



National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file - Votre référence

Our file - Notre référence

NOTICE

The quality of this microform 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 an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30, and subsequent amendments.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme 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 qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

LIBERATION THEOLOGY IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

IN LATIN AMERICA, 1968 TO 1988:

CONFLICTING CONCEPTS OF SOCIAL MISSION

AND THEIR POLITICAL CONTEXT

.....

Thesis submitted to the Department
of Religious Studies, University of Ottawa,
in December, 1992, in partial fulfilment
of the requirements
for the Master of Arts, Religious Studies

.....

Thesis supervisor:

Dr. Elisabeth J. Lacelle

Submitted by:

Kenneth B. Williamson



Kenneth B. Williamson, Ottawa, Canada, 1993



National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-315-83848-5

Canada



UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA
UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

ABSTRACT

In 1968, bishops representing all parts of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America met in their Second General Conference to debate the "transformation of Latin America in the light of the Council". They were referring to the Second Vatican Council, which had concluded three years earlier. In considering the implications for them of what they saw as a new era in the life of the Church, they placed particular emphasis on social mission, in view of the extreme poverty and injustice in many parts of their region. Among the diverse political influences affecting their conclusions, the demands for radical social change, coming mostly from a group of younger theologians and clergy, were significant. Those demands, soon embodied in what became known as "liberation theology", were based on the argument that there was a biblical and theological mandate for revolutionary transformation of society, to be achieved primarily by the elimination of capitalism, in favour of some type of purified socialism. Most leaders of the Church in Latin America, and the Vatican, found the most extreme of the liberation proposals to be unacceptable, both in relation to basic concepts of the role of the Church in social mission and in relation to the partisan political commitment proposed in Latin America.

This thesis examines the ensuring conflict over concepts of social mission during the period 1968-1988, a particularly turbulent one for the Church, with a view to assessing the extent to which the liberation case, theologically and politically, can be accommodated within the social teaching of the Church. It concludes that, while the original political thrust of the movement in the 1970's remains unacceptable, the liberation theologians have made an important contribution to processes of democratization and social change, for example in the base communities, in the role of the laity and in the development of a feminist liberation movement in the Church.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION:	1
(1) Primary Focus	1
(2) Time Frame	3
(3) Primary Sources	4
(4) Religion and Politics	6
(5) Some Basic Terms and Concepts	7
(6) The Thesis and the Structure of the Argument	12
CHAPTER ONE: PROPHETIC DENUNCIATION AND PEACEFUL REVOLUTION: THE POLITICAL OPTION OF LATIN AMERICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGY	13
(1) Context of the Medellin Conference	13
(2) Diverse Political Options	16
(3) A Self-Profile of the Movement	23
(4) A Theological Profile	29
(5) A Political Profile	34
CHAPTER TWO: "DEVIATIONS AND RISK OF DEVIATION": THEOLOGICAL ROOTS OF CONFLICT	37
(1) Redemption by Exodus: Enrique Dussel	39
(2) The Historical and Immanent Jesus: Jon Sobrino	46
(3) A New Vision and Model of the Church: Leonardo Boff	54
(4) Degrees of Deviation	64
CHAPTER THREE: THEOLOGICAL ROOTS OF CONFLICT: MEANS AND ENDS	66
(1) Church and Society: Morality of Means	66
(2) Liberation Means and Ends: Gustavo Gutierrez	69
(3) Liberation Means and Ends: Juan Luis Segundo	74
(4) Roots of Conflict: Theological, Ecclesiological, Ideological	81

CHAPTER FOUR:	EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL CRISES: THE POLITICAL CONTEXT FOR CONFLICT	85
	(1) Strength of the Liberation Movement	88
	(2) Three Crises for the Church	94
	(3) Nicaragua	99
	(4) Chile	102
	(5) Brazil	105
	(6) Liberation Experience and Strategies	108
CHAPTER FIVE	LIBERATING CHANGE: BASE COMMUNITIES, FEMINIST LIBERATION THEOLOGY	115
	(1) Base Communities	116
	(2) Feminist Liberation Theology	126
	(3) Catalyst and Stimulant for Change	133
CONCLUSIONS		136
BIBLIOGRAPHY		144

INTRODUCTION

The span of twenty years, from 1968 to 1988, is a relatively short one for a movement seeking radical change within a Church, and in society. This thesis is presented within a subject area which, in other respects, however, has very wide horizons. This is so in the most obvious sense that the geographic and cultural area is Latin America. It is true, also with respect to the Roman Catholic Church and the varied socio-political situations it has faced in this region and in this period. The word "liberation" has all the evocative power, and ambiguity, of other well-known words at the centre of hopes for change in the human condition (1). There are, however, a number of limitations to the questions which this dissertation addresses.

(1) PRIMARY FOCUS

In the first place, the specific questions to be raised about Latin American liberation theology do not necessarily lead to a systematic and comparative survey of that theology in relation to other Christian theologies, past or present. Reference to a political context does not imply an intention to analyze an entire context, national or regional, but indicates the necessity, given the nature of the thesis, of placing

.....

(1) There are 840 authors and 1,350 works listed under "liberation" in Ronald G. Musto ed., *Liberation Theologies: a Research Guide*, New York, Garland Publishing, 1991. They include topics such as "process", "creation", "Waterbuffalo" and "indigenization" theologies, remote indeed from the subject here. There are, of course, liberation theologies, sharing a number of characteristics with the Latin American ones, in other regions. They are not considered in this dissertation.

concepts of social mission with a theological base in a political setting, to the extent required to understand the situation in the Church and the social objectives of the liberation movement. The questions which provide the primary focus for the analysis are straightforward ones: will the liberation movement achieve the degree of politicization of the Church which it desires; will it be absorbed or "domesticated"; will it break away from the Church on the grounds that the institution is, in terms of liberation objectives, irredeemable?

It is impossible, at this early stage in the development of the movement, and within the limits of this dissertation, to present conclusive answers with respect to the future. One can propose, with respect to the period 1968-1988, on the basis of a reading of a number of the major primary texts, and of a selection from a voluminous secondary literature, an interpretation of the evidence which is available so far and which is relevant to the questions posed. The attempt to provide even tentative answers is helpful in understanding not only conflicting concepts of social mission, but also liberation theology as a whole, in its particular ecclesial and cultural setting.

The subject is not only one of interest to those within the Roman Catholic or other Churches, or a socio-political one of interest to those studying particular situations in Latin America in which the Churches have varying degrees of influence and involvement. In recent years, theologians and social scientists have become more inclined to listen attentively to one

another and to consider the possibility that there are "realities", of considerably different natures, in each field which should be taken into account in the other. Whether one goes back to an earlier period in the scientific approach to religion and attempts to relate liberation theology to analyses of churches and sects, or considers the importance of this Latin American movement for contemporary sociological analysis of structure and function in various sectors of society, the liberation movement provides an interesting case for examination within the range of religious studies (2).

