimension is understood in quantitative terms, and her activity anxiously seeks the inclusion of all those outside her fold through baptism.

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Christendom and its implied conception of the Church will be treated more fully in chapter five of this work where we will explore what Segundo believes is the intrinsic minoritarian character of the Church. Segundo has described in depth the Church of Christendom in his work, La Cristiandad, ¿Una Utopía? I Los Hechos (Montevideo: Mimeográfica "Luz," 1964). See also his work, The Community Called Church, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973), pp. 44-49.

Another important consequence flowing from this particular conception of the Church is the separation of the religious from the profane.<sup>5</sup> It is the Church alone that possesses decisive importance for humanity because only she possesses absolute value in the very salvation that she offers to mankind. The profane and temporal history of man itself becomes stripped of any decisive value unless imbued with the supernatural life of Christian moral conduct. Moreover, the valuation of human activity with regard to results is replaced by the Christian valuation of correct intention, that is, the intention flowing from the supernatural concerns of meriting eternal life. The Church becomes the sphere of the sacred, and only within her precincts do men have access to the only and absolute value of human history, salvation.

Segundo, however, is careful to point out that this absolutist position of the Church has apparently strong theological foundations.<sup>6</sup> After all, Christ had enjoined his Apostles to go to the entire world and preach the good news. Those who believe and are baptized would be saved (Mark 16:15). This line of thought concerning the attainment of salvation is found in other parts of the New Testament as well. When Paul is asked what must be done to be saved, his reply in Acts 6:31 is faith in Jesus

---

<sup>5</sup>Segundo, La Función de la Iglesia en la Realidad Rioplatense, p. 41.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 8-9.

Christ, with baptism following. Faith and baptism, that is, belonging to the Church, appears necessary and essential for salvation. To Segundo, it was undoubtedly the necessity of the Church for salvation that occasioned in early Christian tradition the difficulty voiced by men like Celsus and Porphyry concerning the destiny of those who had died before Christ.<sup>7</sup> The Church had arrived on the scene very late for humanity's salvation. And yet it was the formula "outside the Church, no salvation" that would be enshrined as the traditional teaching of the Church.<sup>8</sup>

The second position or conception of the Church that Segundo discerns in the activity of Christians in the geographical area of the Plate River might be called 'relativist.' It is a position which maintains the relative value of the institutional Church as possessing a function which is merely one among many in society.<sup>9</sup> The Church represents the religious element of the social reality, but there are many elements which lead to the absolute, that is, to salvation. Under this conception what is stressed is the charity of men and women seeking to help their neighbor

---

<sup>7</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, "La Función de la Iglesia," in Diálogo, no. 2 (febrero 1966): 5. See also, Henri de Lubac, Catholicism, trans. by Lancelot Sheppard (London: Burns, Oates and Washborne, 1950), chapter 8.

<sup>8</sup> For a relatively recent and very thorough study of the axiom, "outside the Church, no salvation," see Jerome Theisen, The Ultimate Church and the Promise of Salvation (Collegeville, Minn.: St. John's University Press, 1976).

<sup>9</sup> Segundo, Función de la Iglesia en la Realidad Rioplatense, p. 7.

concretely in deed. The relativist view is critical of the absolutist position because it sees in the latter a kind of duplicity or play acting which does not take the terrestrial history of man seriously. Rather than stressing the supernatural intentions of men, the relativist position emphasizes the actual efficacy of man's activity in serving the needs and alleviating the injustices suffered by others. The decisive element in history, therefore, is that men practice charity and respond in diverse ways to the given needs of society. The Church represents the problems and solutions of only one sector of the social reality.

To Segundo, this second conception of the Church tends to view the temporal and secular affairs of men as autonomous.<sup>10</sup> Within this position, in fact, the institutional Church is often viewed as a stumbling block impeding dialogue and the transformation of the social order. It frankly questions the need and importance of the institutional Church, for the decisive reality is that Christ's charity be practiced and that Christians fully participate in the temporal history of men without being unduly constrained by Church leaders or the ecclesial community itself.

According to the relativist position, therefore, the institutional Church does not possess the decisive importance for mankind that the first conception affords her. In fact, her very existence becomes questioned. Those who believe in Christ are simply called to humanize the

---

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

structures and life of society through their efforts of love and service and join their fellow men wherever similar efforts are being realized. The emphasis is no longer upon winning over converts for Christ by extending the membership of the Church through baptism. All public and social pressure to gain the masses' entrance into the Church is renounced. Salvation is not confined to the institutional Church, and consequently there is no pressing anxiety to gain the allegiance of the vast numbers who find themselves living outside of her boundaries.

Segundo, moreover, will point out another line of thought found in the gospels that seems to offer justification for relativizing the importance of the institutional Church.<sup>11</sup> Christ speaks to his disciples concerning the final judgment of God and the criterion by which God is to render His verdict: the charity offered and practiced to the hungry, thirsty, alone, and mistreated (Matthew 25:31-41). And Christ's language implies that such charity merits God Himself as a fair recompense. Here there is no mention of faith, baptism or, for that matter, the Church herself. All appear to be judged by one criterion, the actual practice of charity toward the needy. As we have already seen in the previous chapter, to Segundo, the writings of John appear to give the same importance to love.

Segundo, however, recognizes that these two distinct and seemingly opposed conceptions of the Church are.

---

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

frequently found mixed together in the lives of committed Christians and often are a source of conflict for them in regard to their allegiance both to the world and to the Church herself. It is a conflict he believes that Teilhard de Chardin has described rather well and succinctly in his Divine Milieu.<sup>12</sup> The first conception of the Church posits the ecclesial institution as the carrier of absolute value and as possessing the only decisive significance for man and his history. The second conception conceives man's real efforts of love as absolute and leading him to salvation. The ecclesial institution is seen as secondary and its decisive importance for mankind questioned.

And yet it is Segundo's contention that these two criteria for salvation, belonging to the Church through faith and baptism and effective love, do not contradict one another because they both proceed from the same Christ.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 11. "Depending on the greater or less vitality of the nature of the individual, this conflict is in danger of finding its solution in one of the following ways: either the Christian will repress his taste for the tangible and force himself to confine his taste to purely religious objects, and he will try to live in a world that he has divinized by banishing the largest possible number of earthly objects; or else, harassed by that inward conflict which hampers him, he will dismiss the evangelical counsels and decide to lead what seems to him a complete and human life; or else, again, and this is the most usual case, he will give up any attempt to make sense of his situation; he will never belong wholly to God nor wholly to things; incomplete in his own eyes, and insecure in the eyes of his fellows, he will gradually acquiesce in a double life." Teilhard de Chardin, The Divine Milieu, trans. by Norman Denny (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 52.

<sup>13</sup>Segundo, Función de la Iglesia en la Realidad Rioplatense, p. 44.

But if they together are not contradictory, it will be incumbent upon him to show the necessity and significance of the Church to what he has previously described as the essential core of Christianity--authentic love. To Segundo, it is precisely the universal perspective on salvation--charity operative in the hearts of all men--that clears the way for understanding the significance and necessity of the Church for mankind.<sup>14</sup> In doing so, he will try to show the weaknesses of the two conceptions of the Church that we have just described while retaining the importance of both criteria for salvation.

Segundo will proceed by first discerning what he considers to be the dimensions of the Incarnational Mystery of Jesus Christ himself, believing that the Church is best defined as the expression of that very mystery. He will then seek to clarify and define the Church's own dimensions in relationship to her source and founder. He treats these aspects most specifically in his book, The Community Called Church.<sup>15</sup> We will, however, be making references to what Segundo had written before and after this publication both to clarify and at times to show the development of his thought.

---

<sup>14</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup>See footnote 48 of chapter two of this work for a clarification of this book.

## 2. The Dimensions of the Incarnational Mystery

We have already explored Segundo's understanding of Christianity as the religion of authentic love. In Christianity, salvation is given to those, with or without reference to Christ, who have loved concretely their brothers.<sup>16</sup> Because of the decisive importance of love for salvation, Segundo is led to formulate a crucial question: how could Christ come so belatedly to mankind and be its only Savior if he did not essentially modify man's possibilities for salvation?<sup>17</sup> Searching for an answer, he turns to the writings of Paul whom he believes describes Christ's work not only as redemption or salvation but the revelation of redemption as well.

Segundo contends that for Paul it was through Christ that God's gift or grace was operating from the beginning of time, but a gift only revealed through Christ's appearance in the flesh (II Tim. 1:9-10).<sup>18</sup> It is for this reason, Segundo maintains, that Paul can describe Christ's coming and revelation in the flesh also as knowledge of God's hidden plan or purpose for humanity (Eph. 1:1-10, 3:1-21).<sup>19</sup> In this way, through the Incarnation,

<sup>16</sup> See chapter two, p. 83 of this work.

<sup>17</sup> Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano? (Montevideo: Mosca Hnos., 1971), p. 103.

<sup>19</sup> Segundo, The Community Called Church, pp. 28-29.

Jesus Christ makes man's supreme calling clear and reveals that man is borne by the love of God, a love which calls man into adoptive sonship and which is the medium through which the unity of everything is achieved. But even before his appearance in the flesh, it was through Christ that God's gift was operating within humanity. Segundo writes:

Through Christ, God gave every man the possibility of loving others, and he joined all men and every individual in solidarity. He thus put love in everyone's hands as the divine instrument of salvation. This possibility is as vast and as ancient as humanity itself. Through Christ it reaches all men.<sup>20</sup>

To Segundo, consequently, the Incarnation of Christ makes known and reveals a universal mystery--God loving and operating in humanity from beginning to end. Through Jesus Christ the 'instrument' at work in God's activity with humanity is revealed. Segundo writes concerning the Incarnation:

God opened up the mystery of his being to us in order to show us a total and intimate collaboration in a history of love that is our own history.<sup>21</sup>

Consequently, Segundo maintains that Jesus Christ teaches man what already is the reality to which he belongs and in

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>21</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, Our Idea of God, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1974), pp. 63-66. Here Segundo is reflecting upon the manner in which the God who is Love presents Himself to us, as a community of three persons whose absolute unity of being flows from the complete and perfect love they share with one another. Segundo considers that the divine society of three persons is God's personal history, freely revealed to man.

which man and all his activity is inserted.

Segundo, however, is careful to point out the particularity and uniqueness of the Incarnational Event, for with the Son's becoming man, the inauguration of the era of the fulfilment of God's plan is established.<sup>22</sup> Christ joins himself in intimate solidarity with human life and human realities. He links his divine destiny with the destiny of all his brothers, however lowly they may be. He accepts all the limitations which historical experience imposes on any man--the limitations of being born within a particular race of a given country in a given moment of time. Segundo expresses the Incarnational Event as the fullest interiorization of God within human history.<sup>23</sup> In this way he believes that in Jesus Christ is realized the fullness of the covenant--the closest proximity of God who becomes both one with mankind and one of mankind. Through the Incarnation God inserts Himself in history without any reservations and directs His love to all without any trace of egotism.

Moreover, Segundo believes that the particularity of the Incarnational Event can only be understood fully as the intimate solidarity that God establishes between Himself and sinful humanity.<sup>24</sup> It is only through the paschal mystery that the intrinsic dimensions of God's love are made known to men. Segundo contends that through this mystery

---

<sup>22</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 13.

<sup>23</sup>Segundo, Our Idea of God, pp. 26-27.

<sup>24</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, pp. 14-15.

God becomes love for mankind to the point where He suffers and dies, giving up His very life for men.<sup>25</sup> And yet in that act of giving up His life is revealed the very power of love over all the corruptible forces of sin, including death.<sup>26</sup> It is Christ's resurrection which reveals that the ultimate results of all men's efforts of love are sure, that none of their labors of love is ever lost in the very history of love they share with God.<sup>27</sup> To Segundo, it is consequently the paschal mystery of the Incarnational Event which reveals to men the depth of God's love and the power of His life.

Segundo, therefore, considers that the Incarnation possesses two dimensions, one universal, the other particular. On the universal plane, Christ's redemptive work operates from the beginning of humanity to its end. Through Christ God has always been involved with human history, collaborating with men in their history of love. On the

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 25-26.

<sup>26</sup> Segundo considers sin as the denial of man's destiny, which is full participation in God's life. Ibid., pp. 14-15. In another work, he describes the reality of sin from an evolutionary perspective, stating that sin, unlike love, is the facile, precipitate synthesis of elements focused around oneself, a ceding to egotism, ease, and simplicity--the form entropy (the negative, structural tendency of the evolutionary process, which seeks the most simple and immediate of syntheses) takes on the human scale. See Juan Luis Segundo, Evolution and Guilt, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1974), pp. 21-27, 104-113.

<sup>27</sup> Segundo will analyze in another work how the Christian sacraments celebrate the assurance of love's victory over all types of death. See Juan Luis Segundo, The Sacraments Today, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1971), pp. 68-74.

particular plane, knowledge of God's plan and activity is at work from the time the Son came into human history as one of mankind.

The situating of Christ's redemptive work at the beginning of time will take on added significance for Segundo when he attempts to explain the Incarnation in more evolutionary and less immobilist terms.<sup>28</sup> The immobilist perspective stresses the absolute importance of the historical moment of Jesus Christ's life and death, which represents a decisive happening at a specific time in history. According to Segundo, a more evolutionary perspective, while not denying the decisive importance of the historical life and death of Jesus Christ, views his redemptive work universally from the beginning of man's genesis. Furthermore, to him it is a perspective which understands the entire universe in its pre-human history as already being directed by the redemptive force of Christ, for all of created reality was made for Christ (Col. 1:15-17).<sup>29</sup>

Christ the Redeemer is the decisive force which leads the universe to its hominized stage and capacity for having direct relations with God through love, thus making it possible for the Incarnation itself to be realized.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Segundo, Evolution and Guilt, pp. 27-30.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 83. We will explore Segundo's evolutionary perspective on redemption in chapter five when we discuss the minoritarian character of the church.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 83, see especially footnote 14, p. 85. For Segundo, right from the start the entire universe was

We will now turn to Segundo's theological understanding of the particular and universal dimensions of the Church. Only after having considered the dimensions of Christ's Incarnation in human history will Segundo explore the Church's own dimensions, for the Church simply cannot be understood apart from her source and foundation.

### 3. The Church: A Reality Particular and Universal

For Segundo, the Church's own dimensions must in fact reflect those of God's Incarnational reality, Jesus Christ, whose mystery she expresses and signifies.<sup>31</sup> The particular and universal dimensions of Jesus Christ must be hers as well. Segundo contends that the limitations of the Church as a particular reality are the result of her very incarnation in human history. She was born at a specific moment of time. And by that very fact, perhaps a million years of human existence remain outside her reach. She appeared as a dissident offshoot of Judaism--as a very small collectivity and group. She would never in her long history encompass all of humanity within her frontiers. In fact, humanity appears to have overflowed her at every turn. To Segundo, the Church as a particular reality in

---

journeying toward Emmanuel, toward God identified in intimate solidarity with man's history and reality. In this he reflects the Duns Scotus school which interprets the Incarnational Event as not solely for the purpose of rectifying a sinful order.

<sup>31</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 4.

history is necessarily limited by the very fact of God's own Incarnation. He writes:

God who voluntarily set limits on himself in the Incarnation, also voluntarily set limits on his Church when he put flesh and bones on her: i.e., when he planted her in human history. . . . Christ himself limited the Church forever.<sup>32</sup>

And yet for Segundo, the particular characteristic of the Church which distinguishes her from the rest of humanity is that in her Christ's redemptive work, operative in the hearts of all men, acquires its maturity in principle by becoming a conscious reality. He writes: "The Church as a particular reality is the conscious and visible sign of the presence of Christ the Savior in the heart of each human being."<sup>33</sup> The revelation of Christ illumined men about the manner of following with greater conscience the authentic road to salvation which all humanity must follow. To Segundo, the Church becomes that portion of humanity which knows the redemptive mystery that is being worked out in every human life and in all of humanity together.<sup>34</sup> Christians who comprise the ecclesial community are people who know the mystery of love, its origin, its object and purpose, and they know the redemptive mystery through their faith in Jesus Christ and through the celebration of their

---

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

faith in sacrament where the mystery is explained and signified. In other words, for Segundo, the Church, as a particular reality, lives the redemptive mystery in the realm of faith and sacraments.<sup>35</sup> To him it is the latter which define the Church in her particularity and distinguish her from the rest of humanity.

Segundo contends that in the realm of faith, the Church combines man's potentialities for love with the actual possession of love's mystery.<sup>36</sup> Through faith in Christ the ecclesial community knows God has a plan of salvation for humanity and the instrument through which this plan is realized. To believe in Christ is the total acceptance of this plan, of making charity the supreme law.<sup>37</sup> Christian faith is love lived in possession of its mystery, that is, love brought to awareness concerning its origin, object, and purpose. Such faith gives reflective consciousness to that which before was only spontaneous or unreflective. Segundo writes: ". . . the Church is the consciousness of humanity as it were. She is humanity arriving at full awareness of what is taking place in it."<sup>38</sup> To him, therefore, it is precisely God's hidden wisdom, His secret purpose framed from the very beginning of time and revealed in Jesus Christ (I Cor. 2:6-12) which the Church possesses

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 29-30.

through faith, allowing her to know what God has done and is doing with humanity as well as humanity's ultimate goal and destiny. And because the Church believes in Christ's revelation, she knows where love comes from and where it goes and the demands of authentic love. She does not know everything but does possess through her conscious acceptance of Christ the absolute value, the meaning, and finality of history.<sup>39</sup>

To Segundo, therefore, the Church is called to practice love with reflective awareness, for she knows love's meaning and significance. Moreover, he believes that the sacraments allow the ecclesial community to do just that: to reflect on love's mystery in diverse circumstances of life, for through sacramental celebration the redemptive love of Christ reaches men in a conscious way through sign which explains and permits a reflective understanding of love's intrinsic dimensions.<sup>40</sup> He contends that redemptive love is not complete on the level of the ecclesial community so long as it is not united with its sign, that is, so long as it is not lived out in its signification. Segundo writes:

---

<sup>39</sup>Segundo, Función de la Iglesia en la Realidad Rioplatense, p. 49.

<sup>40</sup>Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano?, p. 108. Segundo will discuss the paschal mystery which all authentic love embraces in his reflections on the sacraments themselves. See footnote 27 of this chapter for further references.

. . . sacrament not only confers grace on the Christian but also signifies it: it lets us know it. In essence and mission, the Christian is he who knows, he who is acquainted with the hidden reality of God's gift which passes our way without men knowing it.<sup>41</sup>

To Segundo, therefore, in the ecclesial community God's redemptive love is given and celebrated with explication, and for this reason her members can live love more consciously.

Moreover, for Segundo, it is the sacraments which build and fashion the ecclesial community. He contends that redemptive love leads men into communion and solidarity and, when that love is explained and signified for men, it cannot be apart from the ecclesial community itself. Segundo writes in his own book on sacraments,

. . . thus the fact that God wills to give grace through the sacraments means nothing else but that he intends to give his grace as the grace "of the Church": i.e., as a grace which fashions a Church in the service of the rest of the human community.<sup>42</sup>

To know Christ's redemptive love implies sharing and communion and, for Segundo, a community which is conscious of the redemptive mystery needs signs which continually fashion and question it, imbuing it with an ever greater awareness of the dimensions of love revealed in Christ. Segundo writes: "Through them (the sacraments) God grants and signifies to the Church the grace which is to constitute

---

<sup>41</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 31.

<sup>42</sup>Segundo, The Sacraments Today, p. 50.

it truly as such within the vast human community."<sup>43</sup>

In summary we can say, therefore, that for Segundo the Church as a particular reality is best described as the community of faith and sacraments, for to him the latter are the expression of the redemptive mystery of God revealed to men. It is because of faith and the sacraments that the Church possesses the secret of what is taking place in human history, and understands through them, as it were, the actual stakes that are being played out in the events of the world of men. Through faith in Christ she knows the gift of God Himself operative in the hearts of all men and the ultimate purpose and destiny of men in responding to that gift. Through the sacraments God's gift is bestowed with significance and explained so as to shape that portion of humanity already united by their awareness of the mystery of love into a deeper and continual communal awareness of Christ's redemption.

But to Segundo, the Church, being the expression of the Incarnational Mystery, possesses a universal dimension as well. And for him her universality is rooted in the existence of a divine salvation plan that is common to all humanity.<sup>44</sup> He contends that the Church as a particular reality cannot be opposed to the rest of humanity which finds itself outside her frontiers because she knows that God's gift is operative in all men. Citing a text from an

---

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>44</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 8.

article written by a Latin American theologian, Segundo writes:

The Church and the world are not two wholly distinct realities that confront each other and thereby come into conflict. Instead they are two distinct aspects of an indivisible unity. The Church is the conscious awareness and visible presence of the gift which God makes of himself to a world open to the plenitude of his communication.<sup>45</sup>

It is because the redemptive mystery of love is operative in all men and all men must travel the same road to salvation (through authentic love), the Church in her particular dimension, to Segundo, must embrace the dimensions of humanity itself. She is the reflective awareness of the redemptive reality of love given to all. He contends that the Church, the community of faith and the sacraments, becomes to the cosmic community of God's people what the sacraments themselves are to the reality they signify and convey.<sup>46</sup> In other words, to Segundo humanity itself is the cosmic Church, the great Church in which God is collaborating with His self-gift. The small Church, the community of faith and the sacraments, located within the great Church, is the explanation and awareness of His gift. She becomes the conscious sign of what passes man's way in an unreflected, spontaneous manner.

---

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 97. The citation of Segundo is taken from Ricardo Cetrulo, "El Concilio ¿libera a la Iglesia de equivococ?" in Diálogo, no. 6 (octubre 1966), p. 1.

<sup>46</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 54.

Segundo, however, will not maintain that this great or cosmic Church is invisible. Similar to Karl Rahner's own view, he believes that the only Church of Christ is the visible Church through which all men are saved, for all authentic love has visible dimensions which are, in fact, the dimensions of the one Church. He writes:

All who are saved are saved through the visible Church. What occurs is that some do not know that the visible reality they are constructing is called the Church of Christ. Some are ignorant of the fact that this people, united more by visible and tangible charity (of which St. John speaks), are, after coming to the awareness of their name, the People of God, the Church of Christ.<sup>47</sup>

In this way, Segundo believes that two dimensions are united in the one visible Church of Christ. On the one hand, there is the small Church,<sup>48</sup> a community limited in time, space, and number, and on the other, the great Church,<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup>Segundo, La Función de la Iglesia en la Realidad Rioplatense, p. 47. "Todos los que se salvan se salvan por la Iglesia visible. Lo que ocurre es que algunos no saben que la realidad visible que están construyendo se llama la Iglesia de Cristo. Algunos ignoran que ese pueblo humano más unido por la caridad visible y tangible es cuando se vuelve consciente de su propio nombre, el Pueblo de Dios, la Iglesia de Cristo." For Karl Rahner's understanding of the one visible Church of Christ, see "Membership in the Church," in Theological Investigations, Vol. II, trans. by Cornelius Ernst et al (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1964), pp. 1-88.

<sup>48</sup>Segundo will prefer to use the words 'ecclesial community' to designate the reality of the small Church because the term will sum up better for him the contribution she makes toward human society. See Segundo, Our Idea of God, p. 81.

<sup>49</sup>Segundo will often call the cosmic or great Church 'the People of God,' although he is conscious that at times

co-extensive with humanity itself, which is united to the former because both must achieve salvation through the same instrument, authentic love, which in turn is made possible by God's self-gift to all.

But if these two dimensions are united in the one Church of Christ, there will, for Segundo, always remain a certain tension between them. The small Church, or the ecclesial community, possesses through the revelation of Christ the deepest awareness of that which constitutes the intimate unity of mankind and, as we shall see in the following chapter, represents a leaven for all. Her mission, to Segundo, will not be to convert humanity itself into leaven but to nourish it and raise it. And it will be precisely in that mission where tension will surface.

Segundo will once again employ evolutionary terms to describe the two dimensions of the Church that we have just discussed. He believes that Teilhard de Chardin's phrase describing the Church in her particular dimension is especially apt: "the reflectively christified portion of the universe."<sup>50</sup> It is a phrase that Segundo himself

---

in popular usage this expression refers to the Church in her particular dimensions. See Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 23, footnote five.

<sup>50</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, De La Sociedad a la Teología (Buenos Aires: Carlos Lohlé, 1970), p. 157. This article, "La Iglesia en la Evolución de un Continente," is the only extensive one that Segundo has written concerning the Church from the perspective of evolution, although he will make use of it in his other writings, e.g., The Community Called Church, pp. 120-24. In this article, he quite often uses references from hitherto unedited texts of Teilhard found in Emile Rideau, La Pensée du Père Teilhard de Chardin (Paris: Ed. du Seuil, 1965). The phrase, "reflectively

considers to be in substantial accordance with, but independent from, his own reflections on the Church gleaned from the data of Revelation.<sup>51</sup> To Segundo, what distinguishes the Church is not that the redemptive mystery is being effected only in her, but that in her it becomes a reflective reality as well. Moreover, reflecting the thought of Teilhard, he contends that the entire universe also participates in and is directed by the redemptive force of God's love. Segundo writes:

. . . the whole universe is christified from the beginning, since, in the end, it will be recapitulated by Christ.

If the whole universe is christified from its beginning, the law which rules it, no matter how invisible it appears in its origin, must be the same principle of Christ's life, that is, love, charity, which is "not just a secondary result superimposed on the creative process, but its operative element and fundamental dynamism."<sup>52</sup>

---

christified portion of the universe," is taken from Rideau's work, p. 498, in which Rideau is citing an unedited article written by Teilhard, "Comment je vois" (1948).

<sup>51</sup>Segundo, De la Sociedad a la Teología, p. 160.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 158. ". . . el universo está cristificado desde el comienzo, ya que en su término, será recapitulado por Cristo. . . . Si todo el universo está desde el comienzo cristificado, la ley que lo rige, por más invisiblemente que actúe en los orígenes, tiene que ser el principio mismo de la vida de Cristo, es decir, el amor, la caridad, que no es "solamente un efecto secundario superañadido al proceso creador, sino el factor operante y el dinamismo fundamental." The text that Segundo is quoting within this citation is from the hitherto unedited article by Chardin, "Introduction au Christianisme," (1942) in Rideau, La Pensée du Père Teilhard de Chardin, p. 370.

The conclusions of Teilhard, Segundo feels, complement his own theological understanding of the Church's particular dimensions. The ecclesial community represents another stage of the evolutionary spiral which has ascended from matter to life, from life to sensation, from sensation to consciousness. To this consciousness is added the definitive stage which the Church as a particular reality represents: the stage of reflective love. The Church, as it were, balances and completes the fourth stage. The life of Christ, once latent in the evolutionary advance, becomes reflective in the Church through Christ's revelation. It is for this reason that the ecclesial community becomes the reflectively christified portion of the universe which Teilhard has described as the "community of superabundant awareness and charity."<sup>53</sup> Segundo translates this superabundance as the life of the ecclesial community itself, that is, love reaching the awareness of its mystery.<sup>54</sup>

Once again humanity and the ecclesial community are seen as not separated from one another but deeply united through the very redemptive force of Christ which pervades both. But it is the ecclesial community that signifies and reveals the reality and dimensions of that force and that bears at the same time a decisive reference to the past, for the Church, as a particular reality, is the reflective

---

<sup>53</sup>Segundo, De la Sociedad a la Teología, p. 157.

<sup>54</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 121.

awareness of the unity of the entire universe, of its origin and destiny.

#### 4. The Church and the Means of Salvation

Segundo believes that the ecclesial community of faith and sacraments is not meant to limit or restrict God's redemptive activity in the world.<sup>55</sup> Membership in this community should not be interpreted as some restrictive condition imposed by God which in turn confers the privilege of redemption. The Church, in her particular dimension, could not have been founded to make more difficult salvation. He again turns to the writings of Paul and uses Paul's own logic which stresses that the promise of God's gift of salvation to Abraham was unconditional and that He could not have gone back on this promise by imposing later restrictions to His gift through the Law given to Moses (Gal. 3:17-18).<sup>56</sup> Segundo reasons, in a similar manner, with regard to the ecclesial community. It could not have been created to impose a condition on God's unconditional promise of salvation--a salvation which became fully revealed in Jesus Christ. He writes:

---

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., pp. 73-76.

<sup>56</sup>Segundo, La Función de la Iglesia en la Realidad Rioplatense, p. 44.

It could not be one condition more, an obstacle for those who authentic and spontaneous love was saving. It has to be a help to this love, a help to this salvation.<sup>57</sup>

To Segundo, the ecclesial community must be destined to help the common reality of all men (love) through a more profound and certain awareness of love's mystery, orientation, and destiny.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, he maintains that since all men must follow the same road leading to salvation, that is, through authentic love, there must exist an equality of subjective possibilities for all men with regard to salvation.<sup>59</sup> Each human being will ultimately have to decide to embrace the venture of self-giving. Segundo considers that the objective advantage for members of the ecclesial community is that the mystery of God's love is elevated to their consciousness--likened, he believes, to what Paul states concerning the revelation of God's Law to the Jews, which in that case, however, brought the consciousness of sin (Rom. 3:20).<sup>60</sup>

And yet to Segundo, membership in the ecclesial community is necessary for those who understand and accept

---

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 45. "No puede ser una condición más, un obstáculo para aquellos a quienes salvaba un amor verdadero y espontáneo. Tiene que ser una ayuda para ese amor, una ayuda para la salvación."

<sup>58</sup> In our next chapter, we will explore the manner in which Segundo envisages this help.

<sup>59</sup> Segundo, The Community Called Church, pp. 42-43.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

that which it signifies.<sup>61</sup> If men do accept in faith that the ecclesial community does possess the true awareness of this movement of love in which all humanity participates, they then could not seriously seek love and at the same time reject the consciousness of love's reality which the Church signifies. The ecclesial community is, therefore, to Segundo necessary for them, not because mankind is nothing without it, nor because it is a community which possesses an exclusive efficacy for salvation's realization through a different road marked by prescriptions of ritual and dogma. It is necessary for them precisely because of their acceptance through faith of that deeper awareness of love which the small Church signifies and reveals.

Segundo, moreover, believes that because the Church as a particular reality is intimately joined to that universal dynamism of love operative in all men, the formula "outside the Church, no salvation" should not be cause for surprise.<sup>62</sup> It is precisely the small Church which calls men to participate in that very universal movement, that is, to participate in her life, for all authentic love is the life of the small Church as well. In this he concurs with Karl Rahner's own appreciation and understanding of this

---

<sup>61</sup>Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano?, p. 110.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

dogmatic formula.<sup>63</sup> Segundo writes: "It is the sincere participation in that road of solidarity which saves . . . but the Church precisely issues her call to that, to participate in her life."<sup>64</sup>

For Segundo, the small Church can easily enslave man if she does not recognize that it is not man's mere passive submission to her structures or laws which saves. The latter can indeed often be viewed as "being imposed by God independent of man himself as a superior force guaranteeing man's salvation if he will only submit. But as we have previously seen in chapter two, to Segundo, God's relationship to man is not extrinsic, defined by law or structure, but rather defines itself as a love freely given and searching for a free response.<sup>65</sup> All of the universe is man's and can never be posited as a superior force to his creative freedom.

## 5. Conclusions

Segundo has attempted to define the particular and universal dimensions of the Church. His initial preoccupation

---

<sup>63</sup>Rahner, "Membership in the Church," pp. 1-88. It is Rahner's contention that the life of the Church is, in fact, Christ's Spirit, be it a conscious reality or not on the part of those who participate in it.

<sup>64</sup>Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano?, p. 110. "Es la participación sincera en ese camino de solidaridad lo que salva . . . pero la Iglesia llama justamente a eso, participar de su vida."

<sup>65</sup>See chapter two of this work, pp. 86-97.

was to determine whether the two conceptions of the Church operative in the geographical area of the Plate River, bordering the countries of Argentina and Uruguay, are in fact totally opposed or whether one is more in accord with Christian revelation. Certainly the absolutist conception which sees membership in the institutional Church as the normal means of salvation has been seriously called into question by him. The redemptive mystery is operative in all men, and the Church cannot be a restrictive condition to that salvation. Furthermore, the one Church of Christ envelops the entire world of men and contains within it the ecclesial community which is the conscious sign and awareness of the very reality of the redemptive mystery, explaining and signifying it. But Segundo has still to show the necessity of the institutional Church for humanity. That is precisely the question raised by the relativist position. Does the ecclesial community, possessing an awareness of love's mystery, constitute something critical for man's salvation? Does Christian love--a love reflective of itself through belief in the revelation of Christ--have a decisive function to play in the world of men which has already been christified and invaded by God's self-gift? That is the question we wish to explore with Juan Segundo in our next chapter when we deal with his own understanding of the Church's mission.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

In this chapter we will explore with Segundo what he considers to be the Church's<sup>1</sup> function within humanity itself. He wishes to discern the relationship that exists between the community of those who know the mystery of love through faith and the sacraments and those who practice this love without yet possessing awareness of its redemptive reality and dimensions. He questions whether it is, after all, an exaggeration to attribute to the ecclesial community a decisive, saving importance for mankind if men can achieve salvation by the very practice of love itself.<sup>2</sup> In other words, what concretely makes it so important for humanity that God's love become a conscious, explicit, and reflective reality through the Christian community? After seeking an answer to this question, Segundo will define his own conception of the Church's function or mission within human history, and by clarifying her mission, he will at the same

---

<sup>1</sup>We will use the word 'Church' in this chapter to refer to the ecclesial community of faith and the sacraments, the Church as a particular reality.

<sup>2</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, The Community Called Church, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973), p. 52.

time give greater expression to what he considers to be the essential characteristic of the ecclesial community itself--its value as sign of salvation for the rest of humanity. It will be through her sign-bearing function that the Church, to Segundo, will most pointedly express her need for and dependence upon the world of men.

In this chapter we will explore, therefore, the manner in which Segundo defines the Church's mission in the world. We are here concerned, however, only with what the proper mission of the Church is according to Segundo. In a later chapter we shall reflect upon how he conceives the Church as accomplishing her mission in the world. We have divided this present section of our study into three parts. First we shall examine Segundo's thought concerning the necessity of the Church for humanity. We will then analyze his conception of the Church's function within humanity and the world itself. And thirdly we shall attempt to discern the Church's need in turn for the world, which her very mission, to Segundo, implies.

### 1. The Necessity of the Church for Humanity

Segundo dedicates no one single work to the specific problem concerning the necessity or value of the Church for humanity. He, however, initiates his reflections upon this topic in one of his first published works, Función de la

Iglesia en la Realidad Rioplatense,<sup>3</sup> where he seeks to answer, as we have already noted, the relativist position concerning the value of the institutional Church for man's salvation and life. It is a position which questioned the necessity of the Church for humanity. Segundo, however, will reflect upon this question in several later writings and clarify and expand upon the initial response he offers in the publication cited above. We will attempt to discern, therefore, the unfolding of his reflections as they relate to this particular facet of our study.

Since, to Segundo, the Church is aware of the redemptive dimensions of love, she is also conscious of the total meaning of all of human history, of its absolute, saving significance. She knows the secret and destiny of the universe, that all of created reality is to be recapitulated in Christ through love. It is precisely this consciousness of history's meaning and destiny which the Church offers to humanity.<sup>4</sup> Segundo believes, however, that to form man's conscience with regard to the reality and dimensions of love's mystery is not merely one function or value among others because the object of that consciousness is the only and absolute value of life itself. Through the Church, humanity is offered something decisively important concerning its reality and destiny: God's plan of salvation

---

<sup>3</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, Función de la Iglesia en la Realidad Rioplatense (Montevideo: Barreiro y Ramos, 1962).

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

and the knowledge of the instrument by which that plan achieves itself. He writes:

. . . knowing or not knowing what God has revealed, is not and should not be considered an indifferent matter. It has decisive objective importance. Why? Because there does exist a divine plan for the history of humanity.<sup>5</sup>

It will be by exploring the objective importance of man's becoming aware of love's mystery that Segundo will attempt to answer the relativist claim concerning the value of the institutional Church. It is his contention that not to recognize the absolute value of Christianity, and therefore of the Church, as the inspiration and meaning for all of human history is the fundamental error of the relativist position.<sup>6</sup>

Segundo insists that an exploration into the objective importance of the Church for humanity cannot be appreciated apart from her essential contribution to the world.<sup>7</sup> He discovers in one of the official documents of the Second Vatican Council the implicit affirmation that all authentic love is in fact a preparation for the gospel message.<sup>8</sup> As

<sup>5</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 43.

<sup>6</sup>Segundo, Función de la Iglesia en la Realidad Rioplatense, p. 49.

<sup>7</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 54.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 55. The document Segundo refers to is "Lumen Gentium," article 16. What is here affirmed by the Council Fathers is that whatever goodness or truth is found among non-Christians is looked upon by the Church as a preparation for the gospel. See Walter M. Abbott, S.J., gen. ed., The Documents of Vatican II (New York: The America

we have previously noted, to Segundo, love itself is a faith-beginning. He contends that love in its normal development within humanity encounters challenges and crises, posing questions concerning the worthiness and meaning of its very activity--whether the venture of love is really worth the effort. And if love is to overcome its intrinsic obstacles, to Segundo, ~~this~~ beginning faith, contained in love's very reality, must encounter corresponding answers that can only come from the full-fledged faith of Christians committed to the gospel.

Segundo examines some of the most demanding questions which love's activity poses.<sup>9</sup> Because of its propensity to become so easily shipwrecked through the human experience of misunderstanding, superficiality, infidelity, etc., love searches for a sustaining hope that offers assurance against its doubts about the demands and possibilities of self-giving. The ecclesial community is aware that all of love's trust and gamble is well placed, that there is Someone who has responded with a yes because its members know through faith the origin and object of all love, that none of love's efforts is ever lost. Segundo writes:

We know from our faith that what love constructs is not destroyed by any obstacle, even though it may seem to be. Authentic love builds the new earth in some unseen way. And in that new world we will be astonished to see standing the things that we thought

---

Press, 1966), pp. 60-62.

<sup>9</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, pp. 57-58.

had been destroyed over and over again. This does not give us concrete solutions. But it does mean that the solutions which we must seek out bear the stamp of certainty which springs from faith.<sup>10</sup>

When love, therefore, moves beyond its initial stage of enthusiasm and instinctive attraction, the question of its worthiness and value prepares an encounter with what Christians already know through their faith in Christ's revelation.

Segundo furthermore believes that another fundamental question which love poses is one regarding its scope.<sup>11</sup> To extend one's self-giving beyond the narrow circle of the family and of those who may think the same way often implies losing the security of one's own way of life and confronting unknown demands. To Segundo, the temptation here to man is that of placing controls on love, restricting its extension to others beyond the familiar or comfortable circles of one's own immediate environment. The question arises whether love is worth the effort outside the boundaries of the same class, race, religion, or nation. Men and women, asking themselves what to do with a love whose demands appear so continuous and unending, prepare once again the possibility of an encounter with Christians who through their faith possess knowledge of love's universal scope.

Segundo maintains that these and other questions which the rhythm of all authentic love presents are occasions

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 58-59.

for encounters between faith beginning and full-fledged faith, between the world and the Church.<sup>12</sup> He believes, however, that the Christian response to love's questions frequently reaches man in partial doses,<sup>13</sup> for even though persons may not allow for the whole scope and hopefulness of Christian love, the very fact of their living among men who do love unreservedly and who can give reasons for the hope which inspires such love will often cause these same persons to resolve their doubts in favor of love.<sup>14</sup> Segundo writes:

In the midst of the human race there must be people who know the mystery of love, who will meet and dialogue with those who are moving toward the gospel and confronting the questions raised by love.<sup>15</sup>

To Segundo, God revealed His mystery to mankind in Jesus Christ to fully flesh out love's entire dimensions, and man, in his turn, needs this revelation to reach his full measure.<sup>16</sup> Turning to the gospel of John, Segundo

---

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 60. The term 'partial doses' is taken from Karl Rahner, Mission et Grâce, vol. I, trans. by Charles Muller (Paris: Mame, 1962), p. 223. Segundo uses it because he believes it is pertinent to both the scope and necessity of the dialogue between Christian faith and beginning faith, love.

<sup>14</sup>This particular facet of Segundo's thought will be more adequately treated in the second part of this chapter.

<sup>15</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 60.

<sup>16</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, Grace and the Human Condition, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973), p. 129.

believes that the evangelist had in fact described the mission of Jesus Christ in terms of fullness: Christ came that men might have life and have it in all fullness (John 10:10). For this reason, Segundo contends, the Church must continually offer Christ's revelation to humanity, not because the latter will be condemned without it, but because the Church's word of faith reveals the fullness of man, his ultimate obligations, his destiny and purpose within history.

Segundo, moreover, will seek to understand the necessity and importance of the Church from within the perspective of an evolutionary advance. He maintains that the ecclesial community, which has attained awareness of that which was only instinctive and spontaneous, creates and offers something new and definitive to the world of men and represents a new balance upon which everything else will depend.<sup>17</sup> He writes: ". . . the Church . . . constitutes a new, vital order through which continues and culminates the universal process of evolution . . ." <sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 60.

<sup>18</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, De la Sociedad a la Teología (Buenos Aires: Carlos Lohlé, 1970), p. 166. ". . . la Iglesia . . . constituye un nuevo orden vital por donde se continua y culmina la evolución universal . . ." Segundo is here following the thought of Teilhard de Chardin who had described the appearance of Christianity as a new vital order. See Emile Rideau, La Pensée du Père Teilhard de Chardin (Paris: Ed. du Seuil, 1965), p. 534. Rideau is citing a hitherto unedited article of Teilhard, "Le Christianisme dans le monde" (1933).

In clarifying what he means by this new vital order which the ecclesial community represents, Segundo employs the language of Teilhard de Chardin describing the successive stages of the evolutionary spiral. With the emergence of man another stage of the evolutionary advance had made its appearance: consciousness, the appearance of reflection and thought. Life consummated by consciousness or thinking tends to occupy a universal, central, and demanding position within the universe, irregardless of its infinitesimally small proportion to other forms of life. But it is precisely this conscious form of life which needs something else to balance and complete it if it is to continue to progress. Citing a text from Teilhard, Segundo writes:

The more man opens up to the notion of man's universal function and appreciates the decisive role of consciousness and free choice in the world, the more he will realize that the appearance of reflective thinking on earth necessarily calls for something else to balance and complete it. This something else is the reflection of the whole on the monad . . . a revelation.<sup>19</sup>

For Teilhard de Chardin the Christian revelation itself is the reflection of the whole on the monad, opening up humanity to life's definitive potential. Similarly, Segundo contends that only a way of knowing that comes from Totality, that is, from God, can serve as a reliable and

---

<sup>19</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 122. Segundo here is citing a hitherto unedited article of Teilhard de Chardin, "Le Sens humain," (1929) in Rideau, La Pensée du Père Teilhard de Chardin, p. 402.

firm support for a humanity that is being transformed.<sup>20</sup> It is a way of knowing which must enlighten man about the destiny and purpose of human existence, thus enabling him to make a radical advance toward a future which is based on the firmness and surety of an objective purpose and design for humanity. In other words, the hominized stage of evolution is called upon to assume the characteristics and dimensions of a faith. Again citing Teilhard, Segundo writes:

The world cannot continue to progress toward greater complexity and consciousness once it has become a human world, unless it opens up an ever more explicit place for the spiritual forces of hope.<sup>21</sup>

Segundo, moreover, contends that if the Church signifies a critical stage in the evolutionary advance, she must manifest common, exterior characteristics which can be found in the previous stages of evolution.<sup>22</sup> From one point of view, the passage from conscious life to reflective love is almost imperceptible, similar to the various evolutionary thresholds that preceded it. All evolutionary advances were at first barely distinguishable from the forms of life anterior to them, but soon divergency appeared. Life separated from matter, the animal from the vegetable,

<sup>20</sup> Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 122.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 122. Segundo is citing Teilhard's writing "La vision du passé," (1939) in Rideau, La Pensée du Père Teilhard de Chardin, p. 386.

<sup>22</sup> Segundo, De la Sociedad a la Teología, pp. 166-69.

man from the rest of the animals. The differences of forms decrease, however, with each successive stage of the evolutionary spiral, so that man is not all that different from the species of animal from which he emerged but, from another perspective, produces a result incommensurate with the previous stage.<sup>23</sup> Segundo maintains that in a similar manner the Church, the ecclesial community, representing the reflective awareness of love's reality, distinguishes herself almost imperceptibly from the rest of humanity but nonetheless constitutes the entrance into a whole new world and becomes the personalizing leaven of the universe.<sup>24</sup>

Another characteristic similar to previous evolutionary stages which the Church manifests is her qualitative universality. Segundo utilizes Teilhard's reflections concerning how the universality of the different forms which life assumes continues to change with each evolutionary advance.<sup>25</sup> Each successive threshold of evolution becomes more a minoritarian affair but at the same time more universal because of its qualitative superiority. The world has become man's not because humanity outnumbers what has

---

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 164. Segundo is reflecting Teilhard de Chardin's thought concerning how man, without leaving the animal kingdom, exercises an influence vastly superior to the latter. See Teilhard de Chardin, The Phenomenon of Man, trans. by Bernard Wall (London: Wm. Collins Sons and Co., 1959), p. 182.

<sup>24</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 123. We will clarify what Segundo means by the term 'personalizing leaven' below.

<sup>25</sup>Segundo, De la Sociedad a la Teología, pp. 166-68.

preceded it but because of man's power of invasion and extension in the world through consciousness, through human activity. Segundo writes: "The universality within reach of matter is one thing; the universality of living things is another thing; the universality of human effort still another."<sup>26</sup> Man's universality is a qualitative affair. Humanity represents a miniscule phenomenon with regard to life itself but, nevertheless, its quantitative meagerness and fragility are no obstacles to the universality contained within it.

In the same way, Segundo looks upon the universality exercised by the Church.<sup>27</sup> She is situated in the direction of the improbable, and representing a culminating stage of evolution, the Church reflects this smallness-universality phenomenon which characterizes the higher evolutionary advances. To Segundo, her universality will not be found in numbers, in quantity, but rather discovered in her exceptional function within humanity itself.<sup>28</sup> That function, for Segundo, will be in terms of the Church's reflective consciousness of love's dimensions--a consciousness which introduces the Totality into human awareness,

---

<sup>26</sup> Segundo, The Community Called Church, pp. 122-23.

<sup>27</sup> Segundo, De la Sociedad a la Teología, pp. 166-69.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 167. See also Segundo's work, The Community Called Church, pp. 123-24. In our next chapter we will more closely examine Segundo's thought concerning the minoritarian character of the Church in relationship to her universality both from the data of revelation and the perspective of evolution.

contradicting man's instinctive tendency to exist and live only for himself. Because of the revelation of the Totality which the Church possesses, she knows that man's true destiny is radically tied to love itself. She is aware that the progress of each man depends upon the union of all through love,<sup>29</sup> wherein the individual person is considered as an absolute value who can never be instrumentalized by others to achieve ends ruled by self-interest and egotism. Segundo writes:

In this manner, charity, synthesis of liberties, definitively takes over the instinct which resides in the egotistical man and which tends to spare itself of the difficulty of passing through the freedom of the individual. And if this can already be said of cristified humanity, it will have to be said with even more reason of "the reflectively cristified portion within humanity."<sup>30</sup>

Segundo considers that it is only under the creative influence of true communion with others in love that the

---

<sup>29</sup>Segundo, De la Sociedad a la Teología, p. 166. Segundo will also reflect upon the affirmation of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council that the basic law of human perfection and the world's transformation is love. See "Gaudium et Spes," article 38 in The Documents of Vatican II, pp. 235-37. For Segundo's reflection on this article, see his work, Grace and the Human Condition, pp. 133-36.

<sup>30</sup>Segundo, De la Sociedad a la Teología, p. 170. "De esta manera, la caridad, síntesis de libertades, se substituye definitivamente al instinto que subsiste en el hombre egoísta y que tiende a ahorrarse el paso por la libertad de cada uno. Y si esto puede decirse ya de la humanidad cristificada, habrá que decirlo con much mayor razón de "la porción cristificada reflejamente dentro de la humanidad."

individual man achieves his personhood<sup>31</sup> and that mankind's true destiny is advanced. The Church becomes that community of men and women who are aware of love's true demands, knowing that love achieves itself not through a uniformity which eliminates or ignores the individual, but through a synthesis of centers, a communion, in which the individual is respected and truly considered. What love constructs, therefore, is a union of absolutes, of persons, whose differences are maintained and enhanced through love's free acceptance. Segundo writes:

. . . the Christian synthesis, if it is situated in the direction of biogenesis [evolution] . . . substitutes the statistical law for the consideration of the individual. . . . It will be a synthesis of absolutes.

The simplicity and efficacy [immediacy] of the instinctive is here lost.<sup>32</sup>

Love, therefore, is not a simple or immediate synthesis of elements whose results can be predicted through statistical law, but rather, because love must pass through

---

<sup>31</sup>Segundo, De la Sociedad a la Teología, p. 169. Segundo is here reflecting Teilhard's thought concerning how the human person achieves itself by entering into mutual contact with others, developing a relationship of centers which Teilhard calls 'intercentric.' See de Chardin, The Phenomenon of Man, pp. 262-63.

<sup>32</sup>Segundo, De la Sociedad a la Teología, pp. 169-71. " . . . la síntesis cristiana, si está ubicada en la flecha de la biogénesis . . . substituye la ley estadística por la consideración del individuo. . . . Será una síntesis de absolutes . . . Se pierde aquí la simplicidad y la eficacia de lo instintivo."

the freedom of others to achieve itself, its results are complex and mediate. To Segundo, it is the complex synthesis of love itself which the Church struggles to offer humanity,<sup>33</sup> but as a community of men and women who are aware of love's origin, reality, and destiny and especially attuned to the complexity of the union which love itself is seeking. And by offering her love to the world of men, she advances the recapitulation of the universe in Christ.

The new vital order that the Church introduces into the universe is her knowledge of and faith in love's reality. Through her, the actual dimensions of love are revealed so that mankind can avail itself of that which is of critical importance to its destiny and salvation. The Church proclaims that although love's achievements are complex and mediate, love is possible and worthy of man's struggle. By witnessing to her faith, the Church seeks to maintain, fortify, and extend love's progress and at the same time to justify love's efforts through the hope which springs from the knowledge of the Christian message. She is, therefore, destined to help that common reality of all men (love) through a more profound and certain consciousness of its significance, orientation, and end.<sup>34</sup> The greater the love operating in humanity, the deeper is its initial

---

<sup>33</sup>Segundo, De la Sociedad a la Teología, p. 170. See also Segundo's work, Grace and the Human Condition, pp. 124-26.

<sup>34</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, ¿Que es un Cristiano? (Montevideo: Mimeográfica "Luz," 1964), p. 109.

faith and the more that faith demands a response. The Church is meant to give reasons for the worthiness of love's efforts and struggle so that love's progress can continue and expand. At the same time she joins the rest of humanity through her own efforts of love, hoping to provide a milieu in which men will decide eventually for love. In this way, to Segundo, the Church becomes the personalizing leaven of the universe, illuminating love's reality by her message and life.

We will now analyze more closely how Segundo conceives the Church's function within the world. If the Church is necessary for humanity as the revelation of both man's destiny and the reality and dimensions of that instrument by which his destiny is achieved, she must, to Segundo, be a sign in the midst of humanity of love's saving character through dialogue and service.

## 2. The Function of the Church Within Humanity

Segundo's reflections upon the function of the Church within human history will found themselves upon what he has conceived as her necessary and vital relationship to love itself. He writes:

The very nature of the Church's mission is that it must plunge itself into this love that builds up humanity in history. For in every age and place this love runs into new problems. . . . To this moving, changing history God turns with his word,

through a living community that must translate this word in terms of the "signs of the times."<sup>35</sup>

But to Segundo, it is only in a communitarian way that the Church can effectively translate and signify God's revelation. The ecclesial community must be structured according to the efficacy which is required of her very mission, that of leading men into communion with one another through love.<sup>36</sup> The significance of the Church depends on a communitarian activity that itself points to unity. Only in that way can the Church effectively translate and signify the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Segundo writes:

In order to make its own specific and divine contribution to universal salvation, the visible Church qua community must be a sign: a sign of the universal salvific plan, of the recapitulation for which the whole universe is waiting, of a message that God sends through his Church in order to contribute towards solutions of man's historical problems that are truly human.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, The Sacraments Today, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1974), p. 7. It is apparent that Segundo believes that what the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council affirmed concerning the Church's nature as sign aptly describes the relationship of the small Church to the great Church regarding the saving mystery of love. See also footnote 37 below.

<sup>36</sup> Segundo, Función de la Iglesia en la Realidad Rioplatense, p. 45.

<sup>37</sup> Segundo, The Sacraments Today, p. 9. Segundo will frequently utilize the affirmation of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council that the Christian faith throws a new light on everything, manifesting God's design for man's total vocation and thus directing the mind to solutions which are fully human. See "Gaudium et Spes," article 11, in The Documents of Vatican II, pp. 209-10. Faith, for Segundo, is knowing not valid solely for itself, but for the discovery

The Church, consequently, to Segundo, was established for the benefit of the rest of humanity. She is sent to humanity because through her the problems planted by history will obtain a more fully human solution. He contends, however, that she does not possess ready-made answers to man's historical problems but unites with other men in the quest for their solutions, while contributing her faith so as to illumine everything with a new light.<sup>38</sup> The Church is to convert herself into a community that will join the rest of humanity in trying to fashion man's history in love. The renewal and exploration of her own inner life and structures must be inspired by this latter goal from the start.<sup>39</sup>

Consequently, for Segundo, the foundational or primary preoccupation of the Church is not directed toward her own inner life but towards those outside her visible institution. He insists that her first interior concern is the clarity and transparency of her sign function. He writes:

---

of a plan which realizes itself in history. See Segundo's work, Acción Pastoral Latinoamericana: Sus Motivos Ocultos (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Búsqueda, 1972), pp. 126-27 and also De la Sociedad a la Teología, p. 163.

<sup>38</sup>Segundo, Acción Pastoral Latinoamericana, p. 126. Segundo is here reflecting the affirmation of Vatican II that the Church wishes to co-operate in finding solutions to the outstanding problems of our times, illuminating the mystery of man with her faith. See "Gaudium et Spes," article 10, in The Documents of Vatican II, pp. 207-9.

<sup>39</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, Our Idea of God, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1970), p. 79.

. . . the Church is, essentially and primarily, a sign. It has been placed here precisely and exclusively to pass on to men a certain signification, i.e., a message, something that is to be grasped, comprehended and incorporated to a greater or lesser degree into the fashioning of history and the world. . . . the very existence of the Church is meant to be leaven in the dough, salt in the meal, and light for all those who dwell in the human household.<sup>40</sup>

Segundo contends that this was the thinking of Paul himself, reflected in his first letter to the Corinthian community.<sup>41</sup> In the fifth chapter of that letter, the apostle presents the problems raised by an unrepentant Christian, perhaps confused by Paul's own preaching of the new law of liberty, who believed that having sexual relationships with his stepmother was compatible with Christ's message and the Christian community to which he belonged. Segundo believes that Paul's handling of the difficulty embraces three aspects from which one can appreciate the apostle's own conception of the Church.<sup>42</sup> First, Paul never implied that Christians should separate themselves from pagan sinners (I Cor. 5:10). If that were the case they would have to leave the world. Secondly, Paul insists that what he asked the Christian community to do was to separate itself from the immoral person who is a brother Christian (I Cor. 5:11). Segundo contends that in this

<sup>40</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 81.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., pp. 78-86.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., pp. 79-80.

request Paul is preferring the Church's sign-bearing function to the continuance of the unrepentant brother's participation and life within the ecclesial community and that Paul extends this principle to anyone who is a fornicator, adulteror, slanderer, drunkard, etc. (I Cor. 5:11). Segundo writes:

In reality every Christian involves the name and import of the Church in his actions. His very attitudes carry a message. So when the significance that the Church should have is incompatible with the deliberate conduct of some member, Paul demands that the Church prefer her sign-bearing function.<sup>43</sup>

And thirdly, Paul's purpose for excluding such a person from the Christian community is so that his spirit may be saved on the Day of the Lord (I Cor. 5:5). The implication here, to Segundo, is that in excluding the member, Paul is thinking about that person's very salvation. Segundo writes:

Paul is not thinking about his eventual return to the community, even though he doesn't deny that possibility either. He is rather feeling that the new situation will favor the man's salvation.<sup>44</sup>

Segundo draws certain pertinent conclusions from his Pauline reflections. He contends that the Church must make sure that her message truly reaches the human community through her sign-bearing function and that the latter should

---

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., pp. 79-81.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

never be subordinated to mere numbers. He writes:

For Paul it makes no sense to subordinate this transparency [of her sign function] to mere numbers. If a person has grasped the function of the Church with regard to humanity, then he must be in accord with it.<sup>45</sup>

Hé furthermore maintains that the Church only aids the salvation of those who belong to her when their membership that corresponds with that function the Church is called upon to exercise with regard to the rest of the human race. He writes: ". . . membership in the ecclesial community saves people when it is shouldered as a new and more profound responsibility."<sup>46</sup> Belonging to the ecclesial community, therefore, does not always better the situation of its members. It does so only when the latter commit themselves to bear responsibly the obligations of the Church's sign-bearing function toward humanity. In this respect, Segundo contends that the Church herself is risk, since her members have been entrusted with the knowledge of love's mystery and because of that, more will be expected of them.<sup>47</sup> He believes that Paul himself implies this in his first letter to Timothy. Believers who shirk their obligations of

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 85. Segundo also refers to what "Lumen Gentium," article 14, in The Documents of Vatican II, pp. 32-34, states concerning those Christians who fail to respond to God's gift; they will be judged more severely. Segundo contends that an implication of this assertion by the Council is that the Church is not necessarily the ideal situation with respect to salvation for all men.

charity deny the faith and become worse than unbelievers (I Tim. 5:8). Segundo maintains, moreover, that the gospel affirms the same: the more a man has been given, the more will he be required to pay (Luke 12:47-48).

It is precisely through the Church's sign-bearing function that Segundo believes the ecclesial community offers her basic aid to humanity. He writes:

The basic aid that the Church offers to human beings does not involve introducing them into the Church in an improper way, exposing them to her risk without removing the obstacle to salvation posed by selfishness. The basic help she offers comes through her sign-bearing function; for in this function they hear resonances of the message that can change their existence even though it may not convert them into Christians. If it does not resonate through her sign-bearing function, the message will not reach them even if they are physically within the Church.<sup>48</sup>

Segundo insists that it is the Church's living testimony to her message which is the fundamental argument of her faith and the essence of her mission.<sup>49</sup> Her sign-bearing function within the world must place limits on her desire of admitting and keeping the greatest possible number of members. To him, however, this does not involve any connotation of puritanism or moral elitism, for the Church will

---

<sup>48</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 85.

<sup>49</sup>Segundo, De la Sociedad a la Teología, p. 42. To bolster his contention, Segundo recalls the teaching of Vatican I, which affirms that the living testimony of faith comprises its surest defense and credibility. His citation is from Denzinger, El Magisterio de la Iglesia, nos. 1793-94.

always be comprised of sinners and fragile human beings.<sup>50</sup> Rather, Segundo contends that the demands of the Church's sign visibility within the world are necessary for the gospel message to be good news and to be recognized and received as such.<sup>51</sup> Real commitment to the obligation which the Church's sign function implies is absolutely essential if she is to fulfill her purpose.

Segundo defines the new obligation which the Church's sign-bearing function entails as self-giving assumed as a real responsibility.<sup>52</sup> To him the Church must be the sign of God's redemptive love offered to the whole community of mankind through dialogue and service. He writes: "The essence and function of the Church is in terms of dialogue and service to the world."<sup>53</sup> It is through dialogue with the world of men and disinterested service that the significance of God's salvational reality and plan is manifested. The responsibility of self-giving, incumbent upon the members of the Church in relationship to her sign function, will take on, however, added significance when Segundo translates the meaning of salvation in terms of liberation.

---

<sup>50</sup>Segundo, De la Sociedad a la Teología, p. 42.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., pp. 43-44.

<sup>52</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 84.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 117. Segundo is here affirming what the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council themselves have stated. See "Gaudium et Spes," article 3, in The Documents of Vatican II, pp. 200-1.

We have already noted in the second chapter of our study that, for Segundo, it is only through authentic love that man realizes his freedom.<sup>54</sup> He is led, moreover, to express love's salvational activity more persistently in terms of a human liberation. Because love implies a liberating service to humanity, Segundo contends that the term 'liberation' speaks more clearly to the social and historical forces of evil which enslave mankind.<sup>55</sup> Salvation signifies the liberation of man from every kind of evil and from the evil which embraces all others: death, sin's radical consequence. The Church must define her mission in terms of liberation. He writes: "The Christian project is the fashioning of love in history, the liberation of the universe from all enslavements that weigh down upon us."<sup>56</sup> The ecclesial community is called upon to shoulder the task of freeing man for the purpose of constructing the world

---

<sup>54</sup> See chapter two of this work, pp. 91-97.

<sup>55</sup> Segundo treats the meaning of the term 'salvation' in his article, "Intelecto y Salvación," in Salvación y Construcción del Mundo (Barcelona: Nova Terra, 1968), pp. 47-86. This article is a reproduction of the paper, which he delivered at the conference of a group of Latin American theologians meeting in Santiago, Chile, in 1966, concerning evangelization and the Christian message. In the interview I had with Segundo in the summer of 1977, he stated that it was at this meeting that he began to express salvation more in terms of liberation because love itself implied service and service, in turn, implied liberation. See Segundo, "Evangelización y humanización: progreso del reino y progreso temporal," in Perspectivas de Diálogo, Montevideo: Centro Pedro Fabro, Año V, no. 41 (marzo 1970): 9-17.

<sup>56</sup> Segundo, Our Idea of God, p. 45.

through a union of love and brotherhood. Her saving mission of liberation seeks to transform historically human existence and consequently embraces man's history of personal and social relationships, corruption, death, and sin.

Segundo writes:

. . . Christ came to free all men from all types of slavery; not only of the supernatural order but from all slavery to which sin holds us subject: hunger, misery, oppression, ignorance, in a word, injustice.<sup>57</sup>

The saving mission of the Church, therefore, is carried out within the temporal order and in relationship to the task of liberation.<sup>58</sup> Segundo insists that to participate in the Church without participating in the process of liberation is not only meaningless but can also be harmful to the very salvation of the individual who looks to the Church for that which she is unable to give apart from her very mission.<sup>59</sup> Everything in the Church, including her structures and sacraments, must serve and aid her saving mission of liberation.

<sup>57</sup> Segundo, "Evangelización y humanización," p. 14.  
" . . . Cristo vino a liberarnos a todos los hombres de todas las esclavitudes; no solo de esclavitudes de orden sobrenatural sino de todas las esclavitudes a que nos tiene sujeto el pecado: el hambre, la miseria, la opresión, la ignorancia, en una palabra, la injusticia."

<sup>58</sup> We will analyze more closely how the Church achieves her liberating task in chapter six of this work.

<sup>59</sup> Segundo, "Evangelización y humanización," p. 14.

In terms of dialogue, Segundo contends that the Church must relate the essence of the Christian message with the task of liberating man.<sup>60</sup> Christians are called to reflect upon their faith, to translate creatively its message in terms of the problems and circumstances posed by human beings who are subjects of history. The ecclesial community, distinguishing itself from the rest of humanity through the revelation it possesses concerning God's plan of salvation, is meant to be a help to the liberating faith that God has already placed in the hearts of men through love. He writes concerning the Church's dialogic function:

It continually stimulates an encounter between faith that is beginning and faith that already knows God's response, so that from these two there may emerge the concrete historical truth that corresponds with God's salvific plan for all men and all ages.<sup>61</sup>

The Church's knowledge of the redemptive mystery, therefore, must be conceived as the message which God sends to mankind

---

<sup>60</sup>Segundo, The Sacraments Today, p. 116. Segundo here notes that in comparing the documents of Medellin with those of Vatican II, an obvious shift of attention can be detected in the former from intramural ecclesiastical problems to those posed by the necessity of translating the Christian faith into practical orientations regarding man's liberation. See also Segundo's article, "Ritmos de Cambio y Pastoral de Conjunto," in Perspectivas de Diálogo, Año IV, no. 35 (julio 1969): 131-37. Here he contends that the problem that the Second Vatican Council planted rose more from the structural life of the Church of Europe, not from the problems of the Latin American and underdeveloped countries. See also Segundo, Our Idea of God, pp. 74-84. Here he affirms that everything in the Church must be translated from 'religious' terms into man's liberating task in history.

<sup>61</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 99.

in order to liberate man from all that which alienates and enslaves him so as to achieve a universal, fraternal union which corresponds to man's divine vocation.

In terms of service, the Church is called to join with and help foster those historical activities of man which lead to greater union and justice. Segundo contends that the Church cannot remain apart from the redemptive and liberating activity of God's love working within human history.<sup>62</sup> Through her faith, she knows that all authentic love is salvific. She must, therefore, join her pastoral activity to those actions and events wherein the objective demands of love are unfolding.<sup>63</sup> She cannot remain apart from them. Segundo maintains that in this way the Church, through her own communitarian efforts of service, can promote or create conditioning factors which will allow love to unfold more fully, although the latter will always be the

---

<sup>62</sup>This is also the conclusion that Segundo has reached in his interpretation of "Gaudium et Spes." He recognizes, however, within the conciliar document an apparent ambiguity. In article 38, the Council Fathers state that love is the basic law of human perfection and hence of the world's transformation. And yet in article 22, the Council Fathers state that the operative grace of the Spirit working in Christians also works in all men of good will, but in an unseen way. Segundo contends that if grace works in an unseen way in non-Christians, the Church must then simply await the questions that they may ask with regard to the value of her faith (and sacraments). No other form of pastoral activity could arise when Christ's grace is operative in men but hidden and known (only) to God. But if the Church, on the other hand, can discern the saving activity of God's love through the actions and events of history, she is called to join herself to them and help promote them. See Segundo, De la Sociedad a la Teología, pp. 49-59.