(2) TIME FRAME

The period defined in the title, 1968 to 1988, covers what seems to be the first phase of the development of the liberation movement within the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America. The Latin American Episcopal Conference at Medellin, in Colombia, in 1968, is generally considered to be the point of departure, both because of the emergence of identifiable liberation themes in a public document issued at the top level of hierarchy in Latin America, and because of the encouragement given to the production of a great deal of theological writing on these themes in the following years. The antecedents of the movement in earlier writings before Medellin, in the history and teachings of the Church in Latin America and in the documents of Vatican II,

.....

(2) See Robin Gill, ed., *Theology and Sociology: a Reader*, London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1987. The Introduction by Gill, selections by Ernst Troeltsch, the article by Garrett Green on "The Sociology of Dogmatics; Niklas Luhmann's Challenge to Theology" address some of these questions.

will receive the appropriate mention. The conflictual nature of concepts of social mission became real, however, only in their emergence at Medellin, in the supportive and critical reactions which they produced and in a political context dominated by expectations, and realities, of revolution and counter-revolution, in the 1970's and the 1980's.

Twenty years later, the political context had changed, the theological and ideological lines defining the liberation movement were clearer than before (if still ambiguous) and some self-criticism had become evident. Assessments of the central questions at issue became more manageable, and more important for the purposes of understanding any part of the action generated by the movement, whether intellectual, pastoral or political. The publication of a collection of essays, entitled *The Future of Liberation Theology*, in honour of Gustavo Gutierrez on his sixtieth birthday in 1988, can be seen as a symbolical marker in the history of the movement (3). The essays offer a mix of partisan tributes and reflective or analytical assessments. The writers take stock, both of a relatively limited past, and of a future which they have every intention of shaping .

(3) PRIMARY SOURCES

During the period 1968 to 1988, the principal works of Latin American liberation theology have been written by about twenty-five authors. Although there is a significant diversity among them with respect to longer term implications for the social mission

.....
(3) Marc H.Ellis and Otto Maduro eds., *The Future of Liberation Theology; Essays in Honor of Gustavo Gutierrez*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1989.

of the Church, they do constitute a coherent and self-identified movement, so far as their most immediate intentions are concerned. They have aimed to administer a prophetic shock to the conscience of Church members, to provide a theological foundation for objectives of radical social transformation and to raise questions about traditional theological methods (4).

Among these writers, the ones chosen for reference in the following analysis, even if they do not cover the whole spectrum of liberation thinking, are considered both by supporters and critics to represent central elements in that field since 1968: Gustavo Gutierrez, Leonardo Boff, Jon Sobrino, Juan Luis Segundo, Enrique Dussel. In a later phase of liberation analysis and advocacy, described by one of its proponents as a feminist current in a liberation stream, the writings of Elsa Tamez, Yvone Gebara and Maria Clara Bingemer offer a reliable, and separate, focus for the same questions about conflicting concepts of social mission.

The formal positions of Church authorities, indicating the extent to which liberation contentions are accepted, or have limits placed around them, or are opposed, are those expressed, more or less in the period under review, by the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church and, at the level of regional authority, in the Latin American Episcopal Conferences. While all parties to the continuing debate make frequent references to

.....

- (4) For a short review of the movement, written by two of its leaders and identifying other major figures, see Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1988.

the major conclusions of Vatican II, and, to a lesser extent, to preceding documents in the social teaching of the Church, it is the pronouncements of the hierarchical authorities since 1968, in response to a liberation summons to a strongly political role for a new Church of the poor, which provide the other side of the debate. Parallel and related contemporary theologies, usually identified by the words "political", "hope" or "revolution", will be mentioned, but only to help identify the specific characteristics of the liberation position in Latin America.

(4) RELIGION AND POLITICS

The questions defined above as the primary focus for analysis place us on the frontier between religion and politics. History provides abundant confirmation that this is often a changeable, ill-defined and contentious boundary within societies. Juan Luis Segundo, in his response to the 1984 warnings of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith about doctrinal and political tendencies within liberation theology, conceded that the reason for Vatican concern was not unexpected:

to put an end to certain variances and ambiguities, not only theoretical but also practical, at that always painful point where politics and religion meet, as it were, jealously looking at one another (5).

On one side of the frontier, in this particular case, is a religious institution with deep roots, a long history and considerable influence in shaping Latin American culture.

.....

(5) Juan Luis Segundo, *Theology and the Church: a Response to Cardinal Ratzinger and a Warning to the Whole Church*, New York, Seabury, 1985, p.147. Segundo refers to *Instructions on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation"*, Vatican City, 1984.

Believers, skeptics and opponents all seem to agree about the influence, while disagreeing about whether it should be maintained, modified or eliminated. A powerful institutional urge towards ensuring survival, the reformist aspirations of Vatican II and the messianic liberation initiative towards radical transformation of society are all forces within the Church determining a social role. They suggest that the Roman Catholic Church, in many parts of Latin America, if not in all, is not likely to retreat from the contentious frontier of social activism and to remain entirely within the politically safer realms of spiritual celebration and consolation and of traditional pastoral service.

Commitment to that radical transformation, at the urging of the liberation theologians, would eliminate that uncertain frontier between religion and politics, in the view of most leaders of the Church and of the critics of the liberation movement. Commitment of that nature would bind the Church to ideological choices which could only be implemented by political agencies in society which the Church could not hope to control. Whether expressed in theological or political terms, in an emotional appeal for justice or in terms of concepts and principles, this is the essence of the conflict within the Church.

(5) SOME BASIC TERMS AND CONCEPTS

References have been made not only to liberation theology but to a "liberation movement". The movement in this case consists of persons, clergy and laity, actively committed to the cause of radical transformation of Church and society as

advocated by the liberation theologians. There is no simple means of measuring the movement quantitatively. Its leaders describe themselves as a minority within the Church. One estimate, by a social scientist, suggested that up to one third of priests, bishops and members of religious orders might be considered as committed to the liberation cause (6). From a reading of the literature, however, one suspects that "liberation", as used in a number of Latin American contexts, could refer to varying degrees of social activism by the Church, (including those sanctioned by Rome) without any clear indication of the implications for radical, or for reformist action in the political world itself. Within the ranks of theologians, the liberation insistence on their methodological approach (praxis first, theological reflection second) might be considered to identify a "movement" in that limited sphere.

The phrase "social mission" does not refer to evangelisation by the Church, nor to traditional acts of charity in society required by personal ethics based on teachings of the Church. It refers to the general shaping of society, not just to the obligations of Church members. It certainly refers to the sphere of organized and partisan politics but is wider in referring to social inter-relationships, cultural and economic. The description, "political theology", as applied, for example to the writings of the European theologian, Johann Baptist Metz, is helpful in indicating the general dimensions and purpose of

.....

(6) Questions about the strength of the movement are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, with the help of quantitative evidence.

"social mission" and "liberation theology". The latter is the political theology of Latin America (7).

It might be argued that the word "concept" implies more clearly articulated sets of ideas about the role of the Church in society than actually emerge in controversies about the role of the institution in given political circumstances. There does not, however, appear to be any substitute for it. The liberation theologians, arguing from praxis, theology, Scriptural exegesis and history, end up with convictions about what the Church should do, and is capable of doing, in shaping all human institutions and the course of history; these are working concepts to guide a movement. Church authorities, drawing on much the same sources (but in a different order), argue the case against the Church's engaging in direct legitimation or shaping of human institutions (while insisting on a right to judge and influence them). Their judgments do not necessarily have the status of dogma and are, therefore, also concepts and guidelines for the actions (or limitations on action) by an established institution.

The word "politics" will refer to the well-known arts and sciences of governing, gaining or using power for the attainment of objectives of public policy and determining relations between groups with competing interests in the same area. The adjective "political" will normally refer only to those arts, sciences and processes. So far as the Church is concerned, both the hierarchy

.....

(7) The political theology of Metz can be found in *Faith in History and Society: Towards a Practical Fundamental Theology*, New York, Seabury, 1980. See my Chapter Three for the comments of Gustavo Gutierrez on the European approach.

and the liberation writers seem to agree that "social mission" is a better way of referring to the "shaping of society" mentioned above than a phrase such as "political role". Obviously the actions of the Church with reference to competing political groups at some point might well constitute a political choice, or role, but, at least in theory, not a permanent one.

"Politicization" of the Church, alleged by critics of liberation theology, obviously refers to what those critics see as an improper entry of the Church into secular politics. We are still left with the fact that Churches, as well as rebellious groups within them, do make judgments, or have visions, about how humanity should regulate its social affairs within the mundane order. Their concepts of tolerable, wise or ideal governance in human society might best be seen as elements in a comprehensive "polity", with philosophical, ethical and religious convictions about political means and the legitimacy of institutions. Political theology, in Europe or in Latin America, intends to define that polity.

Finally, with respect to words, "ideology", in its use in the whole debate about conflicting concepts of social mission, almost merits a dissertation of its own. Juan Luis Segundo notes an earlier meaning for the word, used by the proponents of Marxist historical materialism, in which it signifies a non-scientific deformation of reality, a false consciousness. He then states that there is now a "wider understanding...more proper to ordinary language". In this usage, the word refers to social philosophies and movements which have methods of analysis and

action to put the principles of those philosophies into practice. It could refer to "capitalist, socialist, Christian Democratic and ecologist" systems of thought. He notes that it is in this sense that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith normally uses "ideology" (8). It is in this sense that it will be used in the following chapters.

The development of this thesis depends, in part, on an examination of the social thought, hopes and assumptions of theologians, who use their own discipline to establish the doctrinal credibility of their case to others who accept the same religious pre-suppositions. In order to understand, and to make some attempt at assessment of that social thought, it is necessary to consider also what well-qualified social scientists, on the basis of their disciplines, can tell us about situations on that very same frontier of religion and politics which is at the heart of the debate within the Church.

This approach is based on the assumption that consulting the works of authors in these quite different fields is an indispensable requirement for an analysis of social mission. The assumption is made also that both religious convictions and motivation derived from the immediate political context have their own relative autonomy as explanations of behaviour.

In a work already cited, Robin Gill acknowledges that the traditionalists espousing "prescriptive understanding of theology", on one side, and Marxists, "regarding some ideas, at least, as simply the product of behaviour", on the other, may

.....
(8) *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37

not be convinced of the validity of the approach he defines.

The predominant style of sociology is "interactionist"--that is to say, an approach to sociology, typified by the work of Max Weber, which is concerned with the mutual interaction between ideas and behaviour [....]; these paths have recently been particularly productive in the academic world. They have certainly been productive together in the area of relations between theology and sociology (9).

The following assessment of the liberation movement and its theological legitimation for behaviour follows the same paths.

(6) THE THESIS AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE ARGUMENT

In response to the questions posed as the primary focus for this assessment, the answers in this thesis are (1) that the liberation movement has failed to persuade authorities of the Church to accept the radical political role proposed, (2) that a general perception of interdependence among diverse groups in the Church makes a schismatic break unlikely and (3) that, on balance, the contribution made by the liberationists to democratization in the institution, to the development of a theologically based feminism and to the defence of human rights, has been positive in helping the Church to maintain its influence in society under changing political circumstances. This argument is developed in a thematic sequence: (1) ambiguity followed by incompatibility in political concepts of "liberation" (Chapter One); (2) the extent to which fundamental theological positions are incompatible (Chapters Two and Three); (3) the consequences and fallacies of the revolutionary case (Chapter Four) and (4) the contribution to ecclesial and societal transformation in the reformist option (Chapter Five).

.....

(9) *op. cit.*, p.2.

CHAPTER ONE

PROPHETIC DENUNCIATION AND PEACEFUL REVOLUTION: THE POLITICAL OPTION OF LATIN AMERICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Latin American liberation theologians would probably agree that the title, "prophetic denunciation and peaceful revolution", provides a reasonably accurate summary of their intentions. Some of them, at least, seem to have believed that they had succeeded in 1968 in persuading bishops of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America to take the first steps on a dramatic new path. The full political implications of the declarations then made were ambiguous. It soon became clear, however, that the majority of the bishops had been in a politically progressive, but not revolutionary, mood at the Medellin Conference. The liberation theologians wanted the Church to lead society towards a Utopian socialism, by peaceful means if possible, unless intolerable oppression and the "structural violence" of the capitalist system made a recourse to arms unavoidable. This interpretation of liberation proved incompatible with concepts of social mission held by authorities of the Church, in Latin America and in Rome. To understand the ensuing conflict, we must consider the context, ambiguity and consequences of the events of 1968.

(1) CONTEXT OF THE MEDELLIN CONFERENCE

The Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops, at Medellin, in Colombia, in 1968, has been identified as the point of departure for the analysis of conflicting concepts of social mission within the Church. The antecedents of the Conference require a brief account. Most of the men (at that point, it seems, only men) who later became known as leaders of a liberation

movement, were completing advanced studies in Latin America and Europe in the 1950's and 1960's and had done some writing in a new and socially radical vein. One of these theologians, the Uruguayan, Juan Luis Segundo, in asserting that there were, from the beginning, "two theologies of liberation", claimed that one at least (of which he has been an exponent) can be dated back to 1961 (1). Latin Americans were thinking, he said, in theologically and socially liberative terms before Vatican II provided a strong impulse towards global efforts to better the human condition, and also before Latin American initiatives towards liberation were "baptised" in 1971. Segundo is, of course, referring to the publication of the *Theology of Liberation* by Gustavo Gutierrez in that year (2).

However one defines origins and attributes credit for the initiation of liberation theology before the 1970's, it is clear that the existence at the Medellin Conference of a liberative impulse in a politically radical direction can be explained to an important extent by the following considerations. As Segundo has pointed out, the inclination of Christian theologians to question traditionalism, conservatism or a formal political neutrality on the part of the Church, and to insist on responsibility for reforming or replacing social institutions,

.....