<sup>63</sup>Segundo, De la Sociedad a la Teología, p. 47.

object of free choice and intense struggle. He writes:

If Christian love is authentic, it will express itself in an ever growing interdependence and unity in the history of human beings. This (cumulative) factor will not make it easier to choose love over egotism. In the face of this option each generation will be equally free. But the person who chooses, out of love, to give himself to others, will have at his disposal greater means and objective possibilities for going further and probing more deeply.<sup>64</sup>

The Church's promotion of man's union, therefore, through the sign of dialogue and service, belongs to the very essence of the Church's liberating mission. To Segundo, membership in the Church signifies shouldering the demands and risks of this responsibility which her mission to humanity implies.<sup>65</sup> As soon as her members detach themselves from this responsibility, then belonging to the Church becomes a backward step on the road to salvation. He writes regarding the Church's awareness of love's reality:

If this possibility for love is turned back in upon itself by mistake, if it is considered to be an instrument and guarantee of salvation itself formed within a context of hollowed efficaciousness, if its formulas are considered to be salvific when they are

---

<sup>64</sup>Segundo, Grace and the Human Condition, p. 126. Segundo offers the example here of a patient undergoing treatment for a mental illness. The process of undergoing a mental cure does not prejudice whether love or egotism will emerge from the patient's regained liberty. Nonetheless, each stage reached in the cure does mean that the dosage of love that does freely arise will be more ample and mature.

<sup>65</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 82.

utilized with material exactitude, then we get a brand of egotism that is elevated to the level of the sacred.<sup>66</sup>

Membership in the Church, therefore, implies responsibility to others, and Segundo contends that to shoulder this responsibility is to feel obligated for something that does not oblige others.<sup>67</sup> As we shall see in our next chapter, this, to Segundo, is what distinguishes the Church from the multitude and establishes her minoritarian character in the midst of humanity. The Church is called to be ferment and savor in the midst of humanity.<sup>68</sup> Her mission is to raise and nourish mankind by her witness. Through her sign-bearing function of dialogue and service, she permeates the world of men, enlivening and quickening its union. It is, moreover, as leaven, as sign of God's liberating salvation, that the Church, to Segundo, manifests her dependence on the world. We will now turn to this particular aspect of Segundo's thought.

### 3. The Dependence of the Church on the World

If the very reason for the Church is to be sign of salvation in the midst of humanity, she must then be intrinsically related to man's history. Segundo contends that

---

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 86. Segundo believes that the biblical images of leaven and salt aptly describe the sign-bearing function of the Church.

this is precisely the portrait which the Church offers of herself in "Gaudium et Spes."<sup>69</sup> The Church could not be a sign of God's liberating love without the world for it is the latter which formulates faith-inspired questions concerning love's reality and it is the very world of men which the Church as sign must seek to illumine and orientate by her witness of dialogue and service. Furthermore, the Church herself is not outside the world but forms a part of it. For this reason, Segundo contends that the expression 'Church-world' is not entirely accurate,<sup>70</sup> for the Church is a portion of humanity and the world, called to dialogue with and serve the rest of man and his world.

Segundo poses the question concerning the type of truth the Church possesses if she does not engage in dialogue.<sup>71</sup> In seeking an answer to the question he analyzes certain affirmations contained within "Gaudium et Spes." The conciliar document affirms that the Church is called to respond in an intelligible language to the perennial questions which men ask about the present life, the life to come,

---

<sup>69</sup>Segundo, Grace and the Human Condition, p. 124. Segundo cites certain affirmations contained in "Gaudium et Spes" which reflect the Church's relationship to man's world. She goes forward together with the rest of humanity and her life is meant to serve as leaven (article 40). She must interpret the signs of the times (article 11). She must search for truth and for the genuine solution to the numerous problems which arise in the life of individuals and from social relationships (article 16). See The Documents of Vatican II, pp. 238-39, 209-10, and 213-14 respectively.

<sup>70</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 70.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

and their relationship.<sup>72</sup> But at the same time the answers to these questions manifest the mutual service that the Church and the world render to each other.<sup>73</sup> To Segundo, what is implied here is that without the questions posed by humanity the Church could not come to a fuller realization and consciousness of the truth of her faith nor adequately possess it.<sup>74</sup> Segundo writes: "To formulate the truth in words and to really possess it are two distinct things."<sup>75</sup> Even though what the Church has defined be true, it is only through dialogue with humanity in light of man's contemporary experience and questions that her dogmas become understandable and the truth which they embrace assimilated into life. For this reason dialogue with the world of men is indispensable for the Church's own understanding of the Christian message. Segundo contends that such was the history of her own dogmatic formulas. He writes:

. . . we believe that the truth defined by the Church was never such without being related to the world and its problems. In her own way, and with the limitations

---

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 70. Segundo is citing the statement of "Gaudium et Spes," article 4, affirming the Church's need to respond to such questions. See The Documents of Vatican II; pp. 201-3.

<sup>73</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 70; "Gaudium et Spes," article 11 in The Documents of Vatican II, pp. 209-10.

<sup>74</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, pp. 70-71.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

imposed by her outlook and her contacts with the rest of humanity, the Church has never turned totally into herself.<sup>76</sup>

To Segundo, therefore, through the Church's dialogue with the world, the ecclesial community grows in her own understanding of the Christian message from the contemporary experience and questions of humanity, for from the latter she seeks to translate her faith into understandable truth, that is, truth capable of being possessed. He, moreover, reflects upon the consequences of assenting to Christian dogma without intellectual comprehension. The formulas of truth can easily become more important than their reflective assimilation in the life of the believer, as if it were the mere consent to the former that guaranteed and assured salvation. He writes that dialogue or free discussion which the former implies

. . . is necessary because it is the effort which must always be renewed to make the revealed or defined formula a possessed truth, creative of giving responses to the questions of realities continually new.<sup>77</sup>

The Church, furthermore, must translate her faith into practical orientations to serve humanity in her mission of liberation. The consequences of not fulfilling that task

---

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>77</sup> Segundo, De la Sociedad a la Teología, pp. 71-72.  
 " . . . es necesaria porque es el esfuerzo que siempre hay que renovar por hacer de la fórmula revelada o definida una verdad propia, creadora de respuestas a los interrogantes de realidades continuamente nuevas."

would be to separate the historical efficacy of service and the saving efficacy of redemption,<sup>78</sup> creating a dualism contradicting the meaning of the Incarnation. If God's saving reality is truly operative in history, the Church is continually called to reflect upon her faith in light of the human condition so as to respond more efficaciously to the signs of God's liberation. Segundo writes:

In effect, if . . . salvation realizes itself already here within human time and in relationship to an historic task, although the hope of its ultimate eschatological realization is preserved, the Christian message loses necessarily its magic character. It is not a question of mysterious and mysteriously efficacious formulas but of its intellectual content which requires an understanding in relationship with actual human tasks.<sup>79</sup>

The transmission of the Christian message, therefore, must be faithful not only to divine revelation but also to the questions and condition of humanity to which the Church's mission of liberation is directed. It is a message that must illuminate and orientate her own activity as well as it seeks to efficaciously respond in service to mankind in

---

<sup>78</sup>Segundo, "Intelecto y Salvación," p. 55.

<sup>79</sup>Segundo, De la Sociedad a la Teología, p. 105.  
 "En efecto, si . . . la salvación tiene lugar ya aquí dentro del tiempo humano y con relación a una tarea histórica, aunque la esperanza de su última realización ultraterrena quede vigente, el mensaje cristiano pierde necesariamente su carácter mágico. No se trata de fórmulas misteriosas y misteriosamente eficaces, sino de contenidos intelectuales que requieren una comprensión, en relación con tareas humanas actuales."

given circumstances.<sup>80</sup>

Consequently, to Segundo, the Church as sign of salvation cannot develop as a world apart, as a perfect society unrelated to man's life and expectations. She is called rather to enter more profoundly man's history and with her message and service of faith be an understandable sign of God's redemptive mystery of love. Without man and his world the Church would perish in isolation and become unintelligible, divorced from the expectations and needs of humanity.<sup>81</sup> As we have already noted, it is Segundo's contention that this had been to a large extent the condition of the Church in Latin America.<sup>82</sup>

#### 4. Conclusions

We have attempted to discern Segundo's thought concerning the necessity and function of the Church within the world. The ecclesial community is seen by him as offering

---

<sup>80</sup>Segundo develops a hermeneutic to interpret the word of God afresh in light of the continuing changes in man's individual and social reality within which faith seeks to exercise itself in love and service. See his work, The Liberation of Theology, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976), pp. 7-38. In our sixth chapter we shall analyze how, to Segundo, the faith activity of the Church achieves its mission.

<sup>81</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, "Pastoral Latinoamericana: hora de decisión," in Mensaje, Santiago, vol. 4, no. 127 (marzo-abril 1964): 74-82. See also Segundo, De la Sociedad a la Teología, pp. 31-48 and his article, "La Teología, problema latinoamericano," IDOC, no. 68-14 (4 julio 1968).

<sup>82</sup>See chapter one of this work, pp. 37-40.

something decisively important. Through the Church, love's reality and dimensions are revealed so that mankind can avail itself of that which is so crucial for its destiny and salvation. The Church is enabled to respond to the questions which all authentic love poses concerning its worthiness, meaning, and destiny, and thereby she reveals the fullness of life to man, his ultimate obligations and purpose within history. To Segundo, because the ecclesial community possesses awareness of the redemptive dimensions and reality of love, the Church constitutes a new vital order which culminates the universal process of evolution. She allows man's consciousness to advance and grow in light of a future which is based on the firmness of an objective purpose and design for humanity. She reveals the complexity of love and by her witness seeks to promote its progress and justify love's efforts, hoping through that very witness that men and women will eventually decide for love. Segundo contends that the Church in this way is the personalizing leaven of the universe, illuminating love's reality by her message and life. As leaven she signifies love's reality through her own communitarian life and through her dialogue with and service to the world. In this way she becomes a sign of God's universal salvific plan of recapitulation. Her primary concern is the transparency of her sign function, for the Church exists for the world. Membership in the ecclesial community implies assuming the responsibility of her mission to mankind--a mission which

Segundo describes as an activity of liberation. The Church only aids the salvation of those who belong to her when their membership corresponds with her function toward humanity. To be a Christian is to belong to a community which has been sent into the world, aiding the latter with the knowledge of love's mystery and a life of liberating service. To look for salvation within the Church apart from the responsibility which her very mission implies is a contradiction. Segundo poses the question, however, whether the Church, given the obligation of service and dialogue she represents within humanity, has possibilities of achieving an adhesion of the masses. In seeking an answer to that question from his thought, we will strive to clarify even more his conception of the Church's mission and the manner in which he believes she exercises her universality.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE MINORITARIAN DIMENSION OF THE CHURCH

In the last chapter we have attempted to explore with Segundo his conception of the Church's mission: to be a sign of dialogue and service to the world of men. To look for salvation within the Church apart from the responsibility which her sign-bearing function implies is, to Segundo, a contradiction. Christians, knowing the mystery of love through their faith in Jesus Christ, must embrace the obligation and responsibility of self-giving which their very membership in the Church requires. Segundo, therefore, is led to ask himself whether this obligation of self-giving, assumed as a real responsibility through dialogue and service, has possibilities of achieving an adhesion of the masses. /The answer to this question has great implications for him regarding the Church's pastoral and missionary efforts. It is his contention that the Latin American Church has been and still is to a large extent still preoccupied with keeping vast numbers of people within her boundaries through her general rule of pastoral prudence: the minimum

of demands to maintain the greatest number of people.<sup>1</sup> In this way, to Segundo, the universality of the Church is still conceived and presented in terms of quantity, of numbers. And within this conception of ecclesial universality is revealed an operative image of the Church: that she is for the benefit of those who belong to her and is always the best place to attain salvation.<sup>2</sup>

Segundo maintains that it was the historical phenomenon known as Christendom which most reflected this very image of the Church, stressing her universality through quantitative extension, that is, through the incorporation of vast numbers of people into her institution. He believes that the key problem confronting the contemporary Church in Latin America is that of the 'crisis of Christendom.'<sup>3</sup> The closed rural environments of the past once ensured that the Christian faith would be passed on from one generation to the next by the simple fact of birth and upbringing. The adhesion of great numbers to the Church was maintained to a large extent by the external pressures of the Christian and civic institutions of society. The 'Christian' life of the people relied heavily upon the support of the social milieu

---

<sup>1</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, Acción Pastoral Latinoamericana: Sus Motivos Ocultos (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Búsqueda, 1972), p. 68. See also Segundo's article, "Pastoral latinoamericana: hora de decisión," in Mensaje, vol. iv, no. 127 (marzo-abril 1964): 74-82..

<sup>2</sup>Segundo, Acción Pastoral Latinoamericana, pp. 70-71.

<sup>3</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía? II Los Principios (Montevideo: Mimeográfica "Luz," 1964), p. 95.

which the Church herself enveloped. But the rapid advance of secularization in Latin America, together with the accelerating growth of urban centers, challenged dramatically the value and meaning of the Christian faith and at the same time revealed a religious life on the part of vast numbers that was woefully inadequate to defend itself against the competing values of a society grown much more pluralistic.<sup>4</sup> The masses of Latin American Christians had not been evangelized. Their faith was neither interiorly formed nor reflected personal conversion to the gospel. As soon as secular benefits were won without having to pay heed to the most minimal exigencies of Christian membership in the Church, the tendency of the masses was to choose the easier way out.

Segundo believes that this 'crisis of Christendom,' which the secularization process has provoked, can be a stimulus to rediscover a more authentic vision of the Church, both from an analysis of the facts of Christendom itself and the data of Revelation. In the first part of this chapter we will explore what in fact the historical phenomenon of Christendom means to Segundo with respect to the Church's conception of herself as well as her mission within the world. He asks whether Christianity is compatible with a mass historical movement known as Christendom. Is the latter an ideal form of Christianity's pretensions to

---

<sup>4</sup>Segundo, "Pastoral latinoamericana: hora de decisión," pp. 74-82.

universality? Segundo wishes to understand the phenomenon of Christendom as a fact of past history because he feels it still frequently continues to affect the outlook of the pastoral efforts of the contemporary Church in Latin America--efforts geared to maintain the masses within her boundaries. Secondly we wish to analyze what Segundo considers to be the intrinsic minoritarian character of Christianity gleaned from the data of Revelation. It is his contention that Christendom's conception of the Church is capable of formulating a question to which the data of Revelation provide an answer concerning the Church's inherent dimensions. In this same section we will also explore Segundo's thought concerning the minoritarian character of Christianity from the perspective of evolution. Segundo maintains that the Christian message must be viewed from an evolutionary outlook but that the latter should not decide the content of the former. Rather, to Segundo, since an evolutionary perspective is more in tune with contemporary man's understanding of himself and the world, the Christian message must be necessarily translated into the language of evolution. He believes an evolutionary outlook serves as the key to understanding more adequately the intrinsic dimensions of sin and redemption.<sup>5</sup> And finally, in our third section, we will explore Segundo's conception of the minoritarian dimension of the Church in relationship to the

---

<sup>5</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, Evolution and Guilt, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1974), p. 59.

obligations of her sign-bearing function within the world. This hopefully will serve to highlight how Segundo conceives the Church as exercising her universality through her very mission in the world.

1. Christendom: Christianity  
of the Masses

It is Segundo's belief that in Christendom the Church undertook an impossible task of trying to take in a mass of non-evangelized Christians without vitiating her message and function.<sup>6</sup> He first questions, however, whether Christendom as it developed in the West after the time of Constantine was the ideal situation (utopia) which the Church would strive to achieve in all times and places. Segundo seeks to answer this question by first investigating the historical and sociological facts of the relationship between Christendom and Christianity. He treats this investigation in the first part of his two-volume work, La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía?<sup>7</sup> In this section we will explore the results of Segundo's study and draw upon certain conclusions he reached which are also reflected in many of his other writings, especially in his work, The Community Called Church.

<sup>6</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, The Community Called Church, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973), p. 47.

<sup>7</sup>Segundo, La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía? I Los Hechos (Montevideo: Mimeográfica "Luz," 1964).

For Segundo, it is historically certain that the masses did not enter the Church through personal conversion on the part of each member but rather on the basis of decisions by those who possessed authority.<sup>8</sup> Among other examples he employs is the action of Henry VIII which led the whole of England into a religious schism lasting up to the present. Moreover, the conversion of the barbarian peoples, he contends, reflects even more clearly the passivity of the masses regarding their passage from paganism to Christianity. Christianity reached the masses more from the conversion of political authorities who in turn placed civil institutions at the service of the Church, thus creating social pressure on the local level.<sup>9</sup> The masses submitted to these institutions because through them they gained secular benefits not obtained otherwise. Public customs and ways of thinking were bathed in Christianity so that becoming part of society almost automatically meant becoming a member of the Church. Segundo writes:

Christendom, sociologically speaking, in effect consists in the fact that one can become a Christian without going to the sources, without conversion, without restructuring one's personal relationship with the absolute.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 3-4.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 18. "La cristianidad consiste, en efecto, sociologicamente hablando, en el hecho de que se puede ser cristiano sin ir a las fuentes, sin metanoia, sin reestructurar la relación personal con lo absoluto."

Segundo contends that through Christendom the Church sought to apply to Christian membership the same mechanisms that helped secure membership in civil society, hoping thereby to achieve a parallel result. The Christianizing of civil institutions helped to facilitate the masses' choice regarding Christianity, for without the pressure of such institutions that choice would not have been nearly so extensive and universal.<sup>11</sup> Basically, to Segundo, the institutions of society known as Christendom were turned into mechanisms for creating and maintaining Christians. They made it easy and advantageous to embrace an ideal which was in itself the most difficult and complex in the world. Segundo writes:

We call Christianity that which can only be transmitted by personal conviction. Christendom, on the other hand, is something which is transmitted together with the institutions of civil society and which is lost with them.<sup>12</sup>

Segundo, moreover, believes that the convergence of at least four general factors were concomitant with the

---

<sup>11</sup>Segundo, La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía?, I pp. 4-7.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 87. "Llamamos cristianismo a lo que puede solo transmitirse por convicción personal. La cristianidad, en cambio, es algo que se trasmite junto con las instituciones civiles de la sociedad y que se pierde con ellas."

institutionalization process of the Church within Christendom.<sup>13</sup> The first factor was that new members no longer entered Christianity through personal conversion but rather through the simple process of birth. Personal and interior conversion to faith was gradually replaced by mere vegetative growth. A second factor, to Segundo, reflected a shift of stress with regard to the aims and goals of the Church herself. The Church's institutional life tended to become an end in itself and her overriding preoccupation. Within this institutional concern was her interest in 'preserving' the faith of those who had been born into Christianity. Segundo writes that the institutional Church:

. . . tried to reduce the unpredictable elements in its members' behavior patterns to established routine forms. In short, the institution tended to become polarized around its normative function: i.e., regulating the conduct of its members, fixing goals, and prescribing or proscribing for the purpose of ensuring stability.<sup>14</sup>

The presentation of the gospel message as a summons to conversion was replaced by the Church's efforts to teach a faith that was already hereditary.

The third factor, to Segundo, was the Church's ability to institutionalize not only her members' interior life but also her very presence within the temporal order.

---

<sup>13</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, pp. 45-46, p. 49, footnote 7. Segundo realizes that in describing these four factors there is a risk of oversimplification. He does not deny the authentic holiness or aesthetic values that flourished during Christendom.

<sup>14</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 45.

The Church became intimately identified with established society and often her faith became transformed into a well-knit ideology that defended her growing temporal power.

Segundo writes:

. . . the Church used the civil institutions of the State to make Christianity available to the masses of the Empire; and the State used the Church in order (among other purposes) to instill into the masses a morality to help them fulfill their civic duties.<sup>15</sup>

And the fourth factor, to Segundo, was that the universality of the Church was envisioned in quantitative terms. The political boundaries of the Empire coincided with those of the Christian world. The Church was universal because all men belonged to her. The 'oneness' of faith was no longer an isolated phenomenon. He writes: "The pagan was no longer someone whom you lived with or near; in a Christian world there were no pagans, just good and bad Christians."<sup>16</sup>

And yet, to Segundo, underlying all these four factors was another very important fact: through Christendom Christianity had become a religion of the masses. It is his contention that the masses are precisely those people who delegate their power of judgment and decision to others in any given area of existence. In this way no one person belongs completely to the masses for in the last

---

<sup>15</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, "Social Justice and Revolution," in America Vol. 118, no. 7 (April 1968): 575.

<sup>16</sup> Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 46.

analysis that depends upon whether potentially free decisions are shouldered as such on any given level. Likewise, there is always a 'mass' element operative in every individual.

He writes:

Mass refers to a complex of human beings who allow those around them to take charge of thinking, choosing, and acting in their place. Thus it is clearly not a specific social class but a line of conduct. Mass is defined here in terms of liberty, in terms of not thinking, in terms of allowing oneself to be led by others. Thus it is equivalent to inertia, passivity, non-liberty. And it should also be noted that there is always a 'mass' element left in every man. . . . There are zones and behavior patterns of non-liberty.<sup>17</sup>

To Segundo, authentic conversion to the gospel demands a personal and interior response which is free; it can never be taken for granted or instilled by social osmosis. Christianity by its very nature requires such an interiorized adhesion for it is at root a call to freedom and personal authenticity.<sup>18</sup> It embraces a message of true love which tenaciously resists leaving out the freedom of the individual to attain a more rapid result. The Christian ideal must be chosen because of its absolute value,<sup>1</sup> for it doesn't have any other. Segundo writes:

---

<sup>17</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, Grace and the Human Condition, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973), p. 51.

<sup>18</sup>Segundo, La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía?, I p. 92.

Christianity in its pure essence is an election which each person realizes with respect to God. It is an election conditioned by history, certainly, but it does not have as its object history.<sup>19</sup>

Segundo maintains that man cannot heed and respond to God's call which Christianity reveals if he continues to be part of the mass and lets others choose for him while remaining passive before the divine summons to responsibility. Conversion only begins when human liberty manages to slip away from the weight of mass attitudes.<sup>20</sup> The God who is Love cannot fulfill the social role of justifying the stereotypes which are the basis for social adhesion on the mass level. God's grace is His free communication searching for a response in the human person that is equally free. As such God seeks to inspire man to the difficult venture of shouldering personal authenticity. Segundo writes: "Being a Christian and fully shouldering the life of grace involves a perduring obligation to seek authenticity, liberty and truth."<sup>21</sup> And yet, for Segundo, such a responsibility is not to be found in the mass element as such.

Segundo explores why the Christian ideal and summons cannot be embraced by the mass. He contends that the

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 16. "El cristianismo en su esencia más pura, es una elección que cada hombre realiza con respecto a Dios. Elección condicionada por la historia, ciertamente, pero que no tiene como objeto a la historia."

<sup>20</sup> Segundo, Grace and the Human Condition, p. 53.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

Christian ideal is not immediately efficacious in the visible history of people.<sup>22</sup> The Christian faith knows that God works more through love and self-giving and therefore does not wait passively for the divine to alleviate the social and personal problems of man through miraculous interventions within the temporal order. The life of faith facilitates little in an immediate way and, moreover, implies a life of self-denial and suffering in its very efforts to respond to the needs of men. By itself the Christian ideal lacks the objective means to respond immediately to man's most pressing problems. Its efficacy many times is long termed. Segundo writes:

The first element which arises from an examination of the Christian ideal . . . is its incapacity to resolve the most immediate problems of the life of man. It is not Christianity, in effect, which is going to provide for the most urgent necessities of existence.<sup>23</sup>

But if, for Segundo, the Christian ideal reflects mediacy regarding its efficaciousness within history, it also at the same time implies complexity.<sup>24</sup> The Christian ideal contains all authentically human values, the personal as well as the social, justice and charity, liberty together

<sup>22</sup>Segundo, La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía?, I p. 22.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 20. "El primer elemento que surge de este examen del ideal cristiano . . . es su incapacidad para resolver los problemas más inmediatos de la vida del hombre. No es el cristianismo, en efecto, quien va a proveer a las necesidades más urgentes de la existencia."

<sup>24</sup>Segundo, La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía?, I p. 26.

with dogma, social transformation, and love for the individual. It resists any facile suppression of any authentic value and continually leaves room for new values which have not previously been incorporated into the life of the individual or society. Christianity refuses to reduce its members to quantitative uniformity for it bases itself on a love which respects and calls forth the differences of individuals so that they may contribute their creative potential to the welfare of the whole. In other words, Christianity in essence implies complexity for its members are called to realize authentic love in history, resisting simplicity, facile actions, so as to attain a richer synthesis of elements.<sup>25</sup>

To Segundo, therefore, the Christian ideal is both mediate and complex and for this reason, he contends, it has little probability of being freely chosen by the mass. The latter tends automatically to that which can be touched, counted, possessed, and accumulated through ease and immediacy, that is, through the law of minimal effort. He writes:

. . . to the measure in which the masses choose for themselves among various ideals, the most complicated and less mediate ideal has no possibility of being elected massively.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 26-29.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 40. " . . . en la medida en que las masas eligen por sí mismas entre varios ideales de vida, el ideal mas complicado y menos inmediato no tiene ninguna posibilidad de ser elegido masivamente."

Segundo maintains that the thrust of the masses according to the law of minimal effort is in the direction of simplistic, mechanical syntheses while Christianity's call to liberty and love always implies a perduring struggle which embraces a painful conversion. To him, the formulary aspect concerning the assent to faith was, in Christendom, given precedence over the richer aspects of New Testament thought which saw this assent as the total consecration of man to God by way of response to God's summons. Segundo writes that in Christendom:

. . . the formulas of faith and ritual tend to be simplified and made more immediate. Simplification, a typical by-product of mass living, makes them appear as possessing a value which can be ascertained with material exactness.

. . . . .  
The notion of immediacy refers to the tendency to attribute to these formulas an automatic effect, one which achieves its purpose without involving the creative power of liberty.<sup>27</sup>

The masses who belonged to the Church believed her to be the depository of privileged grace, the possession of which depended more upon the conditions of sacramental validity than upon the responsible disposition of the receiver conscious of his Christian obligations. Moreover, to Segundo, when Christianity became the religion of the masses in the West, it distinguished between the commandments and the evangelical counsels.<sup>28</sup> The latter were for religious

<sup>27</sup>Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 37.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 91.

people who aspired to perfection. The harsher demands of the gospel were understood as being directed toward those who were living a more intense spiritual life. Christianity consequently appeared on the one hand to be the most difficult and sublime ideal to be realized in life, and at the same time within Christendom it also revealed itself as a life-style that God had determined for the masses. To Segundo, the reality of Christendom manifested the annulment of the tension between the gospel ideal and the attitudes and movement of the masses. One of the constants in Christian existence--the permanent process of tension, creative striving, and struggle--was replaced on the popular level with what was considered to be minimally adequate. Segundo writes:

Christian existence can never measure itself against the bare minimum required to justify the label "Christian." It must measure itself against the maximum reality, as yet unattained: Christ, the image of the Father's perfection.<sup>29</sup>

Segundo believes that the problem of a Christianity of the masses which Christendom represents is capable of formulating a question to which the data of Revelation can give an answer. He maintains that the gospel itself raises the problem of Christianity's massive realization. We will now turn to analyze Segundo's thought concerning

---

<sup>29</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, *The Sacraments Today*, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1974), p. 40.

the response he believes the Scriptures themselves offer.

## 2. The Minoritarian Character of Christianity

Segundo goes, therefore, to the New Testament Revelation in order to ascertain from Christianity's 'principles' whether the gospel message indicates an answer to the question of Christianity's massive realization in history. His interest is in whether the original Christian message was aimed at the masses as such, so that it must be thought out and propagated in those terms, or whether it was in fact aimed at minorities who were destined to play an essential role in the transformation and liberation of the masses. After considering Segundo's reflections on the Scriptures regarding this problem, we will also explore in this section what he considers to be the response which the process of evolution itself indicates throughout the whole pageant of its ascending advance. It is Segundo's contention that the response both from the data of revelation and from the perspective of evolution are essentially in agreement.

### a. The Response from the Data of Revelation

It is in the second volume of his work, La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía?,<sup>30</sup> where Segundo first considers the New

<sup>30</sup>Segundo, La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía?, II.

Testament response to the problem which Christendom raises concerning the universal pretensions of Christianity regarding its acceptance by great numbers, that is, on the scale of the masses. Segundo first turns to the gospel of John and particularly to its Prologue to understand the evangelist's use of the term 'world.' He contends that the term 'world' as here employed by John has three particular meanings.<sup>31</sup> It indicates a place, first of all, the land of men or human existence. "The Word was in the world" (John 1:10). But the world also owed its existence to God because it was created by Him (John 1:10). The world is not therefore some neutral place but rather becomes a sign demanding recognition of its Author. The third meaning of the term 'world' becomes pejorative, for the world did not recognize its maker (John 1:10). The world becomes identified with the no opposed to the Word<sup>32</sup> and represents a collective rejection, at least in its quantitative aspect. Segundo writes:

. . . although there are those who have recognized him, this does not impede John from stating simply that the world had denied him. The fact is that 'his own' do not constitute, for John, the world. They escape the world: the collectivity is identified with the negative position.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp. 1-3.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid. " . . . aunque haya quienes lo han reconocido, eso no impide que Juan simplemente hable del mundo como habiendolo negado. Es que los 'suyos' no constituyen, para Juan, el mundo. Ellos escapan al mundo: el conjunto se identifica con la posición negativa."

Segundo contends that John employs throughout his gospel the term 'world' at least a hundred times and in fifty-one of them the term possesses a clearly pejorative connotation, referring to something structural and not merely to a simple statistic.<sup>34</sup> The world as a structure is incapable of recognizing Christ. It is not able to receive the spirit of truth (John 14:17). It does not become an object of Jesus' prayer (John 17:9). The world is capable of neither seeing nor knowing (John 14:17); it hates what is not its own (John 15:19). Jesus attacks his adversaries for being of the world (John 8:23, 17:14, 15:19). His very mission is to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). In the epistles of John, Segundo believes the world presents itself in a similar fashion--as a collective, negative force.<sup>35</sup> The content of the world is nothing but the yearning of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life (I John 2:16). The world hears only that which is its own (I John 4:5). It lies in the power of the demons (I John 5:19).

Segundo is led to ask himself what this structural incapacity of the world is which refuses so consistently the truth and the approach of God. He believes that for John the world represents a closed, conservative ideology unable to receive the novelty which truth and authentic freedom

---

<sup>34</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, Masas y Minorías (Buenos Aires: Editorial La Aurora, 1973), pp. 37-41.

<sup>35</sup>Segundo, La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía?, II pp. 48-49.

imply.<sup>36</sup> The world only loves what it has decided to love and hates everything outside of its own convenience.

Segundo writes that the world " . . . is the closed, conservative, a-historical structure of society which refuses itself to any novelty."<sup>37</sup> The world represents a vicious circle which feeds upon itself; it is a state of slavery opposed to doing the truth, opposed therefore to Christ (John 7:7). The world's praxis is bad and therefore flees from the light so that it will not be criticized (John 3:19-20). And this rejection on the part of the world appears as a constant (John 15:18-19, 17:14-16).

But if the world represents such a negative structural tendency, closed to the truth, Segundo maintains that John also makes clear that Christ is nevertheless the Savior of the world who comes to redeem it (John 3:16-17, 12:47).<sup>38</sup> The world continues to be the human community despite the dominance of its negative force. The disciples of Christ are elected from the world but are not to leave it; they are to remain within it (John 17:6, 17:15, 17:18). To save the world Jesus introduces his light into it and judges the world by the very fact of living in it committed to the truth. He warns his disciples concerning the difficulties they will continue to have in the world, but yet insists

---

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>37</sup>Segundo, Masas y Minorías, p. 45. " . . . la estructura cerrada, conservadora, a-histórica, de una sociedad que se rehusa a cualquier novedad."

<sup>38</sup>Segundo, Masas y Minorías, pp. 44-45.

that he has actually conquered it (John 16:33). Concerning Christ's victory, Segundo writes:

It is a question then of a victory sui generis: that is, while mentioning his victory, he [Jesus] warns them [his disciples] that the quantitative forces which entered the battle will continue manifesting the same desproportion as before.<sup>39</sup>

Christ's victory is qualitative. He conquers the world by liberating men subject to its destructive lie through the light of his praxis and his word of truth. Segundo writes: ". . . the qualitative victory is the light of truth shed upon the ideological, conservative mechanisms of the human social structure."<sup>40</sup> The Word brings the light of its love and demands to the darkness of the world which is incapable of receiving them unless its closed system of desires, convenience and facility is broken.<sup>41</sup> Men must escape from being led by such a mechanism which closes itself to truth and freedom, and this can only be done through a new birth in the Spirit, from on high (John 3:3-5). The world's game of facility and convenience is revealed by Jesus for what it is: sin, because he unmaskes its conservative ideology

---

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 47. "Se trata entonces de una victoria sui generis: o sea que, al mencionar su victoria, les advierte que las fuerzas cuantativas que entraron en la batalla seguirán manifestando la misma desproporción antes."