- (1) Juan Luis Segundo, "Two Theologies of Liberation" (1983) in Alfred T. Hennelly ed., *Liberation Theology: a Documentary History*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1990, p.353.
- (2) Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1973 (original publication in Spanish, 1971).

was not confined to Europe and North America and had its Latin American roots. At the same time, trends in European theology and the opening of doors towards new concepts of the role of the Church in the world at Vatican II had an impact in Latin America. The arrival in that region, over a period of several years, of substantial numbers of Roman Catholic priests, sisters and lay workers from other countries (to compensate for great shortages in the resources of the Church in Latin America) both encouraged and supported the clergy there in their developing concepts of the social mission of the Church.

In academic, governmental and political circles, considerable skepticism existed about policies of reformism, and developmentalism, associated with the Alliance for Progress promoted by the United States. Economists developed theories about the colonial economic dependency of the Third World, and the need for radical solutions. Widespread poverty and injustice created a Latin American political mood in which not even theology was immune from the effects of some disturbing questions (3).

.....

- (3) In the general account given in this chapter and in others of the liberation movement and the course of events in the period under discussion, the following have been the most useful sources: Alfred T. Hennelly ed., *Liberation Theology: a Documentary History*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1990; Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1988; Phillip Berryman, *Liberation Theology: the Essential Facts about the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America and Beyond*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1987; Deane William Fenn, *Third World Liberation Theologies: an Introductory Survey*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1986; Edward Cleary, *Crisis and Change: the Church in Latin America Today*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1985. Michel Schooyans, *Théologie et libération; questions disputées*, Longueuil, Québec, Le Préambule, 1987.

In the light of events elsewhere in the 1960's (particularly in that same year, 1968) the Medellin Conference, in its spirit, might be considered as, among other things, a social phenomenon of the period. Liberation writers have referred to euphoria in their ranks at what they saw as a victory for their concepts at the Conference; joy over prospects of liberative justice was accompanied, in their movement, by a sense of apocalyptic doom, should that movement not, in the end, prevail. We are limited in this thesis to the general questions already defined about a conflict of concepts about social mission within the Church. We must, therefore, turn from developments preceding 1968, and from the general context and proceedings of the Conference itself, to consider two subordinate questions. To what extent do the formal conclusions of the Medellin Conference confirm, or anticipate, that conflict? What were the principal characteristics of the movement which, if not born at quite that moment, believes that it received, in 1968, some kind of episcopal blessing, in the appropriate institutional setting?

(2) DIVERSE POLITICAL OPTIONS

The final report of the Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops was entitled *The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council*.

(4). The Council to which reference was made was Vatican II, concluded only three years previously. A regional Conference of several hundred bishops, called to consider matters of general

.....

(4) Bogota, Celam (Secretariat of the Latin American Episcopal Conference), 1968.

policy was a relatively new institutional arrangement within the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America. The first one was held in 1955 and dealt with fairly routine matters. The third one was held at Puebla, in Mexico, in 1979. That Conference also was an important event for the liberation movement, to be noted in due course. Pope Paul VI gave the opening address at the Medellin Conference, in the course of the first pontifical visit to the Americas. There can be no doubt that, next to a universal meeting at the same hierarchical level in Rome, there could be no more authoritative setting in which the exponents of radical transformation of society could hope to make their mark in the social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Medellin Conference was seen by the liberation theologians, and others, as the Vatican II of Latin America. The conclusions contain extensive references to the documents of that Council and to formal statements or documents of the Church issued by Paul VI. The purpose of the Conference was seen as the application to society in Latin America of the principles of justice and social mission already stated by the Church. The Latin American bishops were indeed setting forth positions about what has been defined in the Introduction as "polity", a vision of a just society, while not commenting on the actual "politics" in any particular part of that society. Their approach, in committing the Church to active engagement in the struggle for transformation of human society, was very much in keeping with an emphasis in the principal statements of John XXIII and Paul VI, and in documents of Vatican II, on the

responsibility of the Church to contribute to such reform on a global basis (5).

Advocates of radical transformation, and sympathizers, were among those who shaped the Medellin texts, including Gustavo Gutierrez. The latter is credited with influencing the choice of language at critical points in reference to the political situation in Latin America. The passage which the members of the liberation movement have quoted repeatedly since 1968 to support their contention that Medellin was a watershed with respect to recognition of a need for liberation from injustice was indeed radical in its implications, if ambiguous with respect to a choice among existing options in the world of politics. Christians, it was said, "recognize that in many instances Latin America finds itself faced with a situation of injustice that can be called institutionalized violence". The document goes on to refer to "structural deficiencies" in the economy and whole sectors of society lacking the basic necessities for a tolerable existence (6).

The institutions which Gutierrez, and others, had in mind in this passage were those of the capitalist, or market economy, and their proposal, in essence, was to eradicate them, in ways not yet worked out, and to replace them with some form of ethically pure socialism, also undefined. Given those basic

.....

(5) Joseph Gremillion, ed., *The Gospel of Peace and Justice; Catholic Social Teaching Since Pope John*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1976.

(6) from English translation of the Medellin Final Report, vol. II, *Conclusions*, Washington, U.S. Catholic Conference, 1973, p. 110

intentions, the liberation theologians welcomed the fact that the Medellin judgment of social realities, and concepts of a necessary transformation, contained additional language which fitted well into the argument for radical action. Latin America suffers from "oppressive structures that come from the abuse of ownership and of power and from exploitation of workers or from unjust transactions"(7). The oppressed had a right to seek "liberation from every form of servitude"(8). The Church opposed "erroneous conceptions concerning the right of ownership of the means of production" and the neocolonialism from which the developing nations suffered (9).

A rapid reading of the Medellin text, with the liberation goals in mind, might seem to indicate that the bishops, with their advisers, had chosen the liberation movement as the political arm of the Roman Catholic Church. A more attentive reading, particularly if accompanied by study of major texts in the social teaching of the Church up to that time, makes it clear that this was not the case. The Medellin document, following the precedents of Vatican teaching, attacked both liberal capitalism for its irresponsible drive for power and profit and the temptations of the Marxist system, with its total concentration of state power (the liberation theologians, for obvious reasons, also took their distance from existing Marxist regimes, particularly in Europe). The bishops, while criticizing "abuses" and

.....
(7) *ibid*, p.96.

(8) *ibid*, p.95.

(9) *ibid*, p.100-101.

"erroneous conceptions" concerning ownership in the market economy system, did not advocate doing away with that system. Indeed, they referred to business enterprises as providing the "dynamic and fundamental base of the integral economic progress" and called on those with a greater share in wealth, culture and power to show understanding and sensitivity with respect to the need for change which could affect their privileges" (10). The Church did not have "technical solutions or infallible remedies" (11) for social problems, gave priority to an effort at "conversion of men and women" rather than to "affirmation of necessity for structural change" (12) and defined its pastoral mission as "essentially a service of encouraging and educating the conscience of believers" (13).