<sup>40</sup>Segundo, Masas y Minorías, p. 45. ". . . la victoria cualitativa es la luz de la verdad arrojada sobre los mecanismos ideológicos, conservadores, de la estructura social humana."

<sup>41</sup>Segundo, La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía?, II pp. 50-51.

and thereby discloses the lie behind it. Segundo writes:

. . . the game of facility which impedes the richer human syntheses is not sin in the same measure in which it acts disguised as an ideology. . . . But once the mask is removed, it must confront a judgment which will permit it to see the . . . past together with the present, as a sin against man.<sup>42</sup>

Because Segundo believes that the pejorative meaning of the term 'world' in the writings of John embraces a clear and even explicit reference to the same mechanisms of ease and simplicity characterized by the attitudes of the masses which tend to suffocate truth and freedom, he writes:

The most important conclusion of this whole exegesis of the word "world" . . . is the following: not only would it be contradictory that the victory of Christ be realized through the adoption by the masses of his message since his message is anti-masivo. Much more: the revolution of the Christian message about God consists in being essentially a message anti-masivo. A call of God to an attitude exactly contrary to the attitude of the masses, then, today, always. And an attitude anti-masiva at the service precisely of the multitude.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup>Segundo, Masas y Minorías, p. 48. ". . . el juego de la facilidad que impide las síntesis humanas más ricas no es pecado en la medida misma en que actúa disfrazada de ideología. . . . Pero una vez quitado el disfraz, tiene que enfrentarse con un juicio que le hace ver el . . . pasado junto con el presente, como un pecado contra el hombre."

<sup>43</sup>Segundo, Masas y Minorías, p. 48. "La conclusión más importante de toda esa exégesis de la palabra "mundo" . . . es la siguiente: no se trata solamente de que sería contradictorio el que la victoria de Cristo se tradujera en la adopción por las masas de su mensaje ya que su mensaje es anti-masivo. Mucho más: la revolución del mensaje cristiano sobre Dios consiste en ser esencialmente un mensaje anti-masivo. Un llamado a Dios a una actitud exactamenta opuesta a la actitud masiva, de entonces, de hoy, de siempre. Y una actitud anti-masiva al servicio precisamente de la multitud." The underlining is mine.

Segundo maintains that this negative, structural force which the world represents works in all men, and he turns to the writings of Paul to clarify even more its operative significance in human existence.<sup>44</sup>

He maintains that for Paul all of humanity is under the power of sin, which the apostle understands as a condition which subdues and enslaves men against their own will.<sup>45</sup> To Segundo, when Paul analyzes human existence (see especially Romans 7:14-25), he considers the flesh as the very source of evil and calls it "the law of the members."<sup>46</sup> The flesh is opposed to the law of the interior man (also called reason) and represents the natural structure of the creature submitting man to the world and to nature. The flesh resists the realizations and actions which the 'spiritual' man desires and here is where sin takes possession of man. Segundo contends that the resistance of the flesh to the spirit (the law of the interior man) can be described as the opposition between nature and freedom.

It is necessary . . . to look for the actual translation of the antinomy flesh-spirit . . . in the metaphysical duality nature-person or, if you wish, nature-liberty.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup>Segundo, La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía?, II pp. 25-44.

<sup>45</sup>See pages 93-94 of chapter two of our work where we have briefly treated Paul's conception of human existence in the thought of Segundo.

<sup>46</sup>Segundo, La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía?, II pp. 40-41.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 42. "Es preciso . . . buscar la traducción actual de la antinomia carne-espíritu . . . en la dualidad metafísica naturaleza-persona o, si se quiere, naturaleza-libertad."

Nature here represents man's natural, necessary reality, that which is in fact not chosen by him. Liberty, on the other hand, represents value, the good which ought to be. That is the dichotomy which Segundo considers Paul as presenting when the latter states that he doesn't do what he desires but that which he detests (Romans 7:15).<sup>48</sup> The flesh ignores value, the good which man's liberty believes ought to be. In other words, the fleshy things of the world dominate man both from within and without in spite of the value of his liberty and lead him to facility and the impersonal.

Segundo consequently sees a close similarity between the pejorative meaning of the term 'world' in the writings of John and the term 'flesh' in the writings of Paul. He writes:

The same opposition to light and liberty; the same tendency to facility and the impersonal which John saw personified in men or in groups who had opposed the Word, Paul sees as rising from the very depths of man's being.<sup>49</sup>

Both 'world' and 'flesh' refer to a negative structural tendency closing man off to freedom and truth. But to Segundo, it is the Pauline term, 'flesh,' which manifests

---

<sup>48</sup>Segundo, La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía?, II p. 42.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 89. "La misma oposición a la luz y a la libertad, la misma tendencia a la facilidad y a lo impersonal que Juan veía personificada en los hombres o en los grupos que se habían opuesto al Verbo, Pablo los ve surgir de la profundidad misma del ser humano."

more clearly how all men bear in themselves the no of the massive element resisting the divine summons to love and liberty in contrast to the yes of the minoritarian element which accepts the responsibility of that call.<sup>50</sup> Two forces, therefore, are found in every man: the massive element, the weight which the human condition (nature) brings to bear on the liberty of men and which seeks to take over through ease and egotism, and the force of love which realizes man's authentic self, his person, and freedom.

The reason that Segundo considers that the yes of man to love and liberty is minoritarian in relationship to the influence of the flesh is because of the essential disparity between love and egotism, between liberty and the impersonal. They are not on the same planes. He writes:

Remember that man emerges from non-liberty. Everything achieved by love is inscribed in the positive history of humanity. Everything effected by egotism is a return to the blind force of the pre-human.<sup>51</sup>

In this way, he contends, an act of love cancels innumerable sins. The super-abundance and victory of grace of which St. Paul speaks (Romans 5:20) does not consist in improving the ratio between acts of love and acts of egotism. They are not situated vis-à-vis the Absolute in the same way. Man must gradually emerge from a determining nature and personally shoulder the course of his destiny. The victory of

<sup>50</sup>Segundo, La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía?, II pp. 89-90.

<sup>51</sup>Segundo, Grace and the Human Condition, p. 149.

grace is, therefore, qualitative, understood as every emergence of a yes among the multitude of no's which the human condition represents.

Segundo maintains, however, that for Paul Christians must assume the responsibility of love and freedom and live not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit of Christ (Gal. 6; 2 Cor. 5:16-17).<sup>52</sup> Theirs is a perduring obligation to manifest the minoritarian tendency which the acceptance of God's self-gift implies: the continual struggle to embrace love and truth and live it in their flesh.

Consequently the New Testament message, to Segundo, expects the Christian community to perform a function that is equivalent to one of the two poles: the minority. In providing that minoritarian function there will always be a dialectical tension with the mass element. To understand what Segundo means by this dialectical tension, it is necessary to understand what he conceives as the intrinsic necessity of grace (love and liberty) to pass through the flesh and the world.

Segundo maintains that the world for John and the flesh for Paul are the indispensable locus for the realization of love and liberty.<sup>53</sup> They represent for them one, powerfully structured force, a system with its own law. Segundo maintains that the law regulating the former tends

---

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>53</sup>Segundo, La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía?, II p. 77.

to maintain the balance and cohesiveness of the whole with regard to the eruption of anything new and renders at the same time predictable the attitudes and reactions of the multitude.<sup>54</sup> He contends, moreover, that if love is to be authentic and real, it must be tied precisely to that predictability; without the latter the concrete needs of others would not be known, and the response of love would remain abstract. He writes:

. . . if men were absolutely free, if they were capable normally of grasping the determinisms of the universe without in any way becoming their slaves, love . . . would also be . . . practically impossible. There would then only be an abstract charity, the pure desire of giving or of giving oneself, but without the possibility of doing it really, because the need of each man would be absolutely unforeseen and unknowable.<sup>55</sup>

In other words, to Segundo, the possibility for real love is tied to the prevision of the needs of the other and to the limitation which these very needs imply regarding his liberty. That which places each man at the reach of the other's love is in great measure his lack of liberty, his submission to nature and to the attitudes of the mass.

Segundo writes:

---

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., pp. 63-64.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 76. " . . . si los hombres fueran absolutamente libres, si fueran capaces normalmente de empuñar los determinismos del universo sin volverse para nada sus esclavos, el amor . . . sería también . . . prácticamente imposible. Habría entonces solamente una caridad abstracta, el puro deseo de dar o darse, pero sin la posibilidad de hacerlo realmente, porque las necesidades de cada hombre serían absolutamente imprevisibles e incognoscibles."

Without the no of the majority, the world would consist of monads inaccessible to any love which would use the materials of this world. Each man would open himself only towards his interior. His flesh, with the windows of the senses, in reality would be no more than a type of transcendental illusion.<sup>56</sup>

Love, therefore, if it is not to remain abstract, must respond to the concrete needs which the flesh and the world render foreseeable and knowable and employ the materials of this world in its very response. The ambiguity that the flesh and the world imply is that they not only offer resistance to man's efforts of love and liberty, but are the only place where the latter can work themselves out. The world of men is the very object of love and liberty. To give into its mechanisms, however, is to oppose the divine summons but to give one's life for the world is to follow the path of Christ himself, who came into the world (and the flesh) in order to save it.

We have attempted to analyze Segundo's reflections concerning what he conceives as the response of the New Testament message concerning Christianity's pretensions to embrace the masses. To the extent that the latter's conduct is inherently opposed to the exigencies of the Christian message, he believes that Christianity is inherently minoritarian. Christians are called to accept the continual

---

<sup>56</sup> Segundo, La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía?, II pp. 76-77. "Sin el no de la mayoría, el mundo estaría constituido por monadas inaccesibles a todo amor que utilizara los materiales del mundo. Cada hombre se abriría solamente hacia su interior. Su carne, con sus ventanas de los sentidos, en realidad no sería más que una especie de ilusión transcendental."

struggle which love and liberty imply and act as a leaven to the mass in their very efforts of service regarding the latter's needs. It will, however, only be through an analysis of Segundo's thought from the perspective of evolution that Christianity's minoritarian function, that is, its function as leaven within the world, will be more clearly delineated.

b. The Response from  
the Data of Evolution

As we have previously mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Segundo considers the evolutionary outlook as the key to understanding the Christian message, especially regarding the dimensions of sin and redemption. He wishes to understand both the redemptive force of God's grace and the negative force which denies itself to the former from the perspective of evolution. He contends that both forces have been operating from the very start of the evolutionary process but only become more perceptible with the emergence of man, that is, with the stage of hominization.<sup>57</sup> We will now explore his thought concerning these two forces within the evolutionary process so as to clarify the minoritarian function which he will attribute to Christianity, that is, to those who accept the Christian message.

Segundo contends that the law of minimal effort--the tendency towards facility and simplicity which

---

<sup>57</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, Evolution and Guilt, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1974), pp. 126-27. See also footnote 58 below.

characterizes the conduct of the masses--has roots that go far back and can be found at all stages of the evolutionary process.<sup>58</sup> He believes that the negative structural tendency of the flesh and the world which opposes itself to truth and freedom is not to be found solely at the human level but analogically at all levels of the universe, including the physical as well. Within the perspective of evolution, that tendency, to Segundo, is entropy.<sup>59</sup> It is a term employed by Teilhard de Chardin referring to the continuous degradation of energy into less utilizable forms.<sup>60</sup> Throughout the entire evolutionary process the quantity of energy in the universe remains the same--no new energy is ever added nor is any lost. But once energy is used it becomes degraded, that is, diffuse, less available for future utilization. The possibility of an evolutionary advance does not, therefore, reside in the impossible task of acquiring greater quantities of energy but rather in the

<sup>58</sup> Segundo, Masas y Minorías, pp. 24-30.

<sup>59</sup> Segundo, Evolution and Guilt, p. 22, 25. To Segundo what appears as sin on the human level has an analogical continuity to the form which 'sin' takes on the pre-human. If something called sin does exist on the human plane, then something not only similar but also preparatory to sin should show up on the lower planes of evolution. The same can be said of love. He cites Teilhard de Chardin's contention that nothing could appear as final across the different thresholds of evolution which had not already existed in an obscure and primordial way in the more primitive stages. See Teilhard de Chardin, Phenomenon of Man, trans. by Bernard Wall (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), p. 71.

<sup>60</sup> de Chardin, The Phenomenon of Man, pp. 50-52. See also Emile Rideau, Teilhard de Chardin: a guide to his thought (London: Wm. Collins and Sons, 1967), pp. 78-82.

task of concentrating energy, displacing it by drawing it away from one function and putting it into another. The principle of entropy refers to the fact that all concentrated energy, when in operation, is transformed into simpler energy which becomes more difficult to concentrate, more diffuse and unusable.<sup>61</sup> Entropy, therefore, is set directly in opposition to the direction of evolution. Segundo writes:

Evolution moves toward ever more complex and potent concentrations of energy. But since energy tends toward degradation . . . the work of concentrating it runs counter to that of entropy. . . . So if evolution tends toward ever more concentrated and powerful syntheses of energy, then it does so by running counter to the statistically greater tendency toward ever simpler syntheses of degraded energy. It is a minority current running against a majority tendency.<sup>62</sup>

Evolution proceeds in this way from simple concentrations (syntheses) of energies to more complex ones. The world has evolved from inert matter to the most complex activities of man by employing the same quantum of energy, but the difference of the higher beings lies in the fact that they display different distributions and specializations (concentrations) of energy. Because the operative energy in

<sup>61</sup>Segundo, Evolution and Guilt, p. 23. Juan Luis Segundo, De la Sociedad a la Teología (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Carlos Lohlé, 1970), pp. 166-69.

<sup>62</sup>Segundo, Evolution and Guilt, p. 23. See also de Chardin, The Phenomenon of Man, pp. 60-66. Teilhard refers to the energy which becomes concentrated in more complex syntheses as radial and the energy which is degraded into simple, more diffuse forms as tangential. The latter is always more numerically abundant.

the universe through the law of entropy tends toward simplicity or less complex syntheses and concentrations, the higher forms of life (the more complex syntheses of energy) are vastly inferior numerically to the former. Segundo writes:

This degradational tendency . . . is readily translated into numerical terms: the more complex and specialized forms of energy, the richest forms of synthesis, are a minority in the universe. The energy combination that gives rise to a living being is infinitely more improbable and less numerous than the energy arranged in very simple forms and immediately available as inorganic matter.<sup>63</sup>

Segundo understands entropy as operative not just on the physical or chemical level but on the biological and human level as well. Entropy is a reversion to the less costly and poorer syntheses of energy characterized by facility and simplicity. He equates it with concupiscence on the human level. He writes that concupiscence:

. . . is conceived as the difficulty in translating the center of human energy from the instinctive realm to the rational realm: i.e., from simple syntheses to complex syntheses; from easy mechanical concentrations of degraded energy to difficult concentrations of energy.<sup>64</sup>

{ On the human level entropy is perceptible as a tendency toward sin, the ceding to the easy, less complex but more immediately satisfying syntheses. Understood, therefore,

---

<sup>63</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, The Liberation of Theology; trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976), p. 224.

<sup>64</sup>Segundo, Evolution and Guilt, p. 26.

in this sense, enslavement to the world and the flesh make up the negative vector of evolution and must be overcome if richer, newer, and more complex syntheses are to be attained. And yet Segundo insists that entropy on the human level, as on all levels, always remains quantitatively victorious in the majority of cases. He writes:

Quantitatively speaking, the economy of energy operative at every level of the universe with a constant supply of energy determines that the vast majority of activities--ranging from physical to psychological--will follow the line of least resistance. This means that at every level statistics will indicate a majority of reactions directed mechanically toward the simplest and most immediate solutions.<sup>65</sup>

What was and is operating throughout the entire evolutionary process--the tendency to less complex distributions of energy--shows up more perceptibly on the human level as egotism, the surrender to the easy way out in favor of the more immediate and impoverished syntheses. It is a brand of egotism which does indeed look for solutions but which is unwilling to pay the price for better, richer, and long-termed ones. Segundo writes:

The intrinsic wickedness in this surrender . . . lies in the fact that this approach ignores the difference of other beings: i.e., their character as centers. Facile syntheses--sin--reduce other beings to the common denominator of their short-term usefulness. Oversimplification and recourse to facile, immediate solutions are the perduring features of those lines of conduct which put a brake on evolution each time it seems possible to look farther ahead and accept greater complexity.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, p. 225.

<sup>66</sup> Segundo, Evolution and Guilt, p. 127.

But if, to Segundo, entropy, the continuous degradation of energy and the recourse to the facile and simpler syntheses, represents a negative brake to the evolutionary advance, it provides at the same time the necessary and indispensable base for the emergence of the newer and more complex syntheses.<sup>67</sup> The work of concentrating energy--negentropy--depends upon the quantitative extension of the less complex syntheses. Only if the latter are numerically abundant will there be a probability that a more complex concentration will emerge. Segundo writes:

. . . despite the resistance that facile syntheses offer, it is their multitude that makes possible the difficult and improbable. Life would not have arisen without the 'facility' with which matter falls back into simple syntheses and infinite repetitions. It is there that chance can operate with a certain 'liberty' and now and then indulge in the luxury of more complex and difficult syntheses.<sup>68</sup>

In other words, it is only through the operative abundance of the simpler syntheses that relatively much smaller numbers of elements attain higher syntheses which reflect richer and more concentrated combinations of energy. But the latter will go nowhere unless they in turn can massify, that is, turn their own case into a more generalized state of affairs which will serve as a base for yet higher concentrations. In this way, Segundo writes: ". . . evolution keeps passing new thresholds and moving toward higher forms

---

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., pp. 24-25.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

of life and superior structures."<sup>69</sup>

If, to Segundo, entropy represents the negative vector of evolution, the work of concentrating energy, negentropy, represents the positive vector. In the pre-human stages of the evolutionary advance, the emergence of new and richer syntheses takes the form of chance or indeterminacy.<sup>70</sup> But such indeterminacies and chance probabilities on the lower levels are transformed into freely made decisions when the threshold of the human level is passed.<sup>71</sup> In other words, what appears merely as a game of chance, an indeterminacy, on the pre-human level is the prelude which paves the way for liberty.

Liberty or love, which is the former's realization, is the perceptible form negentropy takes within the hominized stage of evolution. To Segundo, love or liberty constitutes the positive vector of evolution because of the complexity of their synthesis. As we have already seen, love's very essence is to unite different beings without blotting out their differences.<sup>72</sup> If it is authentic, love will not cede to facility or ease but rather will seek to construct the difficult synthesis that effects unity by respecting the differences of elements or persons, creating

---

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>72</sup>See chapter 4 of this work, pp. 141-43.

thereby a union of centers. And like all complex syntheses that preceded it, love becomes a minority current within the evolutionary process. Segundo writes:

. . . . escape by the difficult road makes love the minority par excellence. . . . love is that which has been withdrawn from the realm of the mechanical, habitual, the probable. It is liberty vis-à-vis sin, the latter always being a relapse into what is quantitatively the majority.<sup>73</sup>

But if love does represent a minority thrust on the human level in comparison to the line of conduct of the mass, or majority, which is characterized by ease and simplicity, it nevertheless depends upon the mass, that is, upon those very lines of conduct which represent simpler, less complex syntheses. The latter represent the indispensable base of solidarity required so that societal life may exist at all and that out of this base the possibility of a new synthesis may arise through the efforts of authentic love, that is, through a minority effort. Segundo writes:

We can put this another way that might seem odd in the field of theology. We can say that the mass is sin. . . . It is the rejection of a creative but costly liberty. More precisely as sin, it is the statistical law that dominates the world and that also permits it to escape the realm of statistics and find new, superior syntheses based on love without shattering into a million pieces.<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>73</sup>Segundo, Evolution and Guilt, p. 128.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., pp. 38, 72. Segundo is not using the term 'sin' here to denote voluntary or deliberate opposition to God's gift or grace but rather to indicate a condition which subdues and enslaves man against his own will. It is sin (in the singular) of which St. Paul speaks, emphasizing sin's negative power and enslaving influence (Rom. 3:9, 6:17, 6:20, 6:22).

The minority who do strive to create complex and richer syntheses through love do not, therefore, stand separate from the mass because the latter is the base from which the richer syntheses emerge. Equally true is the fact that if love is to be effective and achieve a social change of any consequence, it must bring the masses along with it in the process. It does so by striving to elevate the conduct of the masses through the development of institutions with their regulating laws. Segundo writes that institutions " . . . are intended for the passive majority, in order to obtain from it the choice needed for its own good."<sup>75</sup> Institutions mechanize new lines of mass conduct, creating a facilitating environment (a second nature) for the majority so that the majority's common good can be advanced. In this way institutions, together with their laws, help the masses to progress without, however, giving them interior freedom.<sup>76</sup> The minoritarian tendency of love among the masses must, therefore, seek out mass processes (through institutions) for implementing its goals so that new lines of mechanized conduct can serve as a base for future and richer syntheses. Segundo writes:

The minority effort among the masses is not meant . . . to construct a society based on minority exigencies. The aim is to create . . . new forms of energy that

---

<sup>75</sup>Segundo, La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía?, I p. 61. " . . . están destinadas a la mayoría pasiva, con el fin de obtener de ella la elección que se desea para su misma promoción."

<sup>76</sup>Segundo, La Cristianidad ¿Una Utopía?, I p. 66.

will permit lines of conduct that are necessarily mechanized to serve as the basis for new and more creative possibilities of a minority character.<sup>77</sup>

Again what can be noted in Segundo's reflections is the dialectic that exists between love or liberty and the mass element which both resists and makes possible at the same time the richer syntheses. The mass provides the base from which the richer syntheses emerge. The latter must seek mass mechanisms for the elaboration of new behavior patterns for the majority. But once established, these new lines of mass conduct close themselves to more difficult and richer syntheses. What was once a creation of a minority effort becomes a mass reality, and facility once again dominates. If continual growth is to be realized, however, a new creation or synthesis must emerge from the base that has been constructed. In this way the two vectors of evolution, the minoritarian and majoritarian forces, must interact with one another. They cannot ignore each other or act independently if the evolutionary process is to advance. They in fact are complementary.<sup>78</sup>

In concluding this section, we can say that Segundo has attempted, from an evolutionary perspective, to show that from the very beginning the universe manifests a proclivity toward facile, simple syntheses (entropy) and at the same time is molded by a thrust toward more difficult and richer

---

<sup>77</sup>Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, p. 231.

<sup>78</sup>Segundo, Evolution and Guilt, p. 129.

ones (negentropy). On the human level, entropy takes the form of sin, that is, the easy road of egotism, routine, and mechanization and represents the line of conduct characterized by the mass. It is always quantitatively dominant. On the other hand, negentropy within the human stage takes the form of love which seeks complex and mediate solutions and because of this is always minoritarian. According to Segundo, an evolutionary outlook consists in recognizing that both love and sin are present and active in different ways throughout all the evolutionary stages. In the realm of the physico-chemical love is chance, indeterminacy. In the realm of the human, entropy is sin. The negative, structural tendency which he believes both the flesh and the world represent in the writings of Paul and John are found operating at all levels of the evolutionary process. Equally found operating are love and liberty, but in less perceptible, analogous forms. Love and liberty are the minoritarian pole through which evolution now advances within the stage of hominization. And if evolution is to advance in greater complexity, the minoritarian tendency, which love represents, must seek to serve the majority by elevating their line of conduct. Without that service love itself could not proceed toward greater progress for it would lack the base from which to realize new possibilities, richer syntheses. We will now turn to what Segundo considers as being the intrinsic minoritarian character of the Church. After both analyzing the data of revelation in the writings

of Paul and John and reflecting upon what he considers the evolutionary process itself as indicating, he turns to the reality of the Church and attempts to explore her inherent dimensions within the world of men.

### 3. The Minoritarian Character of the Church

As we have already seen, Segundo maintains that membership in the Church implies self-giving assumed as a real responsibility.<sup>79</sup> The Church must be a sign of God's redemptive love in the world. Her sign-bearing function unceasingly calls for creative dialogue, inventive love, and real disinterestedness, and to Segundo, all these qualities are poles apart from any conditions that would ensure minimum standards.<sup>80</sup> Because the Church combines man's potentialities for love with the actual possession of love's mystery through faith and the sacraments, he writes that "the Church is an undreamed of possibility for love."<sup>81</sup> From his own analysis of the writings of John and Paul, he has concluded that it was precisely this perduring obligation to love with its intrinsic demands for truth and authenticity which the world and the flesh sought to oppose and suffocate. The Christian community was in fact summoned

---

<sup>79</sup> See chapter 4 of this study, p. 151.

<sup>80</sup> Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 82.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

to shoulder a difficult responsibility from the start.

Segundo writes:

Jesus certainly did not present a pastoral program for the masses in his teaching.

. . . . . the primitive Christian community maintained characteristic obligations that made it an exceptional entity and that set it in opposition to the law of least resistance which prevailed in worldly society and its mass mechanisms.<sup>82</sup>

To Segundo, it is precisely the responsibility for self-giving love that defines most clearly the Church's inherently minoritarian character. Her minoritarian dimension does not rest upon the fact that she lacks the necessary means to extend herself quantitatively but rather is consequent upon the essential message of Christ itself--the result of a comparison between the essence of that message and the human condition which it reveals. Segundo asks whether the obligation of self-giving involved in bearing the Christian message does in fact convert the Church into an aristocratic community.<sup>83</sup> He realizes the very word 'aristocratic' is capable of exercising a type of verbal terrorism over people. He believes, however, that the proper understanding of the word implies assuming a responsibility for others that does not oblige everyone. He writes:

---

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., pp. 90-91.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 89.

. . . the very assumption of responsibility for others constitutes those who assume it into a type of aristocracy vis-à-vis those toward whom they assume responsibility.<sup>84</sup>

In this way, to Segundo, it would be utopian to dream of a responsibility that did not constitute an aristocracy. But there is an inherent danger in any group that shoulders responsibility. He contends that an aristocratic group can gradually tend to forget the aspect of service and to stress its own privileges until it drops its original function.<sup>85</sup> Since the Church is called upon to shoulder the demands and risks of responsibility for others in love and service, this obligation should not logically be seen as pure privilege for those who accept this risk. Segundo writes:

There is no pure privilege in the Church, and nothing is a gift in that sense. Everything that the Christian receives is immediately turned into a responsibility. Now we have already seen that the responsibility of the Church, her very rationale, is her sign function.<sup>86</sup>

To Segundo, therefore, the Church, bearing her responsibility which the Christian message indicates, is in fact the deepest call to the minoritarian impulse. If she conserves the demands and significance of the Christian message, something of her life will be carried into the mass.

---

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 103.

It is by refusing the condition of mass membership, that is, by renouncing to be everything, that the Church can become a transforming leaven within the world.<sup>87</sup> Her life of love and service does not triumph by becoming quantitatively universal through its acceptance by vast numbers, that is, by becoming mass, but by completing its function as ferment in the world.

Segundo is aware of the accusation of elitism that his conception of the Church can provoke. He contends that the Church of Christ began as a sect but that its understanding and interpretation of the gospel message did not separate it from the world or its worldwide vocation.<sup>88</sup> The beginning Church was a relatively small group composed of dissidents who had separated from a larger religious tradition. Belonging to the Christian 'sect' implied a certain amount of social inadaptation. The fact is, to Segundo, the Church does not have to reflect an adhesion of great numbers, of the masses, to be universal.<sup>89</sup> Her universality is consequent upon being truly at their service and being, moreover, open to all who accept the responsibility which her sign-bearing function implies. The term, 'elitism,' he contends, should be reserved for lines of conduct (or minorities) which are not open to the service of the masses and

---

<sup>87</sup> Segundo, La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía?, I p. 92.

<sup>88</sup> Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, pp. 194-95.

<sup>89</sup> Segundo, Acción Pastoral Latinoamericana, p. 128.

which emphasize their own privileges to the latter's neglect.<sup>90</sup>

It is not surprising, therefore, that Segundo maintains that one cannot even claim to be Christian, albeit a member of the Church, unless he is giving his life for others and broadening the range of his love beyond the narrow circle of those who are almost automatically loved and who pay this love in kind.<sup>91</sup> He writes, moreover:

... one cannot be a Christian unless one fights imaginatively and resolutely to make sure that socio-political structures reflect and permit an ever more generous and gratuitous love among the citizenry.<sup>92</sup>

As we have already seen in the previous section, it is Segundo's contention that it is through the development of institutions that mass lines of conduct are raised and new behavior patterns established so that the common good of the masses can be advanced. For this reason the Church must be interested in the development of human institutions for the latter are conditioning factors regarding love and

---

<sup>90</sup>Segundo, Masas y Minorías, p. 36.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., pp. 31-35. Segundo reflects here upon the gratuitous character of the love which Christ asks of his followers (Luke 6:27-35; Matt. 5). Their love is to be extraordinary in the sense that it is not only to be directed towards their friends but towards their enemies as well-- towards those who do not repay this love in kind through the obligations of kinship or friendship.

<sup>92</sup>Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, p. 54.

liberty.<sup>93</sup> Institutions do not give the masses interior liberty but rather provide the means through which every new emergence of love can be more efficacious, more far reaching and probing. If the Church represents a minoritarian tendency because of her responsibility to love and freedom, she then cannot be indifferent to the masses if her love is to be truly efficacious. She must seek to elevate the conduct of the masses, thereby creating a new base from which to realize new possibilities and richer syntheses of love. As we have seen, that precisely has been, to Segundo, the thrust of the positive vector of evolution--negentropy. Minorities go nowhere unless somehow they effectively reach the masses. The Church is called to structure the universe for syntheses of love that are richer, more human, and more redemptive.

To Segundo, the tensión which the Church must live is that she must conserve her minoritarian conduct within the world and at the same time give her life to the world. She must recognize her own particular redemptive function within the entire process if she is not to overstep her proper bounds and succumb to mass mechanisms on the one hand or elitism on the other.<sup>94</sup> It belongs to the very minoritarian character of the Church to stand always in a relationship of service to the masses. To Segundo, the multitude in fact would be in greater danger if the Church, in

---

<sup>93</sup>Segundo, La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía?, II p. 98.

<sup>94</sup>Segundo, Evolution and Guilt, p. 131.

receiving them, lost her sign-bearing function and condition as leaven within the world.<sup>95</sup>

Although Segundo maintains that membership in the Church is a summons to love and liberty, the Church herself possesses no technique or science regarding the manner of realizing the content of that summons.<sup>96</sup> He stresses, however, that she must be attuned to those critical moments within the world of men wherein she perceives more clearly the truth. The Church must await the right moment or 'hour'-like Jesus himself, who had to await his hour, his moment of opportunity. Segundo writes:

There is no real opportunity, no right moment, in a closed conservative system. Real opportunity must come from a sudden glimpse of an ongoing process beyond the trammels of mechanical repetition and the enclosed moment. Only then does the moment become fraught with meaning, efficacy and truth; only then does it become the right moment.<sup>97</sup>

The Church must, therefore, always be sensitive to those moments in man's world where both the novelty of a deeper

---

<sup>95</sup> Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 85.

<sup>96</sup> In our next chapter we will examine Segundo's reflections concerning how the faith activity of the Church achieves her mission in the world.

<sup>97</sup> Segundo, Evolution and Guilt, p. 55. See also Segundo, La Cristianidad, Una Utopía?, II, pp. 55-61. Segundo here considers the awaitment by Jesus for his hour as an essential component of his existence (John 7:6, 7:30, 8:20). To have an hour and to wait for it is to live fully a human life, to live for the eruption of truth and liberty. His hour is always associated with the truth, with authenticity and judgment over an inauthentic world. And it is precisely the hour of the cross which represents in all its crudeness the hour of his victory, the hour of his gift of self to the world (John 12:24-27).

love can be realized and a richer comprehension of the truth be had.

Membership in the Church implies, therefore, self-giving love whose scope always goes beyond the familial and narrow circle of friends and acquaintances and whose orientation is toward greater justice for all. Segundo maintains that this is the basic minimum for being a Christian, for being a member of the Church--gratuitous love in search for justice.<sup>98</sup> The Church cannot be oriented to a universality which tends to embrace the masses and at the same time complete her liberating and saving mission within the world, for the masses in their conduct move in the opposite direction and impede the Church from carrying out her mission.<sup>99</sup> It is a mission, Segundo feels, which exposes her members to all sorts of dangers and requires a faith that is interiorly formed and won through personal conversion. It demands a perduring obligation to love more efficaciously, and for that reason it resists the tendency to cede to minimal effort, to the easy and comfortable way out. To have a Church of the masses which at the same time espouses a mission that is

---

<sup>98</sup> Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, p. 55.