While conceding a place for some language of the liberation movement, the bishops at Medellin in general followed teachings of the Church, for example with respect to a right to private property, including means of production, provided that the possessors of such property accepted an obligation to contribute to the well-being of the community generally, an obligation sometimes identified as a "social mortgage" (14).

.....

(10) *ibid*, p.96.

(11) *ibid*, p.111.

(12) *ibid*, p.91.

(13) *ibid*, p.99.

(14) References to teaching of the Church are based on documents and commentary in Joseph Gremillion ed., *op. cit.*, and in Denis Maugenest ed., *Le discours social de l'Eglise catholique; de Léon XIII à Jean-Paul II*; Le Centurion, Paris, 1985.

The Conclusions of the Conference did not refer to any conflict of concepts within the Church about social mission. The Latin American bishops adhered to the official line of their Church, on one hand, insofar as they rejected the errors of both liberal capitalism and Marxism and took a position of ethical judgment above ideologies; on the other hand, desirous presumably of accomodating different political convictions among the delegates themselves and reinforcing a dramatic demand for change in society, they used language in different parts of the Conclusions which clearly implied fundamentally incompatible political judgments by the Church itself. The Church may aspire to reconcile the greatest of divergences in human society, but it will not do so by talking about business enterprises being the "dynamic and fundamental base of the integral economic progress" in one passage and about "structures" of "institutionalized violence" in another.

The roots of what seems to have been an inevitable conflict within the Church on such issues can be seen in the Medellin document. The liberation movement had reason to congratulate itself for the impact it did have. The document as a whole, however, lent more support, for example, to the position of the Christian Democrats then in power in Chile (dismissed as mere reformism by Gutierrez and his associates) than it did to the more radical project of total "liberation" (15).

.....

- (15) This is the view of the writer of this thesis who lived in Chile from 1956 to 1960. It is, of course, a politically contentious one. The principal rivals of the liberation theologians were the reformists, more than conservatives.

A good deal more accurate indication of the incipient conflict within the Church was provided within about three years after the Medellin Conference when the "Christians for Socialism" group in Chile proposed that the Roman Catholic Church in Chile should give direct support to the *Union Popular* Government of Salvador Allende, which had a strongly Marxist orientation. The hierarchy of the Chilean Church (generally considered to be "progressive", both in relation to ecclesial and societal affairs) rejected the proposal, on the grounds that it required an unacceptable politicization of social mission (16).

There are two points which should be noted about the origins of the liberation movement in relation to questions about its destiny within the Church. In the first place, its proponents knowingly challenged others in the Church on politically contentious matters. In the second place, the fact that the bishops not themselves committed to liberation viewpoints were prepared to permit a certain ambivalent representation of a political cause, encouraged the liberation theologians to think that conversion of the Church to a revolutionary concept of social mission was not a lost cause. That judgment was, presumably, one important factor in the choice of an ecclesial strategy which would avoid any formal break. This latter point is an important one, not much dealt with in literature about liberation theology.

The stridency, even virulence, of liberation attacks on

.....

(16) This confrontation in Chile will be discussed in a later chapter (along with situations in Nicaragua and Brazil).

the conservative, "Constantinian" Church, said to be guilty of all kinds of spiritual and other "pathologies" (the term is used by Leonardo Boff), is noteworthy (17). It must have led many to wonder why the writers were not contemplating as dramatic an Exodus from that sinful institution as they were advocating from the ethos and structures of the market economy (17). It would not be fair to the liberation theologians to suggest that the strategic consideration noted above (the use of the Church as a political stepping stone) was the only, or even principal one, but it has to be kept in mind.

(3) A SELF-PROFILE OF THE MOVEMENT

Up to this point in our analysis, only the general purposes and political orientation of a movement of "prophetic denunciation and peaceful revolution" have been mentioned, along with its emergence on the scene at an episcopal conference. Positions taken by liberation theologians, theological, exegetical, methodological and, not least, political will make their appearance as required in the dissertation. At this point, however, it is helpful to provide an outline of principal characteristics before moving on to other aspects of the thesis.

The scope of the dissertation does not permit a step-by-step account of the development of liberation thinking beginning with the publication of *A Theology of Liberation* by Gustavo Gutierrez in 1971, even leading aside Segundo's point about pre-baptismal

.....

(17) See Chapter 6 in Leonardo Boff, *Church Charism and Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church*, London, S.C.M. Press, 1985 (original in Portuguese, 1981). Not surprisingly, Boff was summoned to Rome in 1984 to explain what he meant.

life (18). The theologians themselves have stressed that their contributions to the liberation of the oppressed include theology in movement, an opening up of new ways of understanding the message of the Bible for contemporary society and the emergence of a spiritually and politically evangelical Church of the Poor. Although reasonably coherent as a movement with a cause and immediate objectives, the theologians present arguments with differing long term perspectives. They do not have direct power over any substantial part of the Church, but seem to have significant influence throughout Latin America.

No one document has emerged in research on this subject offering a definitive outline of all the characteristics, judgments and objectives of liberation theology. Although there is a steadily growing body of secondary literature with the comments and assessments of others, those writers approaching the subject primarily in a theological, ethical and partisan political context are inclined to take stands for or against the movement in its own most immediate context. Writers in the social sciences, maintain a stance of objectivity with respect to the social context, but are little inclined to venture into theology. We are faced, therefore, with a rather fluid body of ideas and convictions which provide the general guidelines and inspiration for a movement committed to radical change in Church and society.

Our primary concern is consider the positions of the two parties adhering to conflicting concepts with regard to social

.....

(13) Gustavo Gutierrez, *op. cit.*

mission. The specific criticisms of the liberation movement by the authorities of the Roman Catholic Church will be described in following chapters. That Church needs no description here. Fortunately, for the purposes of identifying a new and dissident movement, there is a short introduction to, and description of liberation theology provided by two well-known members of the movement. The brothers Leonardo and Clodovis Boff have provided such an account, published in 1987, nineteen years after the Medellin Conference (19). So far as the liberation movement is concerned, this is a self-profile, not a critical assessment by others. This fact serves our purposes, however, since the book makes reasonably clear how one party wishes its positions to be known, more or less two decades after the liberation assertions and revisionist arguments about the Christian Gospel began to appear within the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America. The book is not a formal statement by a group but helps us to get the movement into a theological and social focus.

The reason for the reference to fluidity above becomes apparent when we read that Leonardo and Clodovis Boff consider liberation theology not to be a "theological movement but theology in movement", a "humble catalyst" in a "universal current" of liberation (20). It is "open to all theology and conscious of the fact that its final destiny is to disappear as a

.....

(19) Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, Orbis Books; Maryknoll, New York; 1988 (original ed. 1987). Leonardo Boff is a leading exponent of ecclesiology and christology, Clodovis of methodology, in the movement.

(20) *ibid*, p. 83.

particular theology and become simply theology" (21). It is "a historical theology very much of its time" but its time "will last for decades if not centuries" (22). All Christian theology will be reviewed and revised, if necessary, in a series of fifty-five volumes "to cover all the basic themes of theology and pastoral care from a liberation viewpoint" (23).

How do the authors view the position of the liberation movement within the Church? Considering the harsh judgements about the Church already noted, the comments are remarkably circumspect and judicious. The liberation movement, they state, "does not set out to be in competition with the teaching of the Magisterium";

to the extent that the social teaching of the Church provides broad guidelines for Christian social activity, liberation theology tries, on the one hand, to integrate these guidelines into its own synthesis, and, on the other, to clarify them in a creative manner for the specific context of the Third World (24).

This is the language of ecclesiastical diplomacy, not of the sectarian zeal easy to find elsewhere in liberation literature. Since the writers in this movement quote frequently from authoritative documents of the Universal Church, beginning with those issued by John XXIII, in support of their views of social mission (while paying little attention to the limitations on political activism and on ideological commitment stipulated in those

.....

(21) *idem*.

(22) *ibid*, p. 91.

(23) *ibid*, p.73.

(24) *ibid*, p.37.

documents), it is not surprising that they would want to integrate the appropriate "guidelines" into their "own synthesis". This last phrase assumes a considerable degree of autonomy in a teaching role within the Church in Latin America (or within the liberation movement in that Church), an assumption presumably not welcome in Rome. It also embodies a condescension on the part of the Latin Americans, in that it implies that theologians and Church authorities in Rome are too European to be able to think creatively and universally in such a way as to include the Third World. In other liberation writings, this viewpoint is not simply implied. It is stated, as will be noted in a later chapter (25).

Leonardo and Clodovis Boff wrote this general account of liberation theology about three years after the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith warned the liberation theologians, in 1984, of risks of deviation from Church teaching inherent, or implied, in their positions (26). Members of the liberation movement at that time were uncertain, and divided, on the question of how to respond to that warning. Leonardo Boff, who had been summoned to Rome and reprimanded just before the general Vatican warning was published, made some bitter comments on the treatment accorded him and on attitudes among Church authorities

.....

(25) Liberation concepts of regional autonomy in teaching about social mission and in other respects seem to go well beyond any principle of subsidiarity, or delegation of authority, acceptable in Rome. This is an issue of ecclesiology to be discussed in a following chapter.

(26) *Instructions on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation, op. cit.*

in the Vatican who had summoned him (27). Nevertheless, in their general review of liberation theology, Leonardo and Clodovis Boff make only a brief and cautious reference to the warning issued by the Congregation.

The main points about this document are its legitimation of the expression and purpose of liberation theology and its warning to Christians of the risk inherent in an uncritical acceptance of Marxism as a dominant principle in theological endeavour (28)

As for opposition to liberation theology within the Church in Latin America from Church leaders and theologians who both reflected and extended the Vatican criticism, such as Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, Roger Vekemans and Bonaventure Kloppenburg, the account provided by Leonardo and Clodovis Boff is also judicious.

Reservations and opposition began to be expressed by some who feared the faith was becoming over-politicized and by others who mistrusted any use of Marxist categories in analyzing social structures. Also many were unable to accept the deep changes in the structure of capitalist society postulated by this [liberation] theology (29).

Insofar as this account of the situation within the Church, two decades after Medellin, represents liberation thinking generally (the reading of other primary sources suggests that it does) members of the movement seem inclined to maintain a

.....

(27) For this episode, see Harvey Cox, *The Silencing of Leonardo Boff: the Vatican and the Future of World Christianity*, Oak Park, Ill., Meyer-Stone Books, 1988. Comments by both Leonardo and Clodovis Boff on the misuse of Church power are in their book, *Liberation Theology: from Confrontation to Dialogue*, San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1986.

(28) *Introducing Liberation Theology*, op. cit., p. 76.

(29) *ibid*, p. 75. Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, first as Bishop, later as Cardinal, has been one of the principal opponents of the liberation movement, both as theologian and as a Church leader with a powerful position in the Secretariat of CELAM.

position within the Church, to deepen their own thinking on socio-political issues and to avoid confrontations, if possible, with national hierarchies or with Rome. This is a waiting game, so far as strategy is concerned; it does not necessarily suggest a reconciliation, or conceptual accommodation with respect to the principles at issue in conflict over social mission. The principal liberation theologians knew the Church as it was before Vatican II, and after, before and after Medellin. They presumably rely on the observable fact that authoritative judgements about human society, politics and the role of the Church can change from one pontificate to another.

(4) A THEOLOGICAL PROFILE

Leonardo and Clodovis Boff are primarily concerned in their general survey of liberation theology with the particular theology which provides the fundamental and long-term basis for a religious and political movement determined to bring about justice in contemporary society. In this, they are representative of most liberation writers. This assertion might appear to be merely a statement of the obvious. It is essential, however, in assessing the liberation movement, not to dwell too much, as many supporters and opponents have done, on the 1960's apocalyptic impulse to have done with capitalism and Third World dependency once and for all, in a revolutionary uprising of the masses of the poor.

The argument over the issues which this largely political approach raises can obscure the continuing transformative effects in society of a liberative theological approach to revision of

Scriptural exegesis. The liberation theologians insist on prior commitment to combatting injustice, on personal involvement with the poor and alienated and on the use of the social sciences in analyzing particular situations. From these contextual vantage points, they turn to the Bible for guidance in what they see as an hour of crisis. What they derive from that return to Scripture, and communicate in their theology, as a second step following the contextual praxis already noted, is a new vision of a Gospel of liberation for the poor, oppressed and alienated, in this life, in history. Liberation will be as demanding, and disruptive, as is required to achieve justice. The process of liberation in history remains, however, within a Christian eschatological framework of ultimate purpose and hope.

To return to the language of the authors of *Introducing Liberation Theology*, the liberation movement is "motivated by the proclamation of the Kingdom of God[...]which begins in this world and culminates only in eternity[...]and by the life, deeds and death of Christ, who made a historic option for the poor" (30). The books of the Old and New Testaments to which references are made most frequently are listed. Exodus reports the politico-religious liberation of a mass of slaves. Books of the prophets contain denunciation of injustice. The Gospels bring the good news of the liberating actions in the Kingdom proclaimed by Jesus. In Acts the reader can find the ideal of a free and liberating Christian community. Revelation narrates the struggles

.....

(30) *op. cit.*, p. 7

against all the monsters of history. The favourite themes are those of struggle for freedom by people committed to God: the armed uprising of the Maccabees; the restoration after the Babylonian captivity described in Ezra and Nehemiah.