<sup>99</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, "Las Elites latinoamericanas: problemática humana y cristiana ante el cambio social," in Fe Cristiana y Cambio Social en América Latina (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1973), pp. 203-12. In this article, Segundo contends that the Medellín Conference proposed a social mission of liberation for Christians but did not seriously take into account the consequences of that mission for theology and Church structure. According to Segundo, the question that Medellín left unanswered was how the Latin American Church could commit herself to liberation while still being structured as a Church of the masses.

inherently minoritarian is a contradiction.

#### 4. Conclusions

We have attempted to analyze Segundo's reflections concerning the inherently minoritarian dimension of the Church within the world. Segundo first wished to understand the historical phenomenon known as Christendom and its relationship to Christianity. For him Christendom manifested the annulment of the tension between the gospel call to personal and interior conversion and the attitudes and movement of the masses. He contends that Christianity by its very nature requires an interiorized adhesion for it is at root a call to freedom and personal authenticity. Christendom, on the other hand, replaced the gospel ideal with what was considered to be minimally adequate. Its social institutions were turned into mechanisms for creating and maintaining Christians. They made it easy and advantageous for the masses to embrace an ideal which was in itself the most difficult and complex in the world. To Segundo, mass conduct is defined in terms of inertia, passivity, and non-liberty. It is a line of behavior governed by the law of minimal effort, the ceding to that which is less mediate and complex. And to the extent that the Christian ideal of love and liberty demands just the opposite, he has concluded that Christianity has little probability of being elected massively.

Segundo believes that the New Testament message, especially through the writings of John and Paul, offers a response to the problem which Christendom raises concerning the universal pretensions of Christianity regarding its acceptance on the scale of the masses. From John he has concluded that the adoption of Christ's message by the masses would be a contradiction because the very nature of the Christian life with its demands for truth, freedom, and love is inherently opposed to the conduct of the world. It is a call by God to an attitude exactly contrary to the attitude of the masses--a call to serve ~~the~~ the latter. From Paul he has reached similar conclusions. The same opposition to truth and love which John saw operative in the world Paul sees as rising from the very depths of man's being--from his flesh. The latter, to Segundo, represents the weight which the human condition brings to bear on man's liberty as it seeks to realize itself in love. The flesh represents the tendency characterized by ease and simplicity, the ceding to the impersonal and subhuman. Segundo contends that for Paul Christians are called, nonetheless, to live according to the Spirit of Christ. Theirs is a constant, perduring struggle to manifest the minoritarian tendency which the acceptance of God's self-gift implies--and to live it in the flesh.

Segundo, moreover, has attempted to define the negative, structural tendency which he believes both the flesh and the world represent from the perspective of evolution.

He finds this tendency operative as entropy on all levels of the universe. Entropy within the human stage takes the form of concupiscence and sin. Equally found operating are love and liberty, but in less perceptible, analogous forms on the pre-human. They are the minoritarian pole--the positive vector--through which the evolutionary process advances within the stage of hominization. They must seek to serve what is quantitatively dominant, that which is represented by entropy, if new possibilities and richer syntheses are to be realized. Without the mass element love could not proceed toward greater progress.

For Segundo, the Church represents the deepest call to the minoritarian impulse, combining man's potentialities for love with the actual possession of love's mystery. She is called to incarnate a love which must always go beyond the comfortable circle of family and friends, striving to attain greater justice for all. Her minoritarian dimension is consequent upon the essential message of Christ himself, the result of a comparison between the essence of that message and the human condition which it reveals. It is by refusing the condition of mass membership and the consequent lines of behavior associated with it that the Church can become a transforming leaven within the world. The Church exercises her universality by being truly at the service of the mass and by being open to all who accept the responsibilities of her sign-bearing function. She is interested in elevating mass lines of conduct to advance the common good

through the development of human institutions so that love, when freely chosen, can have at its disposal greater means to achieve richer and more far-reaching possibilities. The Church must recognize the tension which her redemptive function within the world implies if she is not to succumb to mass mechanisms on the one hand, or elitism on the other. She cannot be oriented to a universality which tends to embrace the masses and at the same time complete her liberating mission within the world. Her sign-bearing function and condition as leaven have priority over the inclusion of vast numbers within her boundaries, for it is the former which seeks to serve and raise the mass.

That is, in very broad summary, what we have gleaned from our analysis of Segundo's reflections concerning the minoritarian dimension of the Church within the world. In our next chapter we will examine his thought concerning how the faith activity of the Church achieves its mission within the world. To Segundo, the Church, as we have already noted, possesses no technique or science to realize the content of God's summons to self-giving love. Authentic love possesses no exclusive tools or mechanism of itself to respond with efficacy to the changing needs of man. It will be Segundo's contention that faith--love conscious of the mystery which it embraces--must seek to incarnate itself within the relative and ambiguous aspects of human history and issue into ideologies, that is, into concrete programs of action, if it is not to be a dead faith, a faith without works.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE FAITH ACTIVITY OF THE CHURCH AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD WITHIN HISTORY

Segundo has reflected upon what he considers to be the inherently minoritarian dimensions of the Church within the world. Her life is that of shouldering responsibility for others in love and service. As the community of men and women conscious of love's mystery through the revelation of Jesus Christ, the Church is called upon to structure the universe for syntheses of love that are richer, more human, and more redemptive. She must embrace an historical consciousness which, in accord with the gospel, is open to the social signs of the times, searching for concrete paths toward liberation. We have already seen that Segundo has described the redemptive reality of love within man's history in terms of liberation.<sup>1</sup> Salvation consists of man's liberation in history and meta-history. The success of history and that of redemption cannot be separated, for all that men do to construct their history in love is related to redemption, to recapitulating the entire universe in Christ.

---

<sup>1</sup>See chapter 4 of this work, pp. 152-57.

The Church is called upon to insert herself into man's world through her efforts of dialogue and service and help thereby to fashion that history in freedom. It is Segundo's contention that Christianity itself is a responsibility oriented precisely to that task of history-making.<sup>2</sup>

In this chapter we will analyze, from Segundo's reflections, the more prominent practical and theological implications for the Church regarding the exercise of her mission within the world. It is one thing simply to state that the Church is called to respond efficaciously in love and service to individual and societal needs but quite another to understand the implications of incarnating her faith in the contingent and relative context of history and the relationship that exists between the Church's faith and the concrete options which the former elects to realize itself. In the first section of this chapter, we will explore Segundo's thought concerning faith and its subordination to the task of finding solutions to the problems of history. We shall reflect upon the manner in which Segundo conceives faith's value for man and the necessity of faith to incarnate itself in that which is not faith to have any value at all. It is Segundo's contention that the Christian faith is still very frequently understood as a direct means of salvation and often given an autonomous, superior value wholly apart from the specific, concrete options it chooses to incarnate itself within the world. We shall also examine,

---

<sup>2</sup>See chapter 2 of this study, particularly p. 82-83.

in the first section, what Segundo considers to be an intrinsic element of all Christian faith: concern for and commitment to the poor. In the second section of this chapter we shall analyze the causal relationship Segundo believes as existing between man's historical efforts of love and the building up of God's Kingdom within history. He maintains that the intimate relationship between faith and the concrete specific options of love through which the life of faith incarnates itself implies a specific conception of eschatology. By exploring his understanding of the Kingdom of God, we will highlight at the same time what Segundo considers to be a prominent, distinguishing feature of liberation theology from European, political theology.

1. The Practice of Faith  
and Ideology

We have already seen in our study of Segundo that if Christian love is to be genuine, it cannot rest solely on the level of intention.<sup>3</sup> All authentic love embraces a 'materialistic' note because it must be manifested in concrete deed.

We have further noted Segundo's contention that the Church cannot remain apart from those actions and events wherein the objective demands of love are unfolding.<sup>4</sup> The Church is called to join with and help foster those

---

<sup>3</sup>See chapter 2 of this work, particularly pp. 80-81.

<sup>4</sup>See chapter 4 of this work, particularly p. 155.

historical activities of men which lead to greater union and justice. Her faith must be related to those actions and events wherein love is accomplishing itself: The truth of her message of faith, therefore, cannot form a realm of its own divorced from those actions in history which are efficacious for man's salvation.<sup>5</sup> Faith's truth must be lived in history and must convert itself into the activity of liberating men through love and service.

But if faith must incarnate itself in liberating service, then faith, to Segundo, must employ that which is not faith to realize itself in history. It must make specific options, that is, adopt ideologies, to incarnate its love. Segundo writes that the Christian faith should not be understood "as a direct means of eternal salvation whereas ideologies are seen as merely human options that can jeopardize that other superior value."<sup>6</sup> Faith, in other words, should not be given an autonomous value of its own wholly apart from the ideologies chosen out of fidelity to that very faith. It is only through concrete actions or programs that faith, Christian love, can respond to the needs of men.

Segundo is aware that the term 'ideology' carries with it a pejorative connotation referring to the espousal

---

<sup>5</sup>Juan-Luis Segundo, The Sacraments Today, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1974), p. 54.

<sup>6</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976), p. 131.

of a doctrine or truth, religious or otherwise, which seeks to legitimate a way of life which is in fact false. He believes, however, that there is another, more neutral definition of ideology. He writes:

Ideology is the manner of making efficacious a structure of values, that is to say, a study of means with regard to the finality, in ultimate terms, efficacy.<sup>7</sup>

To Segundo, ideologies are specific systems of means and ends adopted to respond efficaciously to given problems. They possess in themselves no pretensions about representing an objectively absolute value and are related more closely to the means (efficacy) to achieve a given goal.<sup>8</sup> With regard to the practice of the Christian faith, ideologies are the specific options or means love elects to respond to individual and societal needs manifested in given historical contexts.

While Segundo insists that faith and ideology cannot be separated in practice, he does not mean that they are not to be distinguished.<sup>9</sup> What distinguishes faith from ideology is that the former does in fact claim to be based on an encounter with the objective source of all truth. He writes

---

<sup>7</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, "Fe e ideología," in Perspectivas de Diálogo, Año ix, no. 89-90 (diciembre 1974): 231. "La manera de hacer eficaz una estructura de valores es ideología, es decir, un estudio de medios en orden al fin, en último término de eficacia."

<sup>8</sup>Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, p. 106, footnote 5, p. 123.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 107-8.

that one recognizes faith "in that it claims to possess an objectively absolute value."<sup>10</sup> Faith is absolute in so far as its truth is revealed by God, but nonetheless faith must be placed at the service of man's liberation and even subordinate itself to the solution of historical problems.

Segundo writes:

Faith is absolute insofar as it is a truth revealed by God, an absolute truth. But insofar as it is destined to perform a function that is not faith itself, even revealed truth and our adherence to it constitutes something relative. In other words, the absolute feature in the plan of God who reveals some truth is not that this truth be accepted but rather that it be placed at the service of historical problems and their solution. The solution of such problems, as we have seen, is brought about by ideology, that is, by an historical system of means and ends related to the problem in question.<sup>11</sup>

Faith, therefore, must search for ideologies. It is the latter which constitute the absolute feature of a functional faith.<sup>12</sup> This subordination of faith, however, to the relative realm of history is, to Segundo, far from being accepted within the Church. He contends that the great majority of Christian Churches continue to be officially structured as autonomous centers of salvation, believing that it would be senseless to make an absolute value (that which is religious, pertaining to salvation) depend upon

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

relative options within history.<sup>13</sup> An example of such thinking, he believes, is to be found within the draft document issued by the Chilean episcopacy concerning the possibility of choosing between two alternative political options: capitalism or socialism.<sup>14</sup> In this document, the bishops of Chile declare that they cannot choose between the two systems.<sup>15</sup> A reason that they offer is that the Church, like Christ, belongs to all the people of Chile. To opt for one political system would mean excluding that portion of Christians who opt for the other side(s). The Church, instead, opts for the Risen Lord.<sup>16</sup> Segundo contends that the bishops of Chile are here in fact implying that the one Christian faith must not be put in the service of ideologies, which by definition are many and varied.<sup>17</sup> In other words

---

<sup>13</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, "Capitalism-Socialism: A Theological Crux," in Concilium, vol. 6, no. 10 (June 1974): 107.

<sup>14</sup>Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, pp. 130-32. The document Segundo is referring to is "Evangelio; política, y socialismos," issued by the Chilean bishops, in Santiago, May 27, 1971. See footnote 2 in Segundo's work for some pertinent, translated texts, pp. 151-52. This document is reproduced in Documentos del Episcopado: Chile 1970-1973, no. 13 (Santiago: Mundo, 1974).

<sup>15</sup>"Evangelio, política y socialismos," p. 65.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, p. 131. For a more detailed analysis of Segundo's critique of this document, see his three articles under the same title, "La Iglesia chilena ante et socialismo," in Marcha, Montevideo, no. 1558 (27 de agosto 1971); no. 1559 (4 de setiembre 1971); no. 1560 (11 de setiembre 1971). Unfortunately while in the national library of Montevideo, these articles were taken from me. But Segundo has treated this topic in his book The Liberation of Theology, from which we have already made citations.

the Christian faith that unites the Chilean people is more important than the ideologies chosen to incarnate that very faith. In this way, Segundo believes faith is given an autonomous, superior value, wholly apart from any ideological option. The thinking of the Chilean bishops implies that it would be senseless to make an absolute value depend on the preference for one political system. The Church opts, instead, for the Risen Lord. Segundo maintains that this option embraces an erroneous view of the Church and faith's value. He writes:

. . . as long as the Church continues to attribute an absolute value to those objects, words, gestures and authorities which appear to form a vertical link between their faithful and God, and a purely relative value to the historical functionalism of all this, it is not possible to put to theology any question about how to orientate the options of Christians between capitalism and socialism.<sup>18</sup>

Segundo, however, asks whether it is possible and even necessary to invert the order and declare with the gospel itself that the Sabbath is made for man and not man for the Sabbath. He writes:

Could this statement not be given the only possible translation, namely that human life in society, liberated as far as possible from alienations, constitutes the absolute value, and that all religious institutions, all dogmas, all the sacraments and all the ecclesiastical authorities, have only a relative, that is, functional value?<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup>Segundo, "Capitalism-Socialism: A Theological Crux," p. 108.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 107-8.

Segundo believes that one of the most acute human problems facing the Latin American continent is precisely the option between capitalist and socialist society,<sup>20</sup> and he uses this problem as a test example to focus upon the practical implications of what he has said concerning faith and ideology. The choice, however, for Latin America is not between the type of capitalistic society as existing in the United States or of the socialistic society as practiced in the Soviet Union. Rather Latin Americans, he feels, must ask what socio-political scheme can be chosen now from their underdeveloped condition which will be both effective and coherent with the kind of society they desire for themselves.<sup>21</sup> Segundo contends that the only real possible option which remains to them must be found within their own countries as they are: to decide whether they are going to leave to individuals and private groups, or to take away from them, the right to possess the means of production as presently existing.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 115. Segundo gives the name 'socialism' to a political régime in which the ownership of the means of production is removed from individuals and handed over to higher institutions whose concern is the common good. By capitalism he understands the political régime in which the ownership of the goods of production is open to economic competition. He believes that these two alternatives must be reflected upon from the context of Latin America's social reality where, in some countries, 1% of the landowners hold 50% of the arable land or where 90% of the people receive only 10% of the national income. See his article, "Social Justice and Revolution," in America, vol. 118, no. 17 (April 1968): 574-77.

Segundo believes that these two alternatives are of vital importance to the human and social reality of Latin America and that if the Christian message has nothing to say concerning them, there is a realized progressive loss in faith's human functionality. He bluntly writes:

This leads us once more to the conviction that if the conclusion were reached that the gospel has nothing to say on a human problem so decisive as the alternative between capitalism and socialism, it is clear that it can only have an absolute value, not a functional value, that is to say, no value at all.<sup>23</sup>

But, to Segundo, Christian faith in and of itself does not contain the ideologies necessary for responding to the ever changing needs and problems of man's history.<sup>24</sup> The Church does, through her faith, possess something specific, the Christian Revelation, and must contribute that element to the solution of man's historical problems so that the latter be truly human.<sup>25</sup> She does not, however, possess any ready-made solutions but must search with other men for them. To practice her faith, the Church is called, therefore, to descend from the comfortable certitudes of her faith to the shaky terrain of concrete history.<sup>26</sup> She

---

<sup>23</sup> Segundo, "Capitalism-Socialism: A Theological Crux," p. 110.

<sup>24</sup> Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, pp. 108-9.

<sup>25</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, "Evangelización y Humanización," in Perspectivas de Diálogo, Montevideo, Año v, no. 43 (mayo 1970): 14.

<sup>26</sup> Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, p. 80.

must elect human options which, in turn, depend upon an understanding and appreciation of the surrounding context, scanning the signs of the times in search for liberation.

Segundo maintains that, in fact, is what Jesus did in the practice of his love.<sup>27</sup> The theology of the Pharisees demanded from him signs proceeding from heaven, that is, something which could not be attributed to man, or, still less, to the devil. Segundo characterizes such signs which the Pharisees demanded as anticipations, outlines, analogies of a strictly divine action, for, to Segundo, "how else can an historical happening be distinguished as a sign proceeding from heaven?"<sup>28</sup> And yet the signs to which Jesus pointed to legitimize his actions were the remedies he brought to some sort of human suffering, however temporary and provisional those remedies might have been.<sup>29</sup> Segundo contends that the truth of Jesus' actions was the very liberation he was effecting. He writes moreover:

It will be remembered that, to the eschatological question of the disciples of the Baptist about "he who is to come," Jesus replies with signs that are historical, relative, extremely ambiguous, at a vast distance from the absolute and definitive.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 78-79.

<sup>28</sup>Segundo, "Capitalism-Socialism: A Theological Crux," p. 118.

<sup>29</sup>Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, p. 79.

<sup>30</sup>Segundo, "Capitalism-Socialism: A Theological Crux," p. 119.

The very liberating service Jesus was effecting was the sign that the Kingdom had arrived. In this way Segundo maintains that Jesus did not appeal to the certitudes of faith to legitimate the specific practice of his love and, by not doing so, he discounted any theological criterion applied to history which was not the direct and present evaluation of the event.<sup>31</sup>

Segundo furthermore notes that the specific instances of liberation which Jesus was effecting were given by him the most absolute name in the theology of his time: salvation. He writes:

Far from de-absolutizing, we can say that he absolutizes imprudently. Just as he called cures of an uncertain consequence the "arrival of the Kingdom," so he calls a momentary, ambiguous, still unrealized decision of Zacchaeus "the entry into salvation." "Your faith has saved you," he said on more than one occasion to people who obtained favors or cures (always uncertain and transient) from him.<sup>32</sup>

Jesus, in other words, recognizes liberation for what it truly is, the presence of salvation and the Kingdom.

To Segundo, it is evident that in order for a judgment to be made with regard to a specific option within a given context, theology has need of an instrument of human cognition: historical sensitivity.<sup>33</sup> He believes, moreover,

---

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 119. See also Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, p. 79.

<sup>32</sup>Segundo, "Capitalism-Socialism: A Theological Crux," p. 120.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

that this historical sensitivity is found within the Synoptics in the term 'openness of heart.' Segundo maintains that none of faith's certitudes can take the place of the latter as the primary source of any and every historical judgment.<sup>34</sup> Openness of the heart to the signs of the times, that is, to the provisional, human context, is the indispensable condition upon which critical options of love are made. The criterion of love's practice is the real and even material success in an historical liberation. To Segundo, that also is the criterion of any true theology.<sup>35</sup>

The Church must consequently first commit herself to real love, to the practice of liberating service. This commitment must be governed by an upright heart open to man's most urgent problems. Indeed, for Segundo, only through a disposition of a heart sensitive and committed to the oppressed in their struggle can the gospel message itself be truly comprehended. He writes:

---

<sup>34</sup>Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, p. 80.

<sup>35</sup>"Statement by Juan Segundo," in Theology in the Americas, ed. by Sergio Torres and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976), p. 281. See also his article, "Capitalism-Socialism: A Theological Crux," pp. 105-23. In this article Segundo writes: "By theology we . . . understand in a much more direct fashion fides quaerens intellectum, faith in search of its own understanding, to orientate the historical praxis. We do not accept that a single dogma can be studied under any other final criterion than that of its social impact on praxis (pp. 115-16)."

Is not this the criterion which opens up the reading of the Gospel? Isn't it in fact the stubbornness of the heart, the insensitivity to injustice, the insensitivity to the situation of the widow, the orphan, the oppressed which impedes even understanding the message of the Gospel?<sup>36</sup>

For Segundo, an open, upright heart, sensitive to the needs of the oppressed, is the key to understanding Jesus Christ and his message and the instrument by which the signs of the times can be evaluated. He maintains that this also was the criterion employed by the prophets of the Old Testament as they tried to discern God's plan and will within the historical context.<sup>37</sup> A commitment to the oppressed is an intrinsic element to the Christian faith itself, serving to authenticate the latter.<sup>38</sup> Citing Gutierrez, he writes: "Only by participating in their [the poor's] struggle can we understand the implications of the Gospel message and make it have impact on history."<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, Masas y Minorías (Buenos Aires: Editorial La Aurora, 1973), p. 93. "¿No es el criterio que abre a la lectura del Evangelio? ¿No es acaso la dureza del corazón, la insensibilidad a la situación a la viuda, del huerfano, del oprimido, lo que impede comprender siquiera el mensaje del evangelio?"

<sup>37</sup> Segundo, Masas y Minorías, p. 93. See also Segundo, "Capitalism-Socialism: A Theological Crux," pp. 116-17.

<sup>38</sup> Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, p. 87.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97. The citation is from Gustavo Gutierrez, The Theology of Liberation, trans. by Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973), p. 269.

Within a commitment to the oppressed, the Church is called to search for and invent ideologies vis-à-vis the concrete problems of history. Segundo insists that, in fact, is what is recorded about faith in both the Old and New Testaments. It was always incarnated in changeable ideologies responding to different historical events and contexts.<sup>40</sup> In other words, faith was always fleshed out in history. Segundo writes:

. . . if the Christian faith is one amid historical diversity, then there must be some ideology that can build a bridge between that faith and our present situation even as there were such ideologies in the past.<sup>41</sup>

Segundo considers that one way the Church might select ideologies to seek out the biblical situations most akin to those of the present day and merely accept the ideology that Scripture offers as a correct response of faith. He, however, discards this possibility as naive, because the situations of the present have changed enormously since biblical times.<sup>42</sup> It would be both unrealistic and unscientific, he feels, to look for similar situations in cultural milieus that are very different from our own. The alternative that he suggests is to invent ideologies which might

---

<sup>40</sup>Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, pp. 110-12.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., pp. 117-18.

be regarded as ones constructed by a gospel message contemporary to us.<sup>43</sup> Such an approach would call for creativity in the here and now, asking what Christ would have said if he were confronting our problems today.

Segundo contends, moreover, that science itself cannot provide any ready-made options in advance. He writes:

We live and struggle in the midst of decisive contextual conflicts without science being able to provide any ready-made options in advance. . . . The most we can say about it is that our option depends on science indirectly insofar as no one wants to opt for unrealizable fantasies and hence everyone tries to be informed ahead of time about the factual possibility of carrying out one's ideal. But even in that case scientific certitude is at best instrumental and it does not say anything about the decisive value of what we are doing.<sup>44</sup>

Since science cannot offer any absolute criterion for resolving historical problems. Segundo once again points to the criterion of Jesus' actions. The Church must sense profoundly what goes well or what goes badly in the life of men and women and make that her principle criterion.<sup>45</sup>

Regarding the two alternatives facing the Latin American continent (capitalistic or socialistic society), Segundo asks which type of theology from those now practiced could serve to orient Latin American churches in their choice. He contends that it would seem at first that the

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 117-18.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>45</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, "On a Missionary Awareness of One's Own Culture," Jesuit Mission Newsletter, no. 33 (May 1974): 6.

political theology of Europe could serve in this regard. But in fact he maintains that it cannot.<sup>46</sup> His reasons will be explored below. We will now turn to the second section of this chapter to understand Segundo's thought concerning the relationship he conceives as existing between the liberating events in man's history and the Kingdom of God. We will also attempt to discern what Segundo believes to be an important distinguishing difference of liberation theology from the political theology of Europe.

## 2. The Construction of the Kingdom of God

It is Segundo's contention that the intimate and unavoidable relationship between faith and ideologies embraces a specific conception of eschatology. He regards history as in the process of becoming the Kingdom of God. He writes:

The relationship with a liberating event, no matter how ambiguous and provisional (as in the example of the gospel), derives from the strength of God himself who promotes it, a genuinely causal character with respect to the definitive Kingdom of God.<sup>47</sup>

He believes that the differences in eschatology among all Christian churches may be reduced fundamentally to the

---

<sup>46</sup>Segundo, "Capitalism-Socialism: A Theological Crux," p. 110.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 123. Although it does not appear that Segundo ever explicitly equates the Cosmic Church with the Kingdom of God, there is no doubt that he considers the latter as embracing it.

different conceptions they hold concerning the relationship between the events and actions of history on the one hand and the Kingdom of God on the other.<sup>48</sup> To him those different conceptions stem from what was a central issue in the Reformation debate between Luther and the Catholic tradition concerning the reality of justification.

Segundo maintains that Luther's belief in justification by faith alone excluded any notion of good works or merit.<sup>49</sup> Salvation was all God's doing. There was no cooperation between man and God in the act of justification. God simply worked in man, changing the human will under the influence of His Spirit. The very notion of merit through good works was thereby denied. In this way Luther rejected the Catholic attempt to connect God "and" man, faith "and" good works.<sup>50</sup> Because of the unbreachable gulf separating man from God, man's efforts and historical activity could exert no causal relationship in the construction of the Kingdom. Faith was turned into the confident but essentially passive acceptance of God's fixed plan for human destiny. For this reason, Luther situated the Kingdom in the remote future, in the eschaton--a Kingdom already

---

<sup>48</sup>Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, p. 233; Segundo, Masas y Minorías, pp. 67-73.

<sup>49</sup>Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, p. 143.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

prepared for God's sons, the justified.<sup>51</sup> Man had nothing to say concerning its realization. Indeed, he had nothing to say concerning his very justification.

Segundo maintains that German political theology is markedly dependent on the Lutheran theology of justification.<sup>52</sup> It is a theology which, with rare exceptions, describes the relationship between the historical reality produced by man's efforts of love and the Kingdom of God in non-causal terms: 'anticipation' (Moltmann), 'analogy' (Weth), 'rough draft' (Metz), etc. To Segundo, such language excludes any explicit historical causality between man's efforts and the building up of the Kingdom, with the all too frequent consequence that nothing will be chosen concretely to better man's situation. Segundo writes:

If man is accustomed to really create things with his free, human activity, what interest can the production of analogical images and anticipations of a Kingdom divorced from his causal activity have for him?<sup>53</sup>

He believes this lack of direct causal connection easily leads to an attitude of excessive prudence before the

---

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 144. Segundo is here citing Rudolf Weth, "La 'Théologie de la révolution' dans la perspective de la justification et du royaume," in Discussion sur 'la théologie de la révolution', trans. by Feil Ernst (Paris: Cerf-Mame, 1972), p. 86. Weth is here citing a central treatise of Luther, De servo arbitrio.

<sup>52</sup>Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, p. 144.

<sup>53</sup>Segundo, Masas y Minorías, p. 68. "Si el hombre está habituado a crear realmente cosas con su libre actividad humana, ¿qué lugar va a ocupar en su interés la producción

challenges posed to the Church's mission of liberation by existing political and social structures and implies, in fact, that the Kingdom of God is not constructed by man in history but rather received by him from God.<sup>54</sup>

Segundo turns more specifically to the prominent Catholic spokesman for European political theology, J. B. Metz. For Metz, the distinguishing feature of Christian eschatology is that it knows less about the future which mankind is trying to discern, and that it persists in its lack of that knowledge.<sup>55</sup> For this reason Segundo feels that the Church, to Metz, is much more reticent than any political program. Metz, in fact, states that the Church:

. . . must institutionalize that eschatological reserve by establishing itself as an instance of critical liberty in the face of social development in order to reject the tendency of the latter to present itself as absolute.<sup>56</sup>

To Segundo, this once again involves the distinction between the relative and absolute. But for Metz, what is absolute is not so much the Church as the eschatological

---

de imágenes analógicas y anticipaciones de un Reino sustraído a su actividad causal?"

<sup>54</sup>Segundo, Masas y Minorías, p. 68.

<sup>55</sup>Segundo, "Capitalism-Socialism: A Theological Crux," p. 110. Segundo is citing Metz's work, L'homme, Antropocentrique chrétienne, trans. by Michel Louis (Tours: Mame, 1971), p. 111.

<sup>56</sup>Segundo, "Capitalism-Socialism: A Theological Crux," p. 111. Segundo is citing Metz, L'homme, Antropocentrique chrétienne, p. 136.

Kingdom of God, that is, the ultimate future which comes down from God Himself to mankind, which the Church is called to serve.<sup>57</sup> What is relative is the political option.

Turning to Moltmann, Segundo contends that the Protestant German theologian fully recognizes the functionality of the Church in relationship to the eschatological Kingdom. The triumph of the latter is what is most important.

Citing Moltmann, Segundo writes:

The universalism of the crucified Christ is realized only through the dialectic of taking sides. The false universalism of the Church . . . is, on the contrary, a premature and inopportune anticipation of the Kingdom of God.<sup>58</sup>

To Segundo, what Moltmann implies here is that the functionality of the Church consists in preventing "premature and inopportune" anticipations of the Kingdom of God--one being the false universalism of the Church, that is, the Church absolutized.<sup>59</sup> But Segundo moreover insists that in the broader context of Moltmann's work every historical project has a tendency to the same universalism, the same absolutization. This, to Segundo, is precisely what political theology attacks. He writes:

---

<sup>57</sup>Segundo, "Capitalism-Socialism: A Theological Crux," p. 111.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 111. Segundo is citing Moltmann, "Dieu dans la révolution," in Discussion sur la 'théologie de la Révolution,' p. 72.

<sup>59</sup>Segundo, "Capitalism-Socialism: A Theological Crux," p. 111.

Political theology attacks all kinds of absolutism, whatever their source: whether they come from the past or the future, the East or the West. It de-absolutizes on the same basis the existing order and the order projected.<sup>60</sup>

Regarding this tendency to de-absolutize, Segundo contends that the political theology of Europe generally resembles more the theoretical Cartesian revolution of methodical doubt rather than practical revolution. He writes:

One may say that it revolutionizes our way of viewing politico-social systems from our establishment inside them; but it does not choose between one system or another. If it has any tendency, if it inclines to one side, it will probably be against the order established today; the capitalist order where that prevails, the socialist order where that prevails. More than that, as the two régimes co-exist today, the "eschatological" criticisms converge today towards a common relativization, which is revolutionary only in name.<sup>61</sup>

Regarding the two alternatives facing Latin America, the political theology of Europe is not able to provide an orientation. Segundo maintains that the reason it can't provide such an orientation is that it does not wish to weigh down the absolute--the Kingdom--with the weight of the relative-transient political systems.<sup>62</sup> But at a more profound level, Segundo believes that it is because relative values are not even fragments of the absolute value. They

---

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., pp. 111-12. The underlining is mine.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

remain definitively within their relative sphere. That is why, to Segundo, the political theology especially of Germany chooses with utmost care the terms which indicate the relationship between a relative, political order and the absolute eschatological order: anticipation, analogy, analogical image or outline.

Segundo believes, however, that the eschatologies of Moltmann, Weth, and Metz, etc., do have at least an initial liberating impact because they desacralize the existing order and through the hope which faith in the eschaton brings, the imagination and creativity of Christians are stimulated to think of better and richer solutions to the problems of history. But yet, to Segundo, since the element of causality is lacking, such general relativization of man's historical accomplishments usually serves as a brake to any specific commitment for their betterment or transformation. He writes:

Even before some new régime is worked out, it is criticized in the name of some new hope. At the same time, the opposed régime is being criticized under the same head but for opposite reasons. And even the search itself is relativized because there is no element in history that can be related causally to the construction of God's eschatological kingdom.<sup>63</sup>

Because of the influence of this Lutheran strain, denying co-operative activity on man's part in matters pertaining to salvation and the Kingdom, Segundo maintains that the

---

<sup>63</sup>Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, p. 145.

political theology of Europe is generally reluctant to admit a connection between the actions and events of man's history and the Kingdom of God. Consequently, they must remain on different planes.