The liberation theologians not only turn to stories and teachings of the Bible, seen with new eyes, but affirm their loyalty to the fundamental Catholic doctrines about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary and the Church. In insisting on their orthodoxy, of course, they also claim new insights, and deeper convictions, arising from their "orthopraxis" among the poor. "God will always be God and as such will constitute the basic mystery of our faith" (31). God sides with the oppressed against cruel rulers. The Kingdom is "God's project in history and eternity[...]not of this world but begins to come about in this world" (32). Mary is the "prophetic and liberating woman of the people"; all Marian doctrines are accepted in this affirmation of faith by the liberation movement; the Prophetess of the Magnificat is "everything that faith proclaims her to be" (33). "The Church is the inheritor in history of the mystery of Christ and his Spirit, and finds the Kingdom in history as its conscious and institutionalized expression" (34). The emergence of the base communities in the Latin American Church, "endowed with many

.....

(31) *ibid*, p.50.

(32) *ibid*, p.52.

(33) *ibid*, p.57.

(34) *ibid*, p.59.

charisms,ministries and services" should be understood in the light of the action of the Holy Spirit.

In these communities Christians have been discovering communion as the structural and structuring value of the Church. Rather than church institutions, organized as a "perfect society" and hierarchically structured, the Church should be the community of the faithful living in comradely relationships of sharing, love and service (35)

This dissertation does not offer a critique of the theology of liberation as such, either from the standpoint of exegesis or that of any other theological discipline. The important point for our analysis of conflict over social mission, and of the compatibility of liberation proposals with the social teaching of the Church, is one made, ironically enough, by one of the severest critics of those proposals, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. He said that while the Latin Americans used the language of the Church "to recast the whole Christian reality" their concepts did not "fit into any of the accepted categories of heresy" (36).

Ratzinger was, in effect, admitting and describing the basic difficulty faced by Rome in dealing with the liberation phenomenon in Latin America. The Magisterium would have to warn about or reject a number of elements in the liberation project: the degree of political activism, the Marxist influence in social analysis and threats to Church unity posed by new thinking in ecclesiology. It also warned about what it saw as excessive

.....

(35) *idem*.

(36) Vittorio Messori, *The Ratzinger Report: an Exclusive View on the State of the Church*, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1985, p.176 (the author interviewed Ratzinger).

emphasis on collective salvation in history, as opposed to to personal hopes for salvation in a transcendental realm. On the other hand, the Vatican could scarcely attack the zealous proponents of liberation for failure to adhere to fundamental creeds or to seek a Scriptural basis for social mission. Church authorities did not want to discourage that zeal as applied to pastoral praxis among the poor. In the face of threats posed by secularization, the real Marxism of the radical left in politics, the advances of evangelical and conservative Protestant groups and a great shortage of priests, the Church in Latin America could not disregard the commitment of priests and theologians who took their religion and its pastoral obligations seriously. Furthermore, these theologians quoted frequently from what John XXIII, Paul VI and John Paul II had actually said about justice for the poor.

The problem for the hierarchy of the Church has been that of controlling a movement. The problem for the leaders of the liberation movement has been "to recast the whole Christian reality" with regard to social mission, from within the Church, without disrupting too much an institution on which it is very dependent for the unique nature of the message it has to offer to society generally. This is only part of the answer to the questions posed in this thesis about politicization, domestication or schism and it tends to suggest a continuing, uneasy compromise. Many other considerations, both doctrinal and political, however, have to be taken into account, in assessing the various contending forces.

(5) A POLITICAL PROFILE

What do Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, in their general profile of liberation theology, say about objectives on the political side of the frontier between religion and politics with which we are concerned? Their references to disputes within the Church were, as noted above, discreet and non-provocative. The political objectives are unequivocal, and simple to the point of being simplistic. The liberation movement in Latin America is "the Christian faith freeing itself irreversibly from the shackles of capitalism" (37). Its adherents are "new barbarians beating at the gates of the empire of plenty of the nations of the center" (38). In the language used in the base communities, where members have been liberated to a new sense of reality, say the authors, capitalism is "a tree with rotten fruit and poison dripping" (39). There is, however, "a particular challenge to social love in class struggle, an aspect of the reality of a society marked by class antagonisms" (40). Lest this sound too much like the Marxism alleged by the Vatican, the Boffs insist that Marxism is useful only as an instrument of social analysis and that atheism is no temptation at all.

In fairness to the two Brazilian theologians, who are admirers of St. Francis and the ways of peace, it must be emphasized that these heroic assertions are not as violently

.....
(37) *op. cit.*, p.88.

(38) *ibid*, p.16

(39) *ibid*, p.62

(40) *ibid*, p.28

"revolutionary" in their implications as might be assumed elsewhere, although alarming enough for supporters of the market economy in Latin America who are condemned as sinners. Compared to the difficult balancing act with regard to the judgment of ideologies in which the Vatican engages, for example in the Papal encyclical marking one hundred years of Catholic social teaching, the liberation position is openly, and assertively, partisan(41). This fact would suggest a conclusion, contrary to the one suggested above about domestication, that either politicization or a break with the Church would be the logical outcome of the conflict, sooner or later. Political positions are rarely fixed permanently, however, either for religious reformers or for others.

We might conclude this chapter by observing that the inherent incompatibility of concepts about the social mission of the Church was clear at the beginning in the declarations of the Medellin Conference. Nevertheless, loyalty to religious beliefs which provided impetus and power to sustain a political cause, early success in influencing publicly proclaimed positions of the Church, and considerations of strategy, kept the liberation movement within the Church. Church leaders, whatever anxiety they may have felt about that incompatibility and the consequent ambiguity with respect to the role of the Church in society, apparently wished to maintain a sense of community among diverse

.....

(41) John Paul II, *'Centesimus Annus': On the Hundredth Anniversary of 'Rerum Novarum'*, Vatican City, 1991.

groups in the face of acute social tensions. In order to judge whether this uneasy compromise, or dialectical tension, will continue, it is necessary to consider whether, in spite of liberationist protestations of orthodoxy, there is a fundamental incompatibility of religious doctrine as well. This is the question to be addressed in the following two chapters (42).

.....

(42) In this chapter, and in the rest of the thesis, "ecclesial" is used in the following sense: "of, or pertaining to the Church", as the community of believers in general, in its mission in the world. The distinction between that word and "ecclesiastical", in current usage, may not be very clear outside the context of the Christian Churches. The latter word is used more often in relation to the structures, institutional processes, hierarchical relationships and clergy within the Church.

CHAPTER TWO

"DEVIATIONS AND RISK OF DEVIATION" THEOLOGICAL ROOTS OF CONFLICT

In the previous chapter about the origins and general nature of liberation theology, we have noted some of the initial responses to questions of the compatibility of liberation arguments with the doctrines and social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. Cardinal Ratzinger has testified that, while certainly revisionist with respect to interpretation of Scripture, the liberation movement is not really heretical (1). Theological and pastoral considerations suggest that relations between the liberation leaders and national hierarchies might continue to be difficult but not to the point of an open break. On the other hand, the assertively partisan stance of the movement with respect to contemporary politics in Latin America, or in the world, is incompatible with the teaching of the Church. Depending on socio-political developments in particular countries, that partisanship of the liberation movement within the Church could produce a crisis in authority comparable to the one which occurred in Nicaragua after the national uprising of 1979(2).

The arguments on both sides on the question of compatibility must be pursued further with reference to particular themes and situations, doctrinal and political, and to the writings of

.....

(1) See p. 32 in Chapter One.

(2) The Nicaraguan situation, as well as relevant ones in Chile and Brazil, will be described Chapter Four.

individual theologians and the pronouncements of the Church. In this chapter, it is the theological roots of conflict which will be under examination (3). An attempt will be made to understand contending views, and their implications for social mission, from within a Christian Church in which the protagonists do, in fact, share a good deal in a cosmic vision.

In following some of the issues of theological debate within the Church, this thesis will not, as already pointed out, engage in analysis of theology as such, either in relation to the reliability of Scriptural interpretation or to questions of epistemology, philosophy or metaphysical speculation. The issues are chosen because the disagreements throw light on operational concepts of social mission with direct political implications. The difficulties already mentioned of defining the frontier between religion and politics are not limited to the contemporary world. They are also retroactive, in the sense that there is disagreement over how to interpret the Old Testament account of Exodus as a political/religious, or a religious/political event, or paradigm, and also over whether the mission of Jesus of Nazareth can properly be called "political" in relation to his own people, the Jews.

Drawing on the writings of three individuals in the liberation movement, Enrique Dussel, Jon Sobrino and Leonardo

.....

- (3) Phillip Berryman, one of the principal defenders of the liberation theologians in English-speaking countries, calls one of his books *The Religious Roots of Rebellion* (Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1984). He is more interested in the active engagement of Christians in Central American revolutions than in theological issues.

Boff, this chapter points to underlying theological themes relevant to the debate over social mission. The fact that the works of a particular person are chosen for one of the themes which follow does not mean that the writings of that author are limited to that theme. In the next Chapter, the contributions to liberation theology of two other major figures, Gustavo Gutierrez and Juan Luis Segundo, will be considered from a somewhat different theological angle.

(1) REDEMPTION BY EXODUS: ENRIQUE DUSSEL

Enrique Dussel is not, like the other writers to be discussed, a priest. He holds doctorates in philosophy, history and theology and teaches at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. Dussel has written extensively on the history of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America and on philosophical and ethical approaches to liberation in contemporary Latin America. References to his beliefs in this chapter are based primarily on what appears to be his most recent book (4). Writing about fifteen years after the appearance of *The Theology of Liberation* by Gustavo Gutierrez, Dussel could not fail to be aware of the criticisms directed at liberation theology for rhetorical excesses and simplistic approaches to politics. What he says about the political sinfulness of a large part of humanity, including most of the members of his own Church, he must mean to say. This is an important consideration in this case, since, at least in the judgment of the writer of this thesis, the assertions in Dussel's

.....

(4) *Ethics and Community*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1988, (original edition, 1986).

book are particularly harsh, sectarian and difficult to reconcile with the teachings of the Church.

The story of Exodus, its political interpretation and its application to contemporary society constitute a major theme in liberation thinking. Gustavo Gutierrez has said, in answer to criticisms, that Exodus is not the only, or principal theme, but that it is very important both in Scripture and in contemporary concepts of liberation (5). It is Exodus which provides the inspired Utopian vision of a Promised Land, defined chiefly in terms of what has to be destroyed first of all.

Dussel insists, in *Ethics and Community*, that liberation and community ethics constitute the "central aspect of basic theology" (6). For him, and for other liberation writers, social liberation must be an integral part of Christian concepts of salvation and redemption. Sometimes social liberation, or radical transformation of society in political and economic terms, almost seems to eliminate any substance from traditional beliefs about individual salvation and a transcendent realm over and above history, not only scarcely visible at the end of it. In order to maintain a religious framework for his beliefs, and to link liberation to salvation, Dussel has to deal with the origins and contemporary manifestations of sin. When he begins to define sin in those terms, the gap between his concept of liberation and the teaching of the Church becomes evident.

.....

(5) *Power of the Poor in History*, London, S.C.M. Press, 1983 (1979), p.219, end note 66.

(6) *op. cit.*, p. 16.

Proceeding from the assertion that evil is idolatry focussed on possessions, an "I-thing reification", Dussel declares that claims to profit, and to possession of capital derived from the work of others, constitute idolatry. This defect or sin is "institutional or social". An individual "inherits this institutional 'originary' sin" (7). Membership in the dominant or in the dominated class is inherited and only the poor and oppressed are just and holy, in Dussel's argument.

Dussel continues the definition of sin in order to include political and economic institutions used by the oppressive classes to maintain domination. The principle of sin "is the assertion of individuality against community" and "sin is actually an organized, self-conscious, functioning 'subject' or agent: Satan, the 'power' of evil, the Evil One". "There is no such thing as a religious sin that is not a political or economic sin[...and vice versa". Sinners can be saved, but not if they remain in a "relationship of domination" (8). "They will be condemned (second death) to eternal death[...]because they will have caused the death of the poor in this world" (9).

What are the oppressed to do in the face of such daunting Evil? It is quite clear, in Dussel's history of origins, definition of ethics and advocacy of liberation, that the oppressed masses must never yield to the dominators and await

.....

(7) *ibid*, p. 20; the use of the archaic "originary" is puzzling; perhaps it means "from the times of origins".

(8) *ibid*, p.25.

(9) *ibid*, p.26.

only a transcendental compensation for the woes of the world. They must struggle to construct an escape route from the system. The Egypt of Biblical times then appears, in Dussel's analogy, as a system of oppression from which the Jews had to seek their Exodus, in a complete and forceful break which they initiated, supported by their God. Babylon was another such system and again Israel managed to survive and to assert its freedom after captivity. Christ and the Poor had to move out from an existing society in Israel (a rather summary way of referring, apparently, to the commencement of the Kingdom of God). Christendom, after the conversion of Constantine, was "a city of the earth" only, a system of domination (10). Finally Nicaragua, after 1979, provided light on the horizon because, with the victory of the Sandinistas, there was "a people that has transcended the morality of sin" and entered "into a new land" (11).

Dussel is preaching a gospel of redemption by exodus. He speaks of "liberation, salvation, emergence ('going out') from a prison" (12) and of redemption "understood as (eschatological) salvation and liberation" (13). The redemptive process moves "theologically, metaphorically and historically from Egypt, to the promised land, through the wilderness" (14). He is not

.....

(10) *ibid*, p.73.

(11) *ibid*, p.52.

(12) *ibid*, p.240.

(13) *ibid*, p.241.

(14) *ibid*, p.73.

speaking dramatically of the progress of human society in a reformist and evolutionary sense. The language, and apparently the thought behind it, point to some kind of mystical, and political, apocalyptic crisis which is both expected to happen and which the liberation movement will help to bring about. The vision of Dussel resembles some forms of millenarianism, with the Second Coming of Christ replaced by the initiation of the Age of the Poor, to be followed by an indeterminate period in which the critical horizon of absolute liberation ethics urges everyone on to new heights of altruism and joy in community .

It is debatable whether the ethical/religious/political scheme for the liberation