He turns, however, to the Catholic tradition concerning justification by faith and good works. He considers that the Catholic emphasis on the merit of human endeavors for gaining entrance into the Kingdom of God is of utmost importance to understanding man's relationship to the latter and vice-versa.<sup>64</sup> He writes:

In Catholic theology the only thing that united the plane of human activity in history with the plane of God's eternal kingdom was the notion of merit, that is, the "eternal" worth of human effort and right intention.<sup>65</sup>

Segundo, nonetheless, believes that in the Catholic view the notion of the merit of a human action had come to be understood as having no direct relationship to its historical effectiveness. Neither successful endeavors nor unsuccessful endeavors were considered meritorious as such. What really counted was the effort expended and a God-directed intention.<sup>66</sup>

He maintains, however, that such a conception of merit assumes that there are two very different, if not

---

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 142.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 139.

opposed, planes of value and efficacy. Taking the example of a medical doctor, he writes:

For society, for the human and historical plane, the value of a doctor is in direct proportion to the historical results he obtains. For God, for the plane of eternal values, those historical results not only do not count but are actually dangerous. They are dangerous insofar as they are historical satisfactions that can compete with the effort and intention that count for eternity.<sup>67</sup>

He believes that the work of Thomas A. Kempis, Imitation of Christ and Contempt for the World, is perhaps the clearest example of this tendency.<sup>68</sup> Men should not delight in the taste of creatures and worldly things but rather in God and things divine. Purity of intention, centered solely on God and divorced from the concerns of the world, is extolled. A model of Christian life is proposed which has been separated from historical involvement.

Segundo, however, insists that the Council Fathers of Trent, addressing themselves to the act of justification, affirmed man's liberty and therefore his co-operation in that act. They both confirmed the primacy of God's mercy and justifying grace and man's co-operation and genuine human activity in the work of salvation. He writes that the Church tried:

---

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>68</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, Grace and the Human Condition trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973), p. 88.

. . . to preserve the principle that human liberty is for something definitive and indeed eschatological: the building up of the Kingdom of God. It differs from Luther's notion of the servant will (servo arbitrio) in that important respect.<sup>69</sup>

Because man's freedom is absolutely necessary in the appropriating of God's justifying grace, man's co-operative activity is therefore safeguarded. The works that man performs under the influence of God's grace are meritorious and co-operative efforts because they always entail his freedom. In this sense, Trent affirmed at least implicitly that human liberty is freedom for co-operating with God's plan of salvation. The possibility is therefore open for man's free activity, under the inspiration of grace, to exercise a causal relationship regarding the Kingdom's realization in history.

Segundo admits that this causality is partial, fragile, and having to be remade, but it is something quite different from analogies, anticipations, or outlines of the Kingdom. He writes:

In the face of options between racial separation and full community of rights, free international demand and supply and a balanced market (with an eye to the underprivileged countries) or capitalism and socialism, what is at stake is no mere analogy of the Kingdom. What is at stake, in a fragmentary fashion if you like, is the eschatological Kingdom itself, whose realization and revelation are awaited with anguish by the whole universe.<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup>Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, p. 150.

<sup>70</sup>Segundo, "Capitalism-Socialism: A Theological Cruc," p. 123.

To Segundo, it is precisely this causal connection between man's historical efforts and the construction of the Kingdom from within history now which Latin American theology of liberation holds fast to. Indeed, it is a basic tenet to the latter's belief.<sup>71</sup>

Segundo turns, moreover, to the New Testament, and especially to the writings of Paul, to show that a continuity does exist between man's efforts or ministry of reconciliation and the definitive eschatological reality. Employing the example of reconciliation, Segundo wishes to show three things: first, that reconciliation is an eschatological good; secondly, that eschatological goods are realized in history; and thirdly, the manner in which eschatological goods are realized in history.<sup>72</sup>

Segundo maintains that Paul uses the verb 'to reconcile' only once in a profane or secular sense (1 Cor. 7:11). Other than that, the only reconciliation to which the New Testament refers is that of an eschatological reality or good.<sup>73</sup> Reconciliation is an element of the new creation initiated in Christ and refers to salvation, a concept exclusively eschatological (Rom. 5:10-11). And

---

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 112. This is a point that Gustavo Gutierrez also insists upon. See Gutierrez, The Theology of Liberation, p. 213 and following.

<sup>72</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, "Reconciliación y Conflicto," in Perspectivas de Diálogo, Año ix, no. 86 (setiembre 1974): 172.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., pp. 172, 174.

yet Paul insists at least eight times that he is a co-operator with God and Jesus Christ--a term implying a concausality with the divine (Rom. 16:3; 1 Cor. 16:16; 2 Cor. 1:24, 8:23; Phil. 2:25, 4:3; Phlm. 1:24).<sup>74</sup> Paul shares the ministry of reconciliation and service which the Lord has entrusted to him and others (2 Cor. 5:17-21).

Segundo contends that the eschatological good(s), e.g., reconciliation, must realize itself in some measure in history. He is aware, however, of at least two types of arguments which seem to deny such historical realization.<sup>75</sup> One, which is well-known, is that the historical Jesus expected a sudden irruption of the Kingdom and a cessation of history. When that expectation was prolonged, the Christian community (especially in Luke) began the process of filling the intermediary time with a vision of history which mediated between the present and the eschatological (the time of the Church, a time unforeseen by Jesus).

The second argument, similar to the first, but much more dependent upon theological suppositions, qualifies history as the dominion of man alone, whereas the eschatological reality and its realization depend solely on the will and causality of God. The eschatological hope is transformed into the relativization of history, with the consequent hope for the irruption of the power of God, who

---

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 174.

constructs His Kingdom. Segundo writes concerning these two arguments:

Whichever of these two arguments, and even more, the convergence of the two, is enough to lead us to a very specific conception of reconciliation as an eschatological good: the conception that this perspective relativizes profoundly the conflicts which, in history, are opposed to such reconciliation in the name of historical efficacy.<sup>76</sup>

In other words, if such arguments were accepted, then the historical, reconciling efforts of men would have nothing to do with the construction of the Kingdom.

With regard to the first argument, Segundo accepts the fact that an expectation of an immanent coming of the Kingdom appears in many passages of the gospel (not only in the gospels preceding Luke but in Paul's letters to the Thessalonians as well).<sup>77</sup> But this, to him, does not necessarily indicate that the authors of these writings merely 'invented' the meaning of the between-times when the Kingdom did not come. Rather, Segundo maintains that when the distance of creativity is measured and taken into account between Jesus and his disciples (a fact continually attested to in the redaction of the gospels), it would

---

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 175. "Cualquiera de estos dos argumentos y, más aun, la confluencia de los dos, basta para llevarnos a una concepción muy específica de la reconciliación como bien escatológica: la de que esta perspectiva relativiza profundamente los conflictos que, en la historia, se oponen a dicha reconciliación en nombre de una eficacia histórica."

<sup>77</sup>Segundo, "Reconciliación y Conflicto," p. 174.

appear more credible that it was their authors who reduced the thought of Jesus to the apocalyptic categories of their time.<sup>78</sup> He feels that this would explain why in the gospels of Mark (considered the earliest and least elaborated upon) and Matthew, the pre-paschal message of Jesus reflects a structural complexity incompatible with the mere acceptance of current Jewish apocalyptic thought or with the 'provisional' morality as preached by John the Baptist. Segundo maintains that the fundamental revision of the Law and its relationship to man which Jesus himself preached (Mark 7:1-23) contradict the expectation of an immanent eschatological judgment whose criterion was thought to be the very Law itself.<sup>79</sup> In this respect, to Segundo, Jesus preached a message which was incompatible with a simple equation with Jewish apocalyptic thinking. He feels it is unlikely that a message of such complexity was added later (given its pre-Lucan origin)--at a time when it would still not have been evident to the first generation Christians that the Kingdom was not going to come immediately.

With regard to the second argument, we have already mentioned Segundo's contention that Paul did imply a con-causality with the divine activity in his ministry of reconciliation. This ministry of reconciliation indicates, to Segundo, that the eschatological action of God passes

---

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

through the historical actions of man, although the latter do not exhaust it.<sup>80</sup>

Segundo, furthermore, maintains that the eschatological goods must, in some manner, be connected to the goods which can be recognized in history or else the former would cease to attract and appear as a catastrophe against creation, not the final work of God.<sup>81</sup> On the other hand, such goods are not yet fully present but indicate a future finality. Their function is to show dissatisfaction with their present realization. Segundo believes the distinction between these two aspects--opposed and complementary--is important. He writes:

. . . it makes [us] see how, in praxis, it is neither eschatological the mere rupture with the present (if it is not related to the final good) nor the mere continuance of a good (if the rupture is not accepted in order for that good to become final).<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., pp. 172, 176. " . . . hace ver como, en la praxis ni es eschatológico la mera ruptura con el presente (si no se la entronca con un bien final) ni la mera prosecución de un bien (si no se admite la ruptura para que ese bien se convierta en final)." Segundo analyzes the accounts of Luke and Matthew regarding the beatitudes. Luke's account, he feels, implies a rupture, even an inversion of situations with regard to the poor and the rich, the suffering and those well treated, the hungry and those who have their fill. Matthew's account, on the other hand, stresses continuity, for he eliminates those who are the object of 'woes.' In this way, Segundo feels, the beatitude of Matthew's account operate more through continuity and culmination in an existing value than through an inversion of actual situations. A situation of poverty in Luke becomes in Matthew a value, 'poor in spirit,' and such a value will continue to exist in

To Segundo, continuity and rupture typify the eschatological. Without continuity, the eschatological loses its attraction and historical force. Without rupture, the actual attainment of historical goods or values becomes rigid and closed to their continuing and final realization.

Reconciliation is an eschatological good to be ever realized in history, whose definitive reality will be manifested at the end time. Segundo insists that the results of man's love (the actions and events of history) must be valued in relationship to the construction of the Kingdom within history itself, for it is the latter which gives them such saving importance. If causality is denied, the Christian faith can easily become divorced from a preoccupation with love's efficacy. Segundo writes:

. . . who consecrates his life to an "analogy"?  
Who dies for an "outline"? Who moves a human mass,  
a whole people, in the name of an "anticipation"?<sup>83</sup>

To Segundo, the eschatological perspective which the Christian faith offers binds the results of man's historical efforts to the absolute while at the same time forestalling any absolutization of their relativity.<sup>84</sup> The expectation of the definitive realization of the Kingdom of God in the

the definitive Kingdom, equally, hunger and thirst are now for justice, etc.

<sup>83</sup>Segundo, "Capitalism-Socialism: A Theological Crux," p. 112.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 121.

future should impede Christians from considering man's works and historical accomplishments as rigid and final, that is, from sacralizing the existing order. At the same time, a Christian faith, divorced from love's efficacy in history, contradicts its own vocation and purpose.

Segundo maintains, therefore, that far from neutralizing the results of man's actual efforts of love, the theology of liberation of Latin America binds them to the absolute and proclaims them instances of salvation and the Kingdom's realization. To him, European political theology, tending to deny any convergence of causalities between historical action and the eschatological plenitude, only makes the eschatological a neutralizing and relativizing instance of historical conflict.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, instead of giving historical stress to the eschatological by justly evaluating the present from the viewpoint of its liberating opportunity, Segundo feels that it prefers the categories and certainties of other human sciences to the apparent simplicity of Jesus' thought; it demands that scientific guarantees be given in advance, demonstrating that an action for a given cure will not be followed by a greater illness.<sup>86</sup> But since such scientific guarantees cannot be found regarding the choice (alternative) for socialism facing Latin America (and could not have been found for the cures Jesus himself

---

<sup>85</sup>Segundo, "Reconciliación y Conflicto," p. 176.

<sup>86</sup>Segundo, "Capitalism-Socialism: A Theological Crux," pp. 120-21.

was effecting), the choice for socialism, to Segundo, will always be theoretical, that is, never chosen. He contends that Christian theology must base itself much more on a sensitive appreciation of what liberates man in the here and now and be opposed to the type of science which either hopes to foresee and exclude in the present all dangers or errors of the future or which claims to criticize and relativize every historical step forward which cannot guarantee such safeguards.<sup>87</sup>

Segundo, however, is aware of the varied and complex needs and pluralistic nature of contemporary society which condition the Church's concrete options. He wishes to restore the Church as a congregation of many 'base communities' at the local level.<sup>88</sup> In other words, to Segundo, the Church must be a congregation of real, concrete communities which are small enough to allow for real giving and sharing and open and sensitive to the signs of the times. The primary trait of such base communities is that they

---

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>88</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, The Sacraments Today, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1974), p. 32. The idea of base communities has been given emphasis in the Medellin Documents when the bishops state that ". . . the Christian base community is the first and fundamental ecclesiastical nucleus, which on its own level must make itself responsible for the richness and expansion of the faith, as well as of the cult which is its expression. This community becomes then the initial cell of the ecclesiastical structure and the focus of evangelization, and it currently serves as the most important source of human advancement and development." The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council II (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1973), p. 202.

constitute groups which must elaborate upon that which they receive from their faith in the Christian message and interpret it in accord with the social reality within which they are living. He writes:

A large crowd in a Church can simply listen to the Gospel Reading with more or less attention. A group of people must discuss it, reflect on it, compare it with real life, and see what import a gospel passage has for their own concrete existence as individuals, families, and members of a society.<sup>89</sup>

This re-examination or 'translation' of the gospel in terms of a real-life situation is, for Segundo, characteristic of base communities. And furthermore, this process within a given situation, culture, and historical moment, must be celebrated through liturgy.<sup>90</sup> In this way what is celebrated in faith always includes the Church community's mission to the wider society. Segundo believes that it is the magisterium or the hierarchy's duty to harmonize ecclesial communities "into a unity that respects diversity within the framework of one faith, one baptism, and one Church."<sup>91</sup> He cautions, however, the hierarchy, especially priests, about the obstacles they frequently pose to such base communities because the reflections of lay men and women

---

<sup>89</sup> Segundo, The Sacraments Today, p. 32.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

are not generally based on the theology of the priest but upon real life and its problems.<sup>92</sup> It is within this

vision of the Church that Segundo has stressed the necessity of the Christian faith to be practiced in service to society with the consequent historical options that such service implies.

### 3. Conclusions

We have attempted to analyze Segundo's reflections concerning the faith activity of the Church and her mission within the world. The Church is called to live her faith within history and to relate it to man's efforts of building up human society in love. Faith should not be given autonomous value wholly apart from the specific options it chooses to incarnate its love. A faith which does not issue into ideologies is a dead faith. Although distinct from faith itself, ideologies give practical reality to faith's truth and constitute the absolute feature of a functional faith. And yet, faith of itself does not contain the options necessary for its love to respond with efficacy to the ever-changing historical circumstances in which men find themselves. In order for a judgment to be made with regard to a specific option within a given context, theology has need of an instrument of human cognition, historical

---

<sup>92</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, Acción Pastoral Latinoamericana: Sus Motivos Ocultos (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Búsqueda, 1972), p. 52.

sensitivity or an open, committed heart. This, to Segundo, implies a commitment to man's most urgent problems, a commitment to the oppressed. Within such a commitment the Church is called to construct suitable ideologies vis-à-vis the concrete problems of history. The criterion for the practice of her love is the very liberation that is effected through it. The Church must have a profound sense of human life--of those actions which augur well for the lives of men and women. The very relativity of her options, however, must not cause her to seek refuge in a world divorced from man's history-making.

This intimate relationship between faith and ideology implies, to Segundo, a specific conception of eschatology. Men co-operate with God in the very construction of His Kingdom within history. It is because God's self-gift or justifying grace always respects man's freedom, the efforts that men expend under God's inspiration are meritorious and as such imply a co-operative activity regarding the realization of salvation within history. It is for this reason that Segundo considers the actions and events of man's history as exerting a causal relationship to the Kingdom's realization. He believes that no matter how partial or fragmentary that relationship may be, the results of man's activity of love must be valued precisely because of the causality which binds them to the absolute. The Church must give historical stress to the eschatological from the viewpoint of the liberating opportunity of the

present. Segundo considers this very causal relationship between man's works and history of love and the Kingdom of God a feature distinguishing Latin American liberation theology from the political theology of Europe.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SYNTHESIS AND CRITICAL ELEMENTS

We would now like to offer our reflections on Segundo's thought concerning the particular and universal dimensions of the Church and the relationship he affirms as existing between them. Our purpose in this our final chapter is to consider the manner in which Segundo has dealt with the problem by reflecting upon its coherency, completeness and scope and by offering certain criticisms regarding the limitations of his thought. Through his reflections concerning the relationship between the particularity of the Church and the universality of her mission, Segundo has in fact presented an ecclesiology intimately bound up with and related to the world and history of man. We would like to examine fundamental aspects of his concept of Church and her mission within the world and also to explore the particular theology of history that his reflections imply. We have divided this chapter into five sections. First, we shall examine the general perspective from within which Segundo has treated the problem. It is a perspective which is closely associated with the condition and reality of the Church's presence within Latin

America. Secondly, we will explore the principal theological focus of Segundo's thought--a focus which has shaped his treatment of the problem. His interpretation of Christian revelation from the viewpoint of the involvement of man's freedom in history and evolution serves, we believe, as the fundamental theological background for his manner of handling the problem. Thirdly, we will consider Segundo's conception of the relationship between the particular and universal dimensions of the Church and the ecclesiology and theology of mission which this relationship implies. Fourthly, we will evaluate the implications of Segundo's reflections regarding a theology of history. The very way Segundo deals with the particular and universal dimensions of the Church, we feel, indicates at times both implicitly and explicitly a Christian understanding and interpretation of history. And lastly, in our fifth section, we will note what we consider to be the contribution Segundo has offered the Church with regard to her self-understanding and finality within the world. At the same time we would like to expose the limitations that his theological efforts contain regarding the solution of the problem.

1. The Functional Perspective of Juan Segundo's Thought Concerning the Relationship Between the Particularity and Universality of the Church

Segundo believes that the key problem confronting the Church in Latin America is that of the 'crisis of

Christendom.<sup>1</sup> The modern world with its technology, competing values, and large urban centers have quickened the destruction of the once closed rural environments of Latin American society and have challenged the Church to rethink her mission and pastoral activity. To him the Christian life no longer finds confident support in the social and political institutions of an increasingly secularized society. The protective social structures and pressures that used to transmit Christianity from one generation to the next in Latin America either have vanished or are in the process of disappearing.<sup>2</sup> And this phenomenon of secularization not only applies to the large urban centers of the continent, but to remote rural areas as well. Mass communications have brought the world into the homes and lives of vast numbers. The influence and impact of this new situation with its competing values have relativized profoundly the religious and traditional attitudes inculcated in the younger generations through the school or the family.

Although the phenomenon of secularization is worldwide, Segundo believes that its appearance in Latin America was much more sudden and drastic than in Europe. The stages of secularization through which the countries of Europe

---

<sup>1</sup>See chapter 1, pp. 38-40 and chapter 5, pp. 169-80 of this work.

<sup>2</sup>Enrique Dussel, Historia de la Iglesia en América Latina. (Barcelona: Editorial Nova Terra, 1972), pp. 164-68.

passed (from the breaking up of 'Catholic' unity in the sixteenth century to the positivism of the nineteenth) covered a span of many generations, permitting the resulting changes to be accepted and integrated more slowly into the pastoral activity of the Church. Latin American society, on the other hand, long dominated by colonial powers, was to 'reproduce' these stages in the time span of one or two generations. With the emergence of the challenging and oftentimes chaotic changes produced by the secularization process of Latin America, the first and almost unanimous reaction of the institutional Church reflected her desire to maintain the political and economic support of civil institutions and in that way to protect somehow the faith and Catholicism of the masses. The Latin American Church exerted a concentrated effort to safeguard some ultimate contact with the masses of people within her boundaries, no matter how external or superficial that contact might have been. Parishes, staffed usually with only one priest, were multiplied and reduced to minimal Christian participation and faith expression. Great missions were inaugurated to reach the people. Intensive programs of recruitment of clergy from the exterior became commonplace. A tension existed within the Church regarding the maintenance of vast numbers of baptized Christians within her boundaries and the necessity of renewing her pastoral activity in accord with the demands of the changing social order and reality. The question arose: what should the Latin American

Church do?

Segundo has directed his attention to this problem. He has suggested that within this 'crisis of Christendom' it may be possible to discover a more profound and permanent element rather than just a passing evil or mere crisis of growth. And that element for him is the opportunity to achieve a new understanding of the Church and her activity within the world. From the European continent two other prominent Catholic theologians have expressed very similar ideas. Fr. Schillebeeckx has noted that the very process by which Christendom is being extricated from an entanglement which tied ecclesiastical structures to political and social ones has now made it possible for Christians, through an authentic Gospel-inspired commitment, to become involved in the realities of the world.<sup>3</sup> J. B. Metz has stated that since the late Middle Ages man has irreversibly moved out of the great, all-inclusive edifice that was medieval Christendom and through that very movement, the Church has slowly perceived the innermost historical impulses of Christianity itself and its message.<sup>4</sup>

For Segundo, the 'crisis of Christendom' provoked the rediscovery of the Church as a minority called to liberty at the service of the masses. It is important, we

---

<sup>3</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, God the Future of Man (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968), p. 146.

<sup>4</sup> Johannes B. Metz, Theology of the World, trans. by William Glen-Doepel (New York City: Seabury Press, 1973), pp. 143-44.

think, to clarify the functional perspective of Segundo's theological reflections concerning the dimensions of the Church's particularity and universality. He is cognizant of the Church's traditional and continuous claim to universality. But the central focus of his works and writings is not principally directed to the universality of Christ's truth for all times and for all men. In other words, Segundo's theology is not a foundational or fundamental theology which strives to understand the pretensions of Christianity's claim to universality with regard to the truth of its message. His writings are not principally directed to that problem, which represents, of course, a heavy cross for any Christian discourse or theology. Rather, the focus of Segundo's reflections are related much more pointedly to the believing community--the Church herself. He attempts to answer the question: What should the Church do--given the crisis produced by the secularization process of Latin America. What new theological understanding or rediscovery could guide and direct her presence and activity in a continent where 90% of the population are Catholic 'by birth,' and not by personal conviction or continuing formation?

Segundo, however, does not discard the universality of Christianity represented by the truth of Jesus' message and life. Rather he concentrates on the difficulties and questions that the believing Church community experiences as it seeks to renew and reshape its pastoral programs and

activities within the rapidly changing context of the Latin American social reality. In this sense his theological reflections on the Church and her dimensions are pastorally or functionally oriented. They are attempts to give orientation to what Rosemary Reuther has described as "the most radically polarized Church in Christianity."<sup>5</sup> The Latin American Church represents the widest possible gamut of operative ecclesiologies, extending from the most rigidly Constantinian and sacral view of the status quo with its hierarchical society (the Church of Christendom) to the most radically revolutionary interpretation of the Church's mission. The focus of Segundo's thought is to fashion an authentically Christian and operative ecclesiology which addresses itself to the Latin American Church's present struggle regarding her self-understanding and mission. And because of that focus, Segundo has necessarily limited his reflections concerning the universal dimensions of the Church to a more functional perspective. We believe, however, that in doing so, Segundo has given to the Church universal a rich contribution which we shall delineate below.

## 2. The Principal Theological Focus of Segundo's Thought

It is important to understand, we think, the primary theological focus of Segundo's writings and reflections

---

<sup>5</sup>Rosemary Reuther, Liberation Theology: Human Hope Confronts Christian History and American Power (New York: Paulist Press, 1972), p. 184.

which we consider has served as a unifying key to Segundo's conception of the Church's reality and her finality within the world. Well before the formulation of any theology of liberation in Latin America, Segundo had devoted serious study to the interpretation of the Christian revelation from the viewpoint of man's freedom and its involvement within history. Through the study of the Russian philosopher, Nicolas Berdyaev, Segundo has centered the essence of human existence in freedom. That appears to us as his fundamental anthropology. Man is called and capacitated through God's self-gift to exercise his freedom within nature and the world and render thereby to his Creator something irreplaceable and unique which God Himself must await as novelty.<sup>6</sup> In this way we have noted that the profound value of human freedom, for Segundo, does not lie in the risk of determining one's final destiny before God but in offering to Him a world recreated through man's efforts of love. History, to Segundo, is looked upon as man's struggle to penetrate nature and the world through the exercise of his freedom. This becomes a basic tenet which runs all through his writings. He looks upon Christianity as a part of, and therefore functionally related to, this larger historical struggle.<sup>7</sup> The novelty of the Christian message, to

---

<sup>6</sup> See chapter 2, pp. 89-91 of this work.

<sup>7</sup> See chapter 2, pp. 83-85 of this work; see also Roger Haight's articulate book review of Segundo's Work The Liberation of Theology in Emmanuel, vol. 83, no. 12, pp. 605-10.

Segundo, is that God reveals Himself as Love in the very history of man.<sup>8</sup> The Christian God does not benumb man's freedom nor, therefore, his capacity to create history but rather nurtures and promotes it as an absolute value through His very gift of self. Christianity is oriented precisely to the task of history-making.

Segundo's interpretation of Christianity is functionally oriented. The Christian revelation calls man to love efficaciously, that is, to respond to the given needs of individuals and society by employing the very materials of this creation. Segundo has contended that the practice of love, through which man's freedom realizes itself, can never be substituted for or take second place to anything else.<sup>9</sup> In Christianity salvation is given to those, with or without conscious reference to God, who love concretely.

The emphasis which Segundo attaches to love's efficacy is a recurring theme throughout much of the writings of the theologians of liberation theology in Latin America. Gustavo Gutierrez has insisted that Jesus Christ did not solely or principally come to teach a doctrine about charity in the world or merely to proclaim its excellence but to manifest it in his historical life and to say that charity

---

<sup>8</sup>See chapter 2, pp. 74-79 of this work.

<sup>9</sup>See chapter 2, pp. 81-82 of this work.

must be practiced.<sup>10</sup> Hugo Assmann affirms that the truth of Christianity cannot become a world in itself independent of human action, that is, of those actions which are and will be efficacious for man's liberation.<sup>11</sup> Segundo's emphasis on love's efficacy within history seeks to clarify the intention which all love must embrace if it is to be authentic: that of searching and struggling to respond concretely to the needs of men. In this way, historical efficacy is an ingredient and the proof of love's authenticity. Segundo is not denying, however, that many times love's efforts are historically inefficacious;<sup>12</sup> rather he is refusing to accept any other love which seeks to escape historical mediation and concrete service.

Although we understand the reason for Segundo's emphasis upon love's search for efficacy within history, we believe that his writings up until now have not sufficiently reflected upon the fact that in its very search for historical efficacy, love many times must give way to that which appears totally inefficacious because of the sinful world to which it is directed. Because of the power of sin embedded within the hearts of men and social institutions,

---

<sup>10</sup>Gustavo Gutierrez, "Liberation, Theology and Proclamation," in Concilium, vol. 6, no. 10 (June 1974): 57-77.

<sup>11</sup>Hugo Assmann, Theology for a Nomad Church, trans. by Paul Burns (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976), pp. 76-77.

<sup>12</sup>See chapter 3, p. 111, especially footnote 27 of this work.

together with the obstacles they pose, efficacious love is frequently called to become suffering love. In other words, many times all that is left of love is the power of love in suffering. Segundo, we feel, has not dealt sufficiently with the salvational density of this form of love, which certainly is widespread in Latin American society. Openness to both love as effective action and love as suffering is an historical constant to any life based upon the Christian revelation. It is a subject matter that Jon Sobrino touches upon in the development of his christology from within the context of Latin America and liberation theology.<sup>13</sup>

If the basic position or insight of Segundo's theological reflections is that man is called to realize his freedom through an involvement in history, he also insists that this very historical involvement takes place within an evolutionary context. We have noted that since an evolutionary perspective, to Segundo, is more in tune with contemporary man's understanding of himself and the world, the Christian message must be necessarily translated into the language of evolution.<sup>14</sup> Influenced by the cosmological and evolutionary perspective of Teilhard de Chardin, Segundo has attempted to understand the dimensions of sin and redemption from within the evolutionary process. Teilhard

---

<sup>13</sup>Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads*, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1977), pp. 91-95, 137, and especially chapter 6.

<sup>14</sup>See chapter 5, pp. 168, 192 of this work.

did not speak much about sin and redemption in his writings because his thought was organized around modalities peculiar to a scientific schema dealing with structure and convergence.<sup>15</sup> In other words, the language of revelation and that of biology appeared as describing either two different worlds or as pointing to two different levels of operations. The language of biology was mobilist, describing the realities of the world and man himself from within an evolutionary process or advance. On the other hand, sin and redemption were frequently ensconced in an immobilist terminology and perspective, emphasizing the personal and individual, and often appeared as contradictory to the language of science. We believe that Segundo, using the categories of Teilhard, not only has stressed that the redemptive work of Christ is universal but has sought to understand the operative character of that very universality within evolution. And in doing so he has concomitantly

---

<sup>15</sup> Phillippe Roquelpo, Expérience du monde: expérience de Dieu? (Paris: Ed. du Cerf, 1968), pp. 83-84. Roquelpo believes that Teilhard was certainly anguished by the problem of evil and did not wish to diminish the saving work of Christ. But because his thought was within a scientific framework of structure and advancing convergence, he was prevented from talking about evil and Christ's redemptive work. See also Christopher Mooney, Teilhard de Chardin and the Mystery of Christ (London: Collins Press, 1966), chapter 4, particularly pp. 122-45. Christopher Mooney points out that redemption for Teilhard comes to mean solely that Christ through his suffering, death and resurrection overcomes in himself (and therefore in humanity as a whole) that resistance to spiritual ascent which is inherent in matter. What Teilhard apparently never sees when dealing with redemption is that the one essential condition for spiritual ascent (and therefore for evolution's success) can only be Christ's conquest of that mysterious capacity in man for disunion and hatred at the personal level.

reflected upon the universality of sin, that is, upon that which Christ's work overcomes, from the same perspective.<sup>16</sup> By emphasizing the analogical relationship which exists between human life, life in its lower forms and matter, Segundo maintains with Teilhard that the qualitative advances of the evolutionary process are appearances ever more evident of the same energy which we call conscience, liberty, and spirit.<sup>17</sup>

It appears to us that the primary insight which Segundo has borrowed from Teilhard is precisely this analogy of continuity: that nothing could ever burst forth as final across the different thresholds successively traversed by evolution which had not already existed in some obscure and primordial way.<sup>18</sup> In other words, nothing totally new ever appears in the evolutionary process. To Segundo, if sin exists and operates on the human level, then it must assume some primitive form throughout the whole process of evolution that leads toward man--and equally so must love or freedom.

We believe that Segundo, without allowing the evolutionary process to decide the content of the Christian

---

<sup>16</sup>See chapter 3, p. 112-13; chapter 5, pp. 192-203 of this work.

<sup>17</sup>See chapter 5, pp. 192-93 of this work.

<sup>18</sup>Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, The Phenomenon of Man, trans. by Bernard Wall (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), p. 71.

revelation, has permitted us to see the universality of both Christ's redemption, of which St. Paul speaks (II Tim. 1:9-10), and sin as operative in all of creation from the beginning of time until now. And it is precisely this operative universality of redemption within the world that complements the conclusions Segundo has reached through his own theological reflections concerning the dimensions of the Church reality.

The Church cannot but be a part of that same universal process of history and evolution wherein redemption is achieving itself. Within the stage of hominization the redemptive force assumes the form of love and freedom. And since man represents a culminating stage in evolution, he shoulders the responsibility of extending redemption within the world. The Church, to Segundo, is that portion of the human world which knows the mystery of that redemptive force and life, its origin, meaning, and destiny.<sup>19</sup> Her function is to witness and proclaim that love is possible, full of meaning, and worthy of man's struggle, so that mankind could avail itself of that which is of critical importance to its destiny and salvation. In this way the Church represents the culminating stage of evolution for she possesses through her belief in Christ the consciousness of love's reality.

---

<sup>19</sup>See chapter 3, pp. 113-18 of this work.

To us, Segundo has described the function of the Church in two ways: that of providing meaning and orientation to man's history and secondly, that of witnessing the very meaning of Christianity through her own activity. With regard to the first function, the Church has the responsibility of explaining that man's efforts of love are trustworthy and have purpose. The radical uncertainty which the realities of the world reflect causes man to mistrust his own historical undertakings. It is a theme which Hans Kung has reflected upon in his latest book.<sup>20</sup> The Church, to Segundo, assures mankind that history has an objective purpose rooted in God Himself. While his theology does not expound upon the reasonability of her message in relationship to the experience and life of man, Segundo emphasizes the need for the Church to dialogue with man and through that dialogue to illuminate anew her own message and give reasons to others for the worthiness of love.<sup>21</sup> Secondly, the Church, to Segundo, cannot remain content to merely dialogue with men but rather must also witness her trust in love's worthiness and meaning. The servant character of the Church suffuses Segundo's ecclesiology because of his full acceptance of the fact that the redemptive mystery is universally operative in all men and that history has a

---

<sup>20</sup> Hans Kung, On Being a Christian, trans. by Edward Quinn (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1976), pp. 70-88.

<sup>21</sup> See chapter 4, pp. 157-62 of this work.

plan and an objective purpose. The Church cannot remain aloof from that redemptive activity.

It is precisely this servant character of the Church that Richard McBrien has himself emphatically given stress to.<sup>22</sup> In another perspective, Gregory Baum has situated his own ecclesiology in a much broader context than that of the Christian Church. He insists that it must incorporate what happens in society wherein the Spirit's presence is operative.<sup>23</sup> We believe that from the very beginning of Segundo's reflections, however, the servant quality of his ecclesiology has been emphasized. The practical implications of her service to the world will be evaluated below. The fundamental theological perspective of Segundo's thought, the involvement of freedom in history within the context of evolution, will serve, however, as the background for our evaluation of the relationship he conceives between the particular and universal dimensions of the Church.

### 3. The Relationship Between the Particularity and Universality of the Church: Focus for Clarifying her Reality and Mission

Segundo has defined the Church in her particularity as that portion of humanity which knows the redemptive

<sup>22</sup> Richard McBrien, The Church: The Continuing Quest (Paramus, N.J.: Newman Press, 1970), pp. 67-85.

<sup>23</sup> Gregory Baum, Man Becoming: God in Secular Experience (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), p. 68.

mystery, its origin, meaning, and destiny, through her faith in Jesus Christ and through the celebration of that faith in the sacraments.<sup>24</sup> We believe that the conception which Segundo holds concerning the particular dimension of the Church embraces three fundamental claims: that the Church is not for the privileged benefit of those who belong to it, that she is not always the best place to attain salvation, and that her universality is qualitative, not quantitative.<sup>25</sup>

With regard to the first claim, Segundo has placed great emphasis upon the Church's quality as sign of salvation. She is to signify the redemptive reality within the world of men through her witness and dialogue and is sent to humanity so that the problems of history will obtain a more fully human solution. Segundo is not denying the benefits the Christian faith and the sacraments give to the membership of the Church. Rather he is insisting that those very benefits cannot be construed as pure privilege but must be intimately associated with Christian responsibility towards society and the world.<sup>26</sup> To Segundo, the Church's finality clearly lies outside her institution and defines itself as service to the world.

---

<sup>24</sup>See chapter 3, pp. 115-18 of this work.

<sup>25</sup>See chapter 4, pp. 144-57; chapter 5, pp. 203-11 of this work.

<sup>26</sup>See chapter 5, pp. 205-6 of this work.

It appears to us that in stressing the sign character of the Church pointing to her service to the world, Segundo clearly implies that this was the understanding Paul also held of the Church, viewing her primarily and essentially as sign of salvation.<sup>27</sup> This, to us, seems quite dubious. Rather, in his letters, Paul conceives the Church principally as the (renewed) People of God or as the Body of Christ.<sup>28</sup> But this does not in itself necessarily take away from Segundo's insistence upon the Church's involvement within the world or the sign value or signification of her communitarian life to others outside her boundaries. It is true that Paul cautions Christians about attachment to the world (Rom. 12:2; I Cor. 7:29) but in the sense of this 'present aeon,' where death and sin are still manifested and exerting influence. Paul, however, understands the world in another sense, as the totality of God's creation, as the cosmos (Col. 1:16-17; Eph. 3:9; I Tim. 6:13). It is creation itself which is awaiting redemption and the revelation of God's sons (Rom. 8:19-22). The world as creation is therefore also implicated in the history of mankind's salvation. The Church is called to summon mankind from darkness (II Cor. 4:3-6) and make known the hidden plan of God's salvation (Eph. 3:9). Her life and witness, therefore, must

---

<sup>27</sup> See chapter 4, pp. 146-50 of this work.

<sup>28</sup> Rudolf Schnackenburg, The Church in the New Testament, trans. by W. J. O'Hara (New York: Seabury Press, 1965), pp. 149-57, 165-76.

signify to others outside her boundaries the meaning of that plan and the instrument by which the design of salvation achieves itself. In this way, the positive signification of the Church for the world, and primarily for the world of humanity, is made clear. It is because of this signification that Rudolf Schnackenburg has maintained that the internal renewal of the Church and her activity within the world must grow together and mutually condition and complete one another.<sup>29</sup> The inner strengthening of Christians regarding their faith and love implies at the same time their opposition and active struggle against the forces of evil within the world. That, likewise, appears to us as the thinking of Segundo, although he stresses more pointedly that the renewal of the Church, her life and membership, must be inspired by her mission to the world from the start.<sup>30</sup> In other words, the Church, to Segundo, possesses one sole finality, the redemption of the world. She does not exist for herself as 'the society of the saved' but for serving the redemptive mystery realizing itself within the history of man.

One author has recently suggested that the Church possesses two equal finalities: the communal experience and celebration of God's love revealed in Jesus Christ and

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 183-84.

<sup>30</sup> See chapter 4, pp. 146-47 of this work.

also her mission to the world.<sup>31</sup> But it appears to us that if the Church does in fact have two equal ends or finalities, she then possesses a mission but is not herself mission. In other words, mission could easily be conceived as something extraneous to the Church's life, not that which intrinsically flows from her awareness and celebration of love's redemptive reality. It is precisely this consciousness which opens the Church's very being to the world of men.

To Segundo, if the Church is not for the privileged benefit of those who belong to her, then she cannot always be the best place to obtain salvation. Belonging to the Church involves assuming the responsibility of her sign-bearing function.<sup>32</sup> The Church community has a special and difficult mission to witness and signify God's liberating plan for all humanity. Christians must commit themselves to the building up of human society where human relations will influence the authentic understanding of the revelation by which God desired to reveal Himself to men and to dialogue with the human family. Segundo is not insisting that members of the Church have to be saints in their moral behavior; that is not the criterion he employs regarding Church membership.<sup>33</sup> Rather, he insists that Christian

---

<sup>31</sup>Robert T. Sears, "Trinitarian Love as Ground of the Church," in Why the Church? ed. by Walter J. Burghart and William G. Thompson (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), pp. 108-35.

<sup>32</sup>See chapter 4, pp. 148-50, 157 of this work.

<sup>33</sup>See chapter 4, pp. 150-51 of this work.

faith involves a behavior that cannot be routinized, passive, unreflected, immediate, or simplified. In other words, it is not the statistically standard behavior of large groups or of a total society. In this way the mere fact of belonging to the Church does not better the situation of her members regarding salvation; it does so only when membership in the ecclesial community is shouldered as a new and more profound responsibility.<sup>34</sup> As soon as her members detach themselves from the responsibility which her mission to mankind implies, then belonging to the Church becomes a backward step on the road to salvation.

It is apparent to us that Segundo has attempted to define Church membership fundamentally as Christian responsibility toward human society and the world--a responsibility which entails risk. But his main scriptural appeal to demonstrate this appears to us again as weak.<sup>35</sup> The reason for Paul's admonition to excommunicate the unrepentant brother Christian from the community (I Cor. 5:1-5) does not derive essentially from Paul's understanding of the Church's sign value to outsiders but rather from the apostle's concern that the deviant behavior of the unrepentant brother not contaminate the life of the Christian community (I Cor 5:6-7). The basic motivation for all of Paul's moral exhortations to Christians base themselves

---

<sup>34</sup> See chapter 4, pp. 148-49 of this work.

<sup>35</sup> See chapter 4, pp. 147-50 of this work.

more fundamentally upon the life flowing from communion with Christ and the possession of his Spirit.<sup>36</sup> Segundo appears to found Paul's injunction solely, or at least primarily, upon the apostle's conception of the Church as sign to others.

We believe, nonetheless, that Segundo's concern for the sign value or signification of Christian life for those outside the Church community must still be safeguarded. Christians must be preoccupied with building up the existence of others (I Cor. 10). In Romans 13:8-10, Paul states that love of one's neighbor is the Christian project. Everything that a Christian does should be significant of an attitude of love for the salvation and welfare of others. The very vocation of Christians is that they are to become salt and light to the world (Matt. 5:13-14).

Segundo has insisted that to become a member of the Church without an interiorized attitude reflecting active commitment and conversion to the demands of the Gospel is not only meaningless, but can also be harmful to the very salvation of the individual who looks to the Church for that which she is unable to give apart from her very mission.<sup>37</sup> Those demands must be expressed not only in building up the Christian community but in service to the world--the finality

---

<sup>36</sup>Rudolf Schnackenburg, The Moral Teaching of the New Testament, trans. by J. Holland-Smith and W. J. O'Hara (New York: Seabury Press, 1965), pp. 300-301.

<sup>37</sup>See chapter 4, p. 153 of this work.

of the Church herself. In this way, belonging to the Church implies actively assuming responsibility for others and for society through fostering justice and brotherhood. It appears to us that Segundo, in the context of the Church's service to the world, is giving added stress to what the Council Fathers of the Second Vatican Council have themselves stated concerning the failure of Christians to respond to the grace of Christ: not only will they not be saved but will be judged more severely.<sup>38</sup>

The conclusions, however, which Segundo derives from emphasizing the character of risk which belonging to the Church entails has great implications for him regarding the understanding of the relationship between the particular and universal dimensions of the Church. The Church must subordinate her acceptance of vast numbers to her mission within the world. To receive masses of people into her membership without an interiorly formed and personally committed adhesion to the gospel and to the responsibility which the latter implies, is to impede the Church from carrying out her very mission.<sup>39</sup>

Segundo has insisted that the very nature of the demands of the gospel message will always keep the Church as a minority within the world. It is a theme which Karl

---

<sup>38</sup>"Lumen Gentium," article 14 in The Documents of Vatican II, ed. by Walter M. Abbott (New York: Guild Press, 1966), p. 33.

<sup>39</sup>See chapter 5, pp. 210-11 of this work.

Rahner has touched upon in a work describing the shape of the future Church--a Church that will inevitably become a small flock in a diaspora situation.<sup>40</sup> Rahner believes that the smallness of the Church is inevitable as secular society erodes the preconditions of a Christian society and thus continuously takes away 'ground' from the Church of traditional Christianity. Joseph Ratzinger has insisted that God in fact divides humanity into two groups: the few and the many.<sup>41</sup> He cites gospel texts indicating that division: few are chosen (Matt. 22:14); few are the workers to gather the harvest (Matt. 9:37); the Lord's reference to the small flock (Lk. 12:32); Jesus' life is given for the ransom of the many (Mk. 10:45).<sup>42</sup> Ratzinger believes, nonetheless, that God has not jettisoned the masses to perdition but utilizes 'the few' to raise the multitude and to attract them to Christ.

We feel that Segundo, however has gone further. He has analyzed the exigencies of the Christian message and found that they entail the necessary acceptance of complexity and mediacy.<sup>43</sup> It is because of the complexity of the

---

<sup>40</sup>Karl Rahner, The Shape of the Church to Come, trans. by Edward Quinn (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), pp. 29-34.

<sup>41</sup>Joseph Ratzinger, Le Nouveau Peuple de Dieu, trans. by Robert Givord and H el ene Bourboulon (Paris: Editions Montaigne, 1971), p. 140.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>43</sup>See chapter 5, pp. 175-80 of this work.

Christian ideal which resists facile solutions (immediacy) in order to achieve a richer synthesis that Segundo contends that it is most improbable Christianity has any chance of being chosen on a massive scale.<sup>44</sup> To him the behavior of the masses tends toward immediacy and simplicity. That is the conclusion which he has gleaned from his analysis of Christendom and what he has defined as mass behavior.<sup>45</sup> But at a more profound level, Segundo has contrasted mass behavior with the costly and creative responsibility of realizing human freedom within the world.<sup>46</sup> Shouldering that responsibility is intrinsically minoritarian because it doesn't cede to inertia, passivity, or the easy way out. As we have noted, to Segundo, such responsibility is an essential element of the Christian message and life. We believe that Segundo's understanding of the minoritarian character of the Church is more profound than that of Rahner and Ratzinger. But, more importantly, Segundo has not merely analyzed why the Church is necessarily minoritarian, but has tried to show as well how she exercises her universality within the world. It is Segundo's functional perspective of the Church's claim to universality that we believe offers a fresh understanding of her mission within the world.

---

<sup>44</sup>See chapter 5, pp. 177-78 of this work.

<sup>45</sup>Segundo's definition has striking similarities to what Herbert Marcuse has described as "one dimensional man," in his work, One Dimensional Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), pp. 1-18.

<sup>46</sup>See chapter 5, p. 174 of this work.

Segundo has insisted that the universality of the Church is qualitative, not quantitative. The victory of Christ did not make it more difficult for men to sin nor increase the ratio between the efforts of his creative freedom as compared to the weight of resistance which nature and the world bring to those very efforts. The quantitative forces which seek to dominate man remain the same.<sup>47</sup> To Segundo, Christ's victory is qualitative, bringing the demands of his love to the darkness of the world and revealing the closed system of the latter, ruled by convenience and facility.<sup>48</sup> Men are called to escape from being led by its mechanism through a new birth in the Spirit. We believe that Segundo, through his analysis of the writings of John and Paul, has boldly attempted to understand why the adoption of the Christian message by the masses would be a contradiction. The very nature of the Christian life with its demands for truth, freedom, and love is inherently opposed to the conduct of the world and the flesh.<sup>49</sup> But more importantly, it is precisely the world and the flesh that not only seek to snuff out the efforts of man's creative freedom but are the indispensable locus wherein those very efforts can realize themselves.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup>See chapter 5, p. 188 of this work.

<sup>48</sup>See chapter 5, pp. 184-85 of this work.

<sup>49</sup>See chapter 5, pp. 180-92 of this work.

<sup>50</sup>See chapter 5, pp. 189-91 of this work.

Locating love and freedom within the context of evolution, Segundo has tried to clarify how the mass element, that which opposes itself to the novelty of creative effort, is the necessary base from which new syntheses arise. The Church, minoritarian by its very life, far from being indifferent to the masses, must seek to elevate the base which the latter represent so that newer and richer syntheses can occur.<sup>51</sup>

From within the context of evolution Segundo has given an operative description of the universality of the Church which complements the gospel message's stress concerning Christ's very coming to redeem and save the world, the multitude. As that portion of humanity conscious of the redemptive dimensions of love, the Church is called to help construct syntheses of love which are more redemptive, richer, and more human.<sup>52</sup> She does this most especially through her concern for the development of institutions which condition love and liberty and provide the means through which every new emergence of love can be more efficacious and far-reaching. We believe that the importance of Segundo's manner of describing the operative universality of the Church has given heightened clarification to the fact that the Church is determined more by the socio-political context of the society wherein she concretely

---

<sup>51</sup>See chapter 5, pp. 197-200 of this work.

<sup>52</sup>See chapter 5, pp. 199-201, 207-8 of this work.

exists than by intra-ecclesiastical problems. He has pointedly made clear that in her struggle to exercise her universality within the world of men, the Church is called upon to adopt a deeper and more profound moral attitude, which is creative, socially oriented, directed toward building the human community, rather than one which engages in what can become an egotistical pre-occupation for individual salvation. The Church's own (moral) life must express itself in her efforts to respond to the needs of society and the individual. She cannot be indifferent to the political and social programs of groups or parties, concerning herself solely with maintaining the dominion of Christian civil institutions in the sphere of public interests. In this way, we believe Segundo has shown that her universality is directed principally to the world, not to the benefit of her own institution.

#### 4. Implications for a Theology of History

Segundo looks upon history as in the process of becoming the Kingdom of God.<sup>53</sup> Man's freedom penetrates nature and the world through his creative efforts of love. Segundo, however, does not maintain that temporal progress and the Kingdom's realization are to be equated. Rather he emphasizes that historical progress provides conditioning factors wherein love, when freely chosen, can be more

---

<sup>53</sup> See chapter 6, p. 231 of this work.

universally efficacious and probing in its scope.<sup>54</sup> The creation of such conditioning factors through institutions, socio-political programs, etc., cannot, therefore, be indifferent to the Kingdom's realization. Social, political, and economic institutions and programs can indeed serve to foster and extend justice and brotherhood. The former serve as necessary vehicles for love to be efficacious in their response to the needs of individuals and society. It appears to us, however, that Segundo could clarify more the difference between the historical 'embodiments' of all authentic love and the results that are effected through them among men: greater union, justice, and brotherhood. It is the latter which are partial realizations of the Kingdom within history, that is, the effects of love produced in and among men. We believe that Segundo is stating this, for it is hard to imagine how the very material embodiments of love can be anything more than anticipations or outlines of the Kingdom on this side of a resurrected existence. The form of this world is passing away and, therefore, Christians cannot identify any form or any embodiment of love which man has constructed with the promised 'new world.'<sup>55</sup> But the effects which man's

---

<sup>54</sup> See chapter 4, p. 156; chapter 5, pp. 199-201 of this work.

<sup>55</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, The Mission of the Church, trans. by N. D. Smith (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), p. 86. See also, Hans Urs Von Balthasar, "Las Tres Caras de la Esperanza Actual," in Selecciones de Teología, vol. 13, no. 51 (julio-setiembre 1974): 212-20.

incarnational efforts produce in men can certainly be realizations, however partial and fragmentary, of God's Kingdom. In this way it appears to us that Segundo has rightly insisted upon the fact that love's liberating service within the world can partially realize the Kingdom of God in history--but among and within men by extending and heightening their communion, reconciliation, and life of justice.

We also believe that far from relativizing the results produced in men through love's liberating service, Christian faith should bind them to the absolute, as Segundo contends,<sup>56</sup> and declare them instances of salvation, while insisting upon the necessity of their ever-continuing and greater realization. Moltmann himself has accepted the point Segundo has made concerning the fact that the Kingdom of God makes it possible to 'absolutize' the relative, allowing the unconditioned to cut into the conditioned.<sup>57</sup>

It also appears to us that Segundo has rightly interpreted the Catholic doctrine of justification which preserved man's freedom and therefore his necessary co-operative activity in that act, thus allowing him to exert a con-causality with God's grace in the realization of

---

<sup>56</sup> See chapter 6, pp. 246-47 of this work.

<sup>57</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, "Carta sobre la Teología de la Liberación," in Selecciones de Teología, vol. 15, no. 60 (octubre-diciembre 1976): 306.

the Kingdom within history.<sup>58</sup> We, however, feel that Segundo's relegation of Metz and Moltmann to the position of denying co-operative activity on man's part regarding the Kingdom's realization within history needs more substantial documentation. In fact, Segundo's references to their works are sparse and, to us, seem drawn more from personal impressions than critical analysis. These same impressions, however, appear to be held also by Jon Sobrino.<sup>59</sup> It is interesting to note that some of the more prominent spokesmen for liberation theology do refer to the relationship between the historical reality produced by man's efforts of love and the Kingdom of God precisely in the terms that Segundo has criticized Moltmann and Metz for employing.<sup>60</sup> This indicates to us that caution must be exercised in judging a particular theology of the Kingdom from the use of a word such as 'anticipation' or from the employment of other similar expressions. Moltmann has in fact accused Segundo of reading only half his works.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> For a lucid and highly articulate treatment of this entire problem, see Harry McSorley, Luther: Right or Wrong? (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1969).

<sup>59</sup> Jon Sobrino, "El Conocimiento Teológico en la Teología," in Liberación y Cautiverio: debates en torno al método de la teología en América Latina, ed. by Enrique Ruiz Maldonado (Mexico City: Comité Organizador, 1975), pp: 203-4.

<sup>60</sup> See for example, Hugo Assmann, Theology for a Nomad Church, trans. by Paul Burns (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976), p. 70. Also Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, p. 53.

<sup>61</sup> Moltmann, "Carta sobre la Teología de la Liberación," p. 306.

Segundo's exegesis of New Testament texts concerning the con-causality of man's efforts of love and the partial historical realizations of eschatological goods is an effort to emphasize the continuity of the latter with the plenitude of the Kingdom at the end of time. We believe that Segundo's insistence on continuity is well founded.<sup>62</sup> Jesus' own eschatology possesses an historico-temporal character. He actively propounds and displays a way of life in accordance with the Kingdom and invites others to open themselves to living such a life.<sup>63</sup> There appears in the gospels unmistakable evidence that Jesus associated the preaching of the reign of God with his own person and actions.<sup>64</sup> That Jesus expected the plenitude of the Kingdom to come within a short span of time lacks firm support in the synoptic traditions.<sup>65</sup> Schnackenburg himself believes, to the contrary, that the synoptics give solid basis for believing that Jesus left the time of the Parusia in complete obscurity.<sup>66</sup> Knowledge of this time is reserved to the Father.

---

<sup>62</sup> Rudolf Schnackenburg, God's Rule and Kingdom, trans. by John Murray (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1963), pp. 277-78.

<sup>63</sup> Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, pp. 64-65.

<sup>64</sup> Schnackenburg, God's Rule and Kingdom, pp. 117-29.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

Whether Segundo's criticism of German political theology's reluctance to commit itself to political options is valid or not we will leave to the parties involved. But we feel Segundo's own comparison of liberation theology with the political theology of Europe has at least for us greatly clarified the former's contention that the Church cannot simply remain an institution of criticism but must herself risk historical options. Segundo has insisted the Church is called upon to live her faith and concretize her life of liberating service by necessarily choosing historical options.<sup>67</sup> He considers these historical options as ideologies, distinct but inseparably united to a faith which is functional. We believe that although Segundo has redefined the classic meaning of the term 'ideology,' his distinction between faith and historical options is, correct and quite necessary if faith is not to be confused with its material forms or expressions. In this way the autonomy of faith is safeguarded. That the Church must choose ideologies, in the sense defined by Segundo, to realize her faith in service to the world and society seems obvious to us. The manner of doing so, however, is not as obvious.

We concur with Segundo that the Church must show partiality and commit herself to the poor.<sup>68</sup> We believe such partiality reflects that of Jesus Christ who strove to

---

<sup>67</sup>See chapter 6, pp. 217-31 of this work.

<sup>68</sup>See chapter 6, pp. 227-28 of this work.

preach and manifest God's universal reign from the experience of the poor.<sup>69</sup> Only through the dialectic of taking sides did the universalism of Christ's ministry become a reality in the world.<sup>70</sup> In this way, the demands and the comprehension of God's reign are more clearly seen from the point of view of the poor. This is not to deny that Christ came primarily to call sinners, be they rich or poor, but that he did so from the vantage point of the poor.

Within this commitment to the poor Segundo believes that the Church must search for and adopt ideologies so that her love might become efficacious.<sup>71</sup> He accepts the need for social analysis, that is, the use of the social sciences, but insists that they can never provide sure criteria for resolving historical problems. Rather, for Segundo, the one indispensable criterion that the Church must always use in the selection of her options must be the sensitivity of an open, upright heart. We believe that Segundo quite rightly asserts that no sure, fool-proof guarantee can be given in advance about the success of her option. There will always be an element of uncertainty and risk in any of

---

<sup>69</sup>Segundo Galilea, Studies in the International Apostolate of the Jesuits, vol. VI, no. 1 (June 1977): 49-56. See also his other works: Vivar el Evangelio en Tierra Extraña (Bogota: Indo-American Press Service, 1976); Contemplación y Apostolado (Bogota: Indo-American Press Service, 1972).

<sup>70</sup>Jurgen Moltmann, The Crucified God, trans. by R. A. Wilson and John Bowen (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), particularly chapters 1 and 8.

<sup>71</sup>See chapter 6, pp. 229-31 of this work.

her historical efforts of service regarding their outcome. This should not deter, however, the Church from assuming that risk.

To us, however, Segundo has to be more reflective concerning the way the Church selects her options within and before the shaky terrain of concrete history. Certainly he wants to avoid any suspicion of advocating a "clericalism of the left"<sup>72</sup> by which the Church hierarchy somehow would determine positions that must be taken by the faithful. His insistence on base communities appears to us to counter that suspicion.<sup>73</sup> But the paucity of his theological reflections concerning the relationship between the hierarchy and laity and the distinctive roles of each in the process of selection is quite evident. Much more theological reflection is needed on his part, we believe, if his own insights into the necessary relationship between faith and the concrete and historical liberating service that must issue from the latter is not to remain on the abstract level. It is interesting to note that in Segundo's theology there is no discussion of the symbols and topics treated by more traditional ecclesiologies: papal primacy, hierarchical structure, apostolic succession, collegiality or the 'marks' of the Church--except of course, universality. It

---

<sup>72</sup>This is in fact what J. B. Metz wants to avoid in his own political theology. See his article, "Teología Política," in Selecciones de Teología, vol. 10, no. 38 (abril-junio 1971): 98-103.

<sup>73</sup>See chapter 6, pp. 248-50 of this work.

seems to us that for Segundo's own ecclesiology to take root, models will have to be constructed which take into account very fundamental pastoral and practical problems of procedure and which, at the same time, respect a plurality of modes of both celebrating and being the gospel.

We believe, however, that Segundo has, through his reflections upon the dimensions of the Church, provided a Christian understanding or interpretation of history. He has contended that Christ is actively present in the hearts of all men through love and therefore is active within man's own history.<sup>74</sup> What accumulates in history, to Segundo, is the progress of mankind's domination of nature and the world but not his goodness or badness. Consequently the human species does not become more moral with historical progress. And yet the latter can provide conditioning factors which allow love to unfold more efficaciously and extensively, when freely chosen.<sup>75</sup> Love, however, will ever remain tied to the risk of each person's liberty in his relationship to others. But nonetheless, through the advance of historical progress, love will have at its disposal greater means by which to extend itself. Historical progress in this way can pave the way for the redemptive activity of love from within. Due to such progress the objective presence of the redemptive mystery encounters

---

<sup>74</sup>See chapter 3, p. 109 of this work.

<sup>75</sup>See chapter 4, p. 156 of this work.

successive generations of men and women who are capacitated for a love with ever more universal possibilities.

Since, to Segundo, the Church possesses knowledge of the redemptive mystery within history, she is one element helping to recapitulate the universe in Christ through love. She would not necessarily be the entity that brings that recapitulation about but rather lends her support to those actions and events through which the world is being transformed into a greater expression of God's Kingdom wherein justice, reconciliation, and love are achieving themselves among men. This process of recapitulation, however, is being effected not only in the world but in the Church herself. The divine plan for humanity reaches in her its maturity in principle by becoming a conscious thing, and the Church through her communitarian life witnesses to it. In this way we believe Segundo has situated the Church in her particular dimension within the universality of Christ's redemptive work and activity--an activity present both within the Church in her particular limits but also beyond those limits. The Church is called to take cognizance of what is being fulfilled in history and serve it.

##### 5. The Value and Limitations of Juan Segundo's Reflections

Segundo's stress or emphasis upon the Church's functional presence within the world offers an ecclesiology which describes how she must exercise her universality

in history. It appears to us that for Segundo the very particularity of the Church must be valued and appreciated precisely for what it contributes to her universal dimension and activity. We believe that the theology of Segundo reflects limitations as well as presents a fresh vision of the Church's reality and mission. We would now like to expose what we consider to be the limits and contribution of his reflections.

It appears to us there is always an inherent danger in stressing the efficacy of faith within history. We have already noted that Segundo's theology is not directed to the problem concerning the universal truth or validity of faith's discourse. Segundo's theology presupposes faith. It does not strive to justify the latter by reproducing on the level of discourse the movement from unbelief to faith. This has been a criticism directed to liberation theology in general.<sup>76</sup> We mention this criticism, however, because we believe that the very process of secularization in Latin America provokes it. As that process increases within the continent, questions concerning the meaning and truth of the Christian faith will certainly arise that cannot be justified by appealing solely to faith's historical efficacy. In other words, the problem of the meaning and truth of faith's discourse must eventually be grappled with.

---

<sup>76</sup> Alfredo Fierro, The Militant Gospel, trans. by John Drury (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1977), pp. 323-39.

Moreover, the stress which Segundo has given to efficacy must be complemented by another necessary dimension of the Christian life--contemplation. Frequently Christians have abandoned their faith in their very commitment to the poor because of the anguish and tension experienced in belonging to a Church many times tied to the established order.<sup>77</sup>

The cause of their commitment becomes divorced from the very faith which has nourished and inspired it. It appears to us that Segundo has to give more studied emphasis to the necessity and importance of contemplation and prayer as a fundamental dimension to all ecclesial communities and locate its value more profoundly within the Church's particularity. We, however, are not maintaining that Segundo is denying the importance of the latter, but his stress upon functionality and efficacy tends, we believe, to conceal the crucial role of contemplation and prayer as a necessary aspect of the ecclesial reality. To us this is especially evident when he fails to consider more fully the importance and saving character of suffering which issues from an active faith within history.

Segundo's own reflections upon the inherently minoritarian character of the Church are to us sound but their practical implications could lead to confusion. He has insisted that the criterion for belonging to the Church is

---

<sup>77</sup>Gustavo Gutierrez, "Evangelio y Praxis de Liberación," in Selecciones de Teología, vol. 12, no. 46 (abril-junio 1973): 68-78.

the active assumption of the responsibility inherent in the Church's sign-bearing function to society, and not necessarily moral criteria. Moral perfection must be considered from within the larger context of Christian responsibility for one's neighbor through love and service. We feel, however, that there is need on Segundo's part to stress that 'neighbor' can also be a fellow Christian and a member of the Church community. Christians who dedicate themselves and their lives to the well-being of the institutional Church, that is, to the practice of love especially among the brethren, are not necessarily reneging upon their Christian responsibility to the world. Their dedication to this service, however, must be open to the Church's finality within the world--an openness which should renew and even shape their very commitment to the service of the institution. We believe Segundo has not adequately reflected upon the role of the hierarchy in this respect. His very discussion concerning the option for socialism which faced the Christians of Chile could easily leave the impression that the hierarchy, almost apart from the base communities of Christians of which Segundo has spoken, should have declared the Chilean Church in favor of a political option.

If one of the functions of the hierarchy is to help form the conscience of Christians with regard to the demands of the Christian message, it equally appears true that Christians must help form the conscience of the hierarchy.

with regard to the historical realization of those demands in given, particular social contexts. There must be a deep sharing and reciprocity. We feel that Segundo has not given adequate reflection to the distinctive roles of the hierarchy and laity within this process. Without such clarification there might easily arise from within the Church either the tendency to offer simple or immediate solutions to the complex problems of history and society--the very behavior which Segundo has insisted against--or the tendency to remain in the relatively safe realm of abstraction, emphasizing general gospel attitudes that must be lived by Christians, but independent of particular social contexts. Historical sensitivity to the signs of the times, even with an upright heart, cannot, however, insure consensus concerning the relative realm nor can it safeguard the Church from internal divisions which her historical options may cause.<sup>78</sup> We believe that Segundo should reflect more

---

<sup>78</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx has contended that even with a scientifically conducted analysis of society, there is always left open many possible choices that can be taken, and none of these imposes itself as morally binding in the here and now. See his article, "The Magisterium and the World of Politics," in Concilium, vol. 6, no. 4 (1968): 19-39. See also chapter 5 of his work, The Understanding of Faith, trans. by N. D. Smith (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), pp. 78-101. Karl Rahner insists that the unavoidable struggle among Christians to incarnate love in history and society may frequently lead to division. Christians must learn, however, to maintain the Church's unity within the struggle while not superficially avoiding conflict. See his work, The Shape of the Church to Come, pp. 123-32. In another work he stresses that the salvation of men and women is won or lost in the concrete realities of their earthly existence, and for that reason the Church must be concerned with the concrete earthly life of man and not deny

seriously upon the ministry of communion which the hierarchy is called to exercise, not only regarding their particular Churches, as they struggle to live their faith responsibly in the world, but also those on the local and international level. Certainly he is aware that Christian commitment within a given historical situation will always be marked by ambiguity and by reasons for or against the commitment. But to us, that very ambiguity must be considered more seriously regarding its implications to the communitarian life of the Church.

We believe, however, that Segundo's reflections concerning the particular and universal dimensions of the Church and their relationship have offered valuable contributions to ecclesiology. No author, to our knowledge, has more intensely reflected upon the minoritarian dimension of the Church within the world than Juan Segundo. The merit of Segundo's ecclesiology is that it does not remain solely within the abstract level but has striven to define functionally the Church's presence and mission within the world--as a creative minority committed to the service of mankind in the process of history.

---

the latter in a preoccupation solely with ultimate human attitudes toward God in the abstract. He maintains, however, that the limits of Church possibilities and those of her official hierarchy are not to be regarded as identical. See his work, The Christian of the Future, trans. by W. J. O'Hara (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1964), pp. 13-41.

Because he sees Christianity as functionally related to man's history wherein the redemptive mystery of love is realizing itself, Segundo defines the Church's particularity as intrinsically related to that history, making her a servant, an instrument, and a means in relationship to a wider plan and project of God in and for the world. The consistency and thorough-going character of Segundo's historical-functional approach to Christianity has allowed him, we believe, to appreciate more fully the minoritarian quality of the Church's activity. He has insisted that if the Church is to fulfill the mission which she represents within humanity, then her membership must reflect a faith which involves an adult or mature understanding of Christianity and its relationship to the world-- a faith adhesion won through personal conversion and interiorly formed conviction. It is this faith which allows the Church to be sign of salvation and fulfill her mission as leaven within the world.

Segundo has pointedly clarified the demands which the Church's activity within the world embraces if she is to embody and signify God's liberating plan for all of humanity. Her mission demands the creative exercise of freedom, which must always be in the process of development in accord with the changing historical contexts, socially oriented, and pointing to the Good News which she is called to transmit through her dialogue and witness. Such creative exercise of freedom in the service of love and

truth distinguishes itself from the behavior of the world or from the standardized conduct of the masses. But of central importance in Segundo's reflections is the Church's role both in the criticism and transformation of human institutions. The value of the social, political, economic, and cultural institutions of society rests upon their capacity to provide a 'liberating environment' for humanity. The distinctive contribution of Segundo's ecclesiology, we believe, resides in the way he has analyzed theologically the exercise of the Church's universality within the world in the context of historical progress and evolution. The Church, signifying the universal dimension of Christ's redemptive work, is called to help in the transformation or development of human institutions, seeking thereby to raise the conduct of the masses and thus create conditioning factors which will allow love, when freely chosen, to become more universal and efficacious in its scope. We believe that through Segundo's reflections, Christian commitment to institutional change and development within society has been clearly highlighted as a central component to the Church's very role in the evolution of mankind and in the progress of history. Such a commitment cannot be considered merely as something added to or a side effect of her very mission within the world, but must be seen as an intrinsic element to it. In this respect, we believe Segundo's ecclesiology offers a genuinely fresh evaluation and understanding of the Church's reality, presence, and activity

within history--but nonetheless forged within the Catholic tradition. If the Church were to elect more fully the awesome and enormously difficult task and adventure of assuming that role, perhaps her membership could be given the name which Segundo himself uses as the general title of his five-volume series: artisans for a new humanity.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

It appears to us that although Juan Segundo's ecclesiology is constructed from within the historical context of the present social reality of Latin America, it poses, nevertheless, critical questions to the universal Church's own self-understanding and mission within the world. He has treated such crucial theological issues as the basic meaning of Christianity, the function of the Church within the world, the type of faith and life demanded of Christians, the ambiguity and necessity of ideology in the exercise of faith's activity within history, and the Church's commitment to the creation or development of just and more fully human socio-political structures. Segundo's theology allows room for and even demands a pluralism of ecclesiologies operating within and respecting the diverse needs and differences of social and cultural contexts, both at regional and local levels. This in itself need not deny the international or universal character of the Church. Pluralism in ecclesiology is no more unthinkable than pluralism in theology in general. Segundo has united himself and his theological enterprise to a general analysis of the needs of Latin American society, to the political, economic, and cultural setting of its peoples. He has insisted that the Church is a function of society, not some entity from another culture, time, and

place. He has shaped and formed his ecclesiology within a particular historical context. And in doing so, we believe, he has challenged theologians from other cultural and historical heritages to define their contexts and priorities and to develop theologies of Church based upon both the living reality of their peoples and problems and the Christian revelation, interpreted from their present historical actuality. We believe that if this challenge is accepted, the ecclesiologies which may emerge could mutually challenge one another and stimulate a dialogue that would not only be illuminating, but constructive as well to the historical presence of the Church universal within the world of men.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

## I. PRIMARY SOURCES

### Books Written by Juan Segundo

Existencialismo, filosofía: ensayo de síntesis. Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe, 1948. This short work is a reflection upon existentialist philosophy's attempt to answer the problem of man's existence.

Función de la Iglesia en la Realidad Rioplatense. Montevideo: Barreiro y Ramos, 1962. This work reflects upon the theologically opposed visions present in the Church's pastoral practice in the geographical area of the Plate River.

Etapas Precristianas de la Fe: Evolución de la Idea de Dios en el Antiguo Testamento. Montevideo: Cursos de Complementación Cristiana, 1962. In this work, Segundo tries to describe and understand the progressive understanding of God as revealed in the history of the Jews, recorded in the Old Testament.

Berdiaeff: Une Réflexion Chrétienne sur la Personne. Paris: Éditions Mouton, 1963. This work is the published doctoral dissertation of Segundo. It is a study of Berdyaev's conception of the human person as a created being endowed with freedom. From man's experience of freedom, God, grace, sin, and the Law are studied and reinterpreted.

Concepción Cristiana del Hombre. Montevideo: Mimeográfica "Luz," 1964. The work is a continuation of Segundo's previous study concerning the progressive understanding of God in the Old Testament but now from the New Testament perspective. The novelty of the New Testament understanding of God implies a new understanding of man and his task.

La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía? I Los Hechos. Montevideo: Mimeográfica "Luz," 1964. This is the first part of Segundo's second doctoral dissertation. In it he tries to determine whether Christendom can be considered the historical ideal of Christianity from the facts of history and sociology.

La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía? II Los Principios. Montevideo: Mimeográfica "Luz," 1964. This is the second part of Segundo's doctoral dissertation in which he tries to determine whether Christendom can be considered the historical ideal of Christianity from the New Testament texts.

Esa Comunidad Llamada Iglesia. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Carlos Lohlé, 1968. (The Community Called Church. Translated by John Drury. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973.) This book universalizes the content of Segundo's previous work, Función de la Iglesia en la Realidad Rioplatense, applying the latter's reflection to the pastoral function of the Church universal.

Gracia y Condición Humana. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Carlos Lohlé, 1968. (Grace and the Human Condition. Translated by John Drury. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973.) In this work Segundo inquires into the very nature of grace in relationship to man. He considers grace's scope, its source, its activity, and its revelation in Christ.

De la Sociedad a la Teología. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Carlos Lohlé, 1970. This book is a compilation of articles previously written by Segundo but having as its unifying theme the questions posed to Christianity from the social problematic of Latin America.

Nuestra Idea de Dios. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Carlos Lohlé, 1970). (Our Idea of God. Translated by John Drury. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973.) This work reflects upon the intimate relationship which exists between our manner of living and our conception of God. It tries to clarify the significance the Christian God has for man's life in the world and for his own proper self-understanding.

¿Que es un Cristiano? Montevideo: Mosca Hnos. S.A. Editores, 1971. This book is the compilation of two of Segundo's previous works: Etapas PreCristianas de la Fe and Concepción Cristiana del Hombre.

Los Sacramentos Hoy. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Carlos Lohlé, 1971. (The Sacraments Today. Translated by John Drury. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1974.) This work is an exploration into the meaning of the sacraments for Christians' activity in the world. Segundo contends that the sacraments must be translated into man's historical task of transforming the world into the Kingdom.

Evolución y Culpa. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Carlos Lohlé, 1972. (Evolution and Guilt. Translated by John Drury. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1974.) In this work Segundo attempts to reinterpret the basic Christian themes of original sin, redemptive grace, and freedom in terms of an evolutionary perspective. His basic contention is that if Christianity cannot be translated into the evolutionary perspective which modern man possesses, it would not truly be convincing or compatible with man's own self-understanding and his understanding of the world.

Acción Pastoral Latinoamericana: sus motivos ocultos. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Búsqueda, 1972. In this work Segundo attempts to explore the hidden motives which often restrict the Latin American Church from separating itself from Christendom, with the latter's emphasis on social pressure to win the allegiance of the masses.

Masas y Minorías. Buenos Aires: Editorial La Aurora, 1973. Segundo here explores the incompatibility between a Church based on quantity, massive numbers, and a Church composed of personally committed Christians. This book could be considered a short, 'popularized' version of his second doctoral dissertation: La Cristianidad, ¿Una Utopía?

Liberación de la Teología. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Carlos Lohlé, 1975. (The Liberation of Theology. Translated by John Drury. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976.) This book represents the first major work explicating the theological methodology of liberation theology. Segundo analyzes the consequences of the employment of this methodology for the Church's pastoral practice and attempts to show the weakness of any theology that refuses to begin with faith's practice of love and service in concrete, historical situations.

Articles Written by Juan Segundo

"The Future of Christianity in Latin America." Cross Currents. Vol. 12, no. 2 (1963): 273-81.

"Pastoral latinoamericana: hora de decisión." Mensaje. Santiago, Chile. Vol. 4, no. 127 (marzo-abril 1964): 74-82. In this article Segundo explores whether the traditional pastoral effort of the Latin American Church has any chance of succeeding.

- "Problemas teológicas de Latinoamérica." Petrópolis, Brasil: 1964. This is a paper Segundo prepared for one of the first international conferences of Latin American theologians during the Second Vatican Council. It describes the social changes of the Latin American continent and their significance for the Church's pastoral effort.
- "La función de la Iglesia." Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 1, no. 1 (diciembre 1965): 4-7. Segundo here explores the tension between the minority character of the Church and its claim to universality.
- "La función de la Iglesia." Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 1, no. 2 (febrero 1966): 5-10. Segundo explores the two evangelical criteria which emerge from the New Testament with regard to the realization of man's salvation.
- "El diálogo, Iglesia, mundo, reflexión." Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 1, no. 6 (oct. 1966): 3-7. Segundo asserts that to be sign of salvation the Church needs the world and its problems.
- "El diálogo, Iglesia-mundo." Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 1, no. 9 (noviembre 1966): 8-12. Segundo discusses Christian morality as not one of liceity but of advantage for the other.
- "Lo que el concilio dice." Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 1, no. 10 (diciembre 1966): 3-13. Segundo analyzes the Second Vatican Council's texts in relationship to the Church's particularity and universality.
- "Que nombre dar a la existencia cristiana?" Perspectivas de Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 2, no. 11 (enero-febrero 1967): 3-9. Segundo, in this article analyzes the meaning of the word 'grace' in the New Testament writings.
- "Intellecto y salvación." Salvación y construcción del mundo. Barcelona: Editorial Nova Terra, 1967, pp. 77-86. Segundo insists that free discussion on Christian doctrine is obligatory and necessary to make dogmatic formulations creative responses to the questions of ever-changing reality.
- "Universidad latinoamericana y conciencia social." This is a paper Segundo prepared for an international conference of Catholic educators in Buga, Colombia, February 1967.

"The Church: A New Direction in Latin America." Catholic Mind. Vol. 65, no. 1211 (March 1967): 43-47. This article is a translation of the first article listed in this bibliography.

"La condición humana." Perspectivas de Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 2, no. 12 (marzo-abril 1967): 30-35. Segundo affirms that human freedom cannot merely consist of choosing between good and evil.

"La condición humana." Perspectivas de Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 2, no. 13 (mayo 1967): 55-61. Segundo analyzes the meaning of concupiscence.

"Camilo Torres, sacerdocio y violencia." Víspera. Montevideo. Año 1, no. 1 (mayo 1967): 71-75.

"La vida eterna." Perspectivas de Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 2, no. 14 (junio 1967): 83-89. Segundo affirms the supernatural as the elevation of all that is human, capacitating it to live in justice and love.

"La vida eterna." Perspectivas de Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 2, no. 15 (julio 1967): 109-18. All of mankind is called to one divine destiny and vocation.

"Un nuevo comienzo." Víspera. Montevideo. Año 1, no. 2 (agosto 1967): 39-43. Segundo in this article reflects upon the mission of a Catholic university in Latin America.

"América hoy." Víspera. Montevideo. Año 1, no. 2 (octubre 1967): 53-57. Segundo affirms that theological reflection implies two tasks: the interpretation of biblical and dogmatic tradition and the reflection upon its contemporary significance.

"Profundidad de la gracia." Perspectivas de Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 2, no. 19 (1967): 235-40. Segundo analyzes the meaning of being justified and sinner at the same time.

"Profundidad de la gracia." Perspectivas de Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 2, no. 20 (diciembre 1967): 249-55. Segundo analyzes the way in which grace can be more abundant than sin.

- "Hacia un exégesis dinámica." Víspera. Montevideo. Año 1, no. 3 (octubre 1967): 77-84. Segundo, interpreting the Second Vatican Council's texts, analyzes the mutual interdependence between the Church and the World.
- "Dios nos interesa o no?" Perspectivas de Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 3, no. 21 (marzo 1968): 13-16. Segundo explores how our manner of living is more important with regard to our conception of God than our manner of expressing it.
- "Del ateísmo a la fe." Perspectivas de Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 3, no. 22 (abril 1968): 44-47. Segundo analyzes the atheism inherent in every Christian.
- "Social Justice and Revolution." America. Vol. 118, no. 17 (April 27, 1968): 574-77. Segundo explores the basis to the right of private property and seeks to understand if socialism contradicts such a basis.
- "Padre, Hijo, Espiritu: una historia." Perspectivas de Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 3, no. 23 (julio 1968): 71-76. Segundo affirms that all that is revealed to us about God in the Scriptures is in reference to a common, divine work, that of our human history.
- "El poder del habito." Perspectivas de Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 3, no. 23 (julio 1968): 90-91. Schoonenburg's book, The Power of Sin, is reviewed.
- "Padre, Hijo Espiritu: una sociedad." Perspectivas de Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 3, no. 24 (junio 1968): 103-9. God is a society of three persons, a society which maintains and respects their differences. This society is the only mark of reference for Christian existence in the world.
- "Padre, Hijo, Espiritu: una libertad I." Perspectivas de Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 3, no. 25 (julio 1968): 142-48. Segundo explains why the trinitarian controversies did not only concern questions related to God's divinity but to the history and destiny of man. Every degradation of our idea of God hides a human degradation and vice-versa.

- "Padre, Hijo, Espiritu: una libertad II." Perspectivas de Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 3, no. 26 (agosto 1968): 183-86. The influence of Berdyaev is especially seen in Segundo's affirmation that God freely wished not to be satisfied with Himself. God's history cannot be ever deduced from His nature, because the former implies personal freedom.
- "Has Latin America a Choice?" America. Vol. 120, no. 8 (February 22, 1969): 213-16. Segundo affirms that there exists a minimum of hope for Latin America's future and this depends on a transformation of the international economic and political order.
- "Un Dios a nuestra imagen?" Perspectivas de Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 4, no. 32 (marzo 1969): 14-18. Again Segundo affirms that just as we relate to persons as functions, so also we do so regarding God.
- "Hacia una iglesia de izquierda?" Perspectivas de Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 4, no. 32 (abril 1969): 35-39. Segundo affirms that the Church cannot communicate its message without relationship to politics.
- "Riqueza y pobreza como obstáculos al desarrollo." Perspectivas de Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 4, no. 32 (abril 1969): 54-56. Segundo explores the question whether underdeveloped countries can achieve development through the same roads as the developed countries.
- "Ritmos de cambio y pastoral de conjunto." Perspectivas de Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 4, no. 35 (julio 1969): 131-37. Segundo reflects on the difficulty of applying the conciliar texts of Vatican II to the Latin American reality.
- "Autoridad o que?" Perspectivas de Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 4, no. 39-40 (diciembre 1969): 270-72.
- "Introduction." Iglesia latinoamericana, protesta o profecía? Buenos Aires: Ediciones Búsqueda, 1969, pp. 8-17. This is almost a reprint of an earlier article, "Autoridad o que?"
- "Evaneglización y humanización: progreso del reino y progreso temporal?" Perspectivas de Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año V, no. 41 (marzo 1970): 9-17. Segundo affirms that all of the Church with its

structures and sacraments is for the service of finding solutions to the problems of the history of man.

- "Desarrollo y subdesarrollo: polos teológicos." Perspectivas de Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año V, no. 43 (mayo 1970): 76-80. Segundo affirms again that the Gospel must be read in intimate relationship to the socio-political reality of Latin America.
- "La ideología de un diario católico." Perspectivas de Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año V, no. 44-45 (junio-julio 1970): 136-44. Segundo explores the political and social pressures experienced by Catholic newspapers and their consequences.
- "El posible aporte de la teología protestante para el cristianismo latinoamericano en el futuro." Christianismo y Sociedad. Montevideo. Año 8, no. 22 (1970): 41-49. Segundo analyzes the Protestant principle affirmed by Paul Tillich: the divine and human protest against any absolute claim made for a relative reality.
- "Wealth and Poverty as Obstacles to Development." Human Rights and the Liberation of Man in the Americas. Edited by Louis Colonna. Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, pp. 23-31.
- "La iglesia ante el socialismo I." Marcha. Montevideo. No. 1558 (4 de setiembre 1971).
- "La iglesia chilena ante el socialismo II." Marcha. Montevideo. No. 1559 (4 de setiembre 1971).
- "La iglesia chilena ante el socialismo III." Marcha. Montevideo. No. 1560 (11 de setiembre 1971).
- "Education, Communication and Liberation: a Christian Vision." IDOC International. North American Edition (November 13, 1971): 63-96.
- "Las Elites latinoamericanas: problemática humana y cristiana ante el cambio social." Fe Cristiana y Cambio Social en América Latina. Edited by Alfonso Bolado. Salamanca: Sígueme, 1973, pp. 203-12. Segundo, employing a marxist social analysis, affirms that the paradox of the Medellín Conference was that it did not correspondingly analyze the 'super-structure' (Church, theology, sacraments) after its analysis of the social political reality of the Latin American continent.

- "Teología y ciencias sociales." Fe Cristiana y Cambio Social en América Latina. Edited by Alfonso Bolado. Salamanca: Sígueme, 1973, pp. 285-95. This is an article reproduced in Chapter II of Segundo's Book, The Liberation of Theology.
- "On a Missionary Awareness of One's Own Culture." Jesuit Missions Newsletter. No. 33 (May 1974): 1-6.
- "Reconciliación y conflicto." Perspectivas de Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro. Montevideo. Año 9, no. 86 (setiembre 1974): 172-78. In this article, Segundo affirms the partial realization of the Kingdom in this world as man co-operates with God in history.
- "Fe e ideología." Perspectivas de Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 9, no. 89-90 (diciembre 1974): 79-82. In this article, Segundo affirms that faith without ideology is a dead faith.
- "Theological Response to a Talk on Evangelization and Development." Studies in the International Apostolate of Jesuits. November, 1974, pp. 79-82.
- "Teología: Mensaje y proceso." Perspectivas de Diálogo. Centro Pedro Fabro, Montevideo. Año 9, no. 89-90 (diciembre 1974): 259-70. Segundo, appealing to the prophets of the Old Testament, affirms that the Church has lost creative boldness to proclaim without the Bible what God would say if he were leading his people creatively in accord with their situation. He develops for the first time his definition of faith as a process of learning to learn. This will be more fully developed in his book, The Liberation of Theology.
- "Capitalismo-socialismo: crux teológica." Concilium. Año 10, no. 96 (June 1974): 403-22. The same article in the English version is to be found in Concilium, vol. 6, no. 10 (1974): 105-23. Segundo affirms that the Church's universalism must be achieved not in the abstract through dogmatic formulas, but through her historical commitment to liberation and service.
- "Conversão e reconciliação na perspectiva da moderna teologia da libertação." Perspectiva Teologica. Rio dos Sinos, Brasil. Año 7, no. 13 (julho-dezembro 1975): 163-78.
- "Teilhard de Chardin." Montevideo, 1975. Several conferences given by Segundo on the contribution of Teilhard de Chardin to Christianity.

"Condicionamientos actuales de la reflexión teológica en latinoamérica." Liberación y Cautiverio: debates en torno al método de la teología en América Latina. Edited by Enrique Ruiz Maldonado. Mexico City: Comité Organizador, 1975, pp. 99-101. Segundo surveys the development of Latin American theology since the Second Vatican Council.

"Statement by Juan Luis Segundo." Theology in the Americas. Edited by Sergio Torres and John Eagleson. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976, pp. 280-83.

"Direitos Humanos, Evangelização e Ideologia." Separata da Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira. Vol. 37, Fasc. 145 (Marco de 1977).

## II. SECONDARY SOURCES

- Alonso, Antonio. Iglesia y Praxis de Liberación. Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1974.
- Alves, Rubem. A Theology of Human Hope. Cleveland: Corpus Books, 1969.
- Arroyo, Gonzalo. "Pensamiento Latinoamericano sobre Subdesarrollo y Dependencia Externa." Fe Cristiana y Cambio Social en América Latina. Edited by Alfonso Bolado. Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1973, pp. 304-33.
- Assmann, Hugo. Opresión-Liberación: Desafío a los Cristianos. Montevideo: Ediciones Tierra Nueva, 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Teología desde la Praxis de Liberación. Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Theology for a Nomad Church. Translated by Paul Burns. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976.
- Balthasar, Hans Urs von. "Las Tres Caras de la Esperanza Actual." Selecciones de Teología. Vol. 13, no. 51 (1974): 212-20.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Reflexiones soteriológicas sobre la teología de la liberación." Tierra Nueva. Año VI, no. 22 (1977): 30-46.
- Barauna, Guillermo. "La Iglesia en el Mundo de Hoy." Madrid: Studium, 1967.
- Baum, Gregory. Man Becoming: God in Secular Experience. New York: Herder and Herder, 1971.
- Berdyayev, Nicolas. Freedom and Spirit. Translated by George Reavey. London: The Centenary Press, 1935.
- \_\_\_\_\_. La filosofía como acto creador. Translated by Ramon Alcalde. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Carlos Lohlé, 1977.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Meaning of History. Translated by George Reavey. London: The Centenary Press, 1936.

Berdyaeu, Nicolas. Slavery and Freedom. Translated by George Reavey. London: The Centenary Press, 1943.

Berryman, Phillip E. "Latin American Liberation Theology." Theology in the Americas. Edited by Sergio Torres, and John Eagleson. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976, pp. 20-53.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Doing Theology in a (Counter-) Revolutionary Situation: Latin American Liberation Theology in the Mid-Seventies." Theology in the Americas. Edited by Sergio Torres and John Eagleson. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976, pp. 54-83.

Boff, Leonardo. Jesucristo el Liberador. Translated by María Rodríguez. Buenos Aires: Latinoamérica Libros, 1976.

\_\_\_\_\_. "¿Que es Hacer Teología desde América Latina?" Liberación y Cautiverio: debates en torno al método de la teología en América Latina. Edited by Enrique Ruiz Maldonado. Mexico City: Comité Organizador, 1975, pp. 129-54.

\_\_\_\_\_. Teología do Cativero e da Libertação. Lisboa: Multinova, 1976.

Bonino, Miguez. Christians and Marxists: the Mutual Challenge to Revolution. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1976.

\_\_\_\_\_. Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Way. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975.

Cetrula, Ricardo. "El Concilio ¿libera a la Iglesia de equivocados?" Diálogo. No 6, pp. 1-5.

de Chardin, Pierre Teilhard. The Divine Milieu. Translated by Bernard Wall. New York: Harper and Row, 1965.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Future of Man. Translated by Norman Denny. New York: Harper and Row, 1964.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Phenomenon of Man. Translated by Bernard Wall. London: Wm. Collins and Co., 1959.

Comblin, José. "Movimientos e Ideologías." Fe Cristiana y Cambio Social en América Latina. Edited by Alfonso Bolado. Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1973, pp. 101-27.

\_\_\_\_\_. Teología de la Revolución. Translated by C. Lizarraga. Bilbao: Gráfica Bilbao, 1973.

Congar, Yves. Un Peuple Messianique: salut et libération. Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1975.

Dussel, Enrique. "Domination-Liberation: A New Approach." Translated by J. D. Mitchell. Concilium. Vol. 6, no. 10 (1974): 34-56.

. Historia de la Iglesia en América Latina. Barcelona: Nova Terra, 1972.

. "The Political and Ecclesial Context of Liberation Theology in Latin America." The Emergent Gospel: theology from the underside of history. Edited by Sergio Torres and Virginia Fabella. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1978, pp. 175-92.

. "Sobre la Historia de la Teología en América Latina." Liberación y Cautiverio: debates en torno al método de la teología en América Latina. Edited by Enrique Ruiz Maldonado. Mexico City: Comité Organizador, 1975, pp. 19-66.

Fierro, Alfredo. The Militant Gospel. Translated by John Drury. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1977.

Galilea, Segundo. Contemplación y Apostolado. Bogota: Indo-American Press Service, 1972.

. "Evangelization of the Poor." Studies in the International Apostolate of the Jesuits. Vol. VI, no. 1 (1977): 49-56.

. "La Liberación en la Conferencia de Medellín." Nuevo Mundo. Año X, no. 57, pp. 148-49.

. Vivir el Evangelio en Tierra Extraña. Bogota: Indo-American Press Service, 1976.

Greshake, Gisbert. "Escatología e Historia." Translated by Rafael de Sivatte. Selecciones de Teología. Vol. 13, no. 51 (1974): 189-98.

Gutierrez, Gustavo. A Theology of Liberation. Translated by John Drury. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973.

. "Evangelio y Praxis de Liberación." Fe Cristiana y Cambio Social en América Latina. Edited by Alfonso Bolado. Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1973, pp. 231-45.

. "Freedom and Salvation: a political problem." Liberation and Change. Edited by Ronald H. Stone. Translated by Alvin Guttierrez. Atlanta: John Knox Press, pp. 3-94.

Gutierrez, Gustavo. "Hacia Una Teología de la Liberación." Montevideo. (miec-jeci 1969).

. "Introduction." Between Honesty and Hope. Issued by the Peruvian Bishops' Commission for Social Action. Translated by John Drury. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1970., pp. xiii-xxiii.

. "Liberation, Theology and Proclamation." Translated by J. P. Donnelly. Concilium. Vol. 6, no. 10 (1974): 57-77.

. "Two Theological Perspectives: Liberation Theology and Progressivist Theology." The Emergent Gospel: theology from the underside of history. Edited by Sergio Torres and Virginia Fabella. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1978, pp. 227-55.

Haight, Roger. "Book Reviews . . . Juan Luis Segundo's Liberation of Theology." Emmanuel. Vol. 83, no. 12, pp. 605-10.

Hennelly, Alfred. T. "The Challenge of Juan Luis Segundo." Theological Studies. Vol. 38, no. 1 (1977): 125-34.

. "Liberation in the Americas: A Dialogue with Juan Segundo." Manuscript to be published by Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, in 1979.

. "Theological Method: The Southern Exposure." Theological Studies. Vol. 38, no. 4 (1977): pp. 709-36.

Kloppenborg, Bonaventure. Ecclesiology of Vatican II. Translated by Matthew O'Connell. Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974.

. "Las Tentaciones de la Teología de la Liberación." Selecciones de Teología. Vol. 15, no. 60 (1976): 284-93.

Kung, Hans. On Being a Christian. Translated by Edward Quinn. Garden City, N.J.: Newman Press, 1970.

de Lubac, Henri. Catholicism. Translated by Lancelot Sheppard. London: Burns, Oates and Washborne, 1950.

Lepargneur, Francois Hubert. "Théologies de la libération et théologie tout court." Nouvelle Revue Théologique. Vol. 98, no. 2 (1976): 126-69.

- Malevez, Leopold. "La gratuité du surnaturel." Nouvelle Revue Théologique. Vol. 85, no. 6, pp. 561-86.
- Marcuse, Herbert. One Dimensional Man. Boston: Beacon Press, 1964.
- Metz, Johannes B. L'homme, Antropocentrique chrétienne. Translated by Michel Louis. Tours: Mame, 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Teología Política." Translated by Javier Medina-Davila. Selecciones de Teología. Vol. 10, no. 38 (1971): 98-103.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Theology of the World. Translated by William Glen-Doepel. New York: Seabury Press, 1973.
- Moltmann, Jurgen. "Carta sobre la Teología de la Liberación." Translated by A. Gonzalez Montes. Selecciones de Teología. Vol. 15, no. 60 (1976): 305-11.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Crucified God. Translated by R. A. Wilson and John Bowen. New York: Harper and Row, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Dios reconcilia y hace libres." Translated by Antonio Caparros. Selecciones de Teología. Vol. 10, no. 38, pp. 214-21.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "¿Iglesia abierta por una doble estrategia? La crisis de la Iglesia de masas como oportunidad de la comunidad." Translated by Antonio Caballos. Selecciones de Teología. Vol. 17, no. 65, pp. 54-57.
- Mooney, Christopher. Teilhard de Chardin and the Mystery of Christ. London: Collins Press, 1966.
- Muñoz, Ronaldo. Nueva Conciencia de la Iglesia en América Latina. Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1974.
- McSorley, Harry. Luther: Right or Wrong? Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1969.
- McBrien, Richard. The Church: the Continuing Quest.. Paramus, N.J.: Newman Press, 1970.
- Nucho, Fuad. Berdyaev's Philosophy: the Existential Paradox of Freedom and Necessity. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1966.
- Oliveros, Roberto. Liberación y Teología: génesis y crecimiento de una reflexión, 1966-1977. Lima: CEP, 1977.

Prada, Hernan. Crónica del Pequeño Concilio de Medellín. Santiago: I.S.A.L., 1973.

Rad, Gerhard von. Old Testament Theology I: the Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions. New York: Harper and Row, 1962.

Rahner, Karl. The Christian of the Future. Translated by W. J. O'Hara. Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1964.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Membership in the Church." Theological Investigations. Vol. II. Translated by Cornelius Ernst et al. Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1964, pp. 1-88.

\_\_\_\_\_. Mission et Grâce. Vol. 1. Translated by Charles Muller. Paris: Mame, 1962.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Shape of the Church to Come. Translated by Edward Quinn. New York: Seabury Press, 1974.

Ratzinger, Joseph. Le Nouveau Peuple de Dieu. Translated by Robert Givord and Héléne Bourbon. Paris: Editions Montaigne, 1971.

Reuther, Rosemary. Liberation Theology: Human Hope Confronts Christian History and American Power. New York: Paulist Press, 1972.

Richard, J. P. "Teología de la Liberación Latinoamericana: Un Aporte Crítico a la Teología Europea." Páginas. Vol. 2, no. 3 (1976): 1-12.

Ricoeur, Paul. "El Conflicto: ¿Signo de Contradicción y de Unidad?" Selecciones de Teología. Vol. 13, no. 51, pp. 243-52.

Rideau, Emile. La Pensée du Père Teilhard de Chardin. Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1965.

\_\_\_\_\_. Teilhard de Chardin: a guide to his thought. Translated by Rene Hague. London: Collins, 1967.

Roquelpo, Phillippe. Expérience du monde: expérience de Dieu? Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1968.

Schillebeeckx, Edward. God the Future of Man. Translated by N. D. Smith. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Magisterium and the World of Politics." Translated by Theo Westow. Concilium. Vol. 6, no. 4 (1968): 12-21.

- Schillebeeckx, Edward. The Mission of the Church. Translated by N. D. Smith. New York: Seabury Press, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Understanding of Faith. Translated by N. D. Smith. New York: Seabury Press, 1974.
- \_\_\_\_\_. World and Church. Translated by N. D. Smith. London: Sheed and Ward, 1971.
- Schnackenburg, Rudolf. The Church in the New Testament. Translated by W. J. O'Hara. New York: Seabury Press, 1965.
- \_\_\_\_\_. God's Rule and Kingdom. Translated by John Murray. Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1963.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Moral Teaching of the New Testament. Translated by J. Holland-Smith and W. J. O'Hara. New York: Seabury Press, 1965.
- Sears, Robert. "Trinitarian Love as Ground of the Church." Why the Church? Edited by Walter J. Burghart and William G. Thompson. New York: Paulist Press, 1977, pp. 108-35.
- Smith, Brian and T. Howland Sanks. "Liberation Ecclesiology: Praxis, Theory, Praxis." Theological Studies. Vol. 38, no. 1 (1977): 3-38.
- Sobrino, Jon. Christology at the Crossroads. Translated by John Drury. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1978.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "La Conflictividad Dentro de la Iglesia." Selecciones de Teología. Vol. 15, no. 65 (1978): 45-53.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "El Conocimiento Teológica en la Teología Europea y Latinoamérica." Liberación y Cautiverio: debates en torno al método de la teología en América Latina. Edited by Enrique Ruiz Maldonado. Mexico City: Comité Organizador, 1975, pp. 177-207.
- Theisen, Jerome. The Ultimate Church and the Promise of Salvation. Collegeville, Minn.: St. John's University Press, 1976.
- Vekmans, Roger. "Antecedentes para el Estudio de la Teología de la Liberación." Tierra Nueva. Año 1, no. 2 (1972): 5-22.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Antecedentes para el Estudio de la Teología de la Liberación." Tierra Nueva. Año 1, no. 3 (1972): 5-19.

Vekmans, Roger. "Antecedentes para el Estudio de la Teología de la Liberación." Tierra Nueva. Año 2, no. 5 (1973): 15-33.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Expansión mundial de la teología de la liberación en América Latina." Tierra Nueva. Año 5, no. 18 (1976): 40-71.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Panorámica actual de la teología de la liberación latinoamericana." Tierra Nueva. Año 5, no. 18 (1976): 72-78.

\_\_\_\_\_. "El papel de la Iglesia en el proceso de liberación." Tierra Nueva. Año V, no. 19 (1976): 80-88.

Weth, Rudolf. "La 'Théologie de la révolution' dans la perspective de la justification et de la révolution." Discussion sur la théologie de la révolution. Translated by Feil Ernst. Paris: Cerf-Mame, 1972, pp. 77-99.

\_\_\_\_\_. "A Changing Ecclesiology in a Changing Church: A Symposium on Development in the Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner." Edited by Leo J. O'Donovan. Theological Studies. Vol. 38, no. 4 (1977): 736-62.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Documents of Vatican II. General editor, Walter M. Abbott. New York: The America Press, 1966.

\_\_\_\_\_. La Iglesia en la Actual Transformación de América Latina a la Luz del Concilio. Vol. II. Bogota: CELAM, 1970.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Council II. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1973.

\_\_\_\_\_. Medellin Conclusiones. Bogota: CELAM, 1973.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Théologies de la Libération en Amérique Latine." Le Point Théologique. No. 10. Centre D'Etudes et de Recherches Interdisciplinaires en Théologie de Strasbourg. Paris: Editions Beauchesne, 1974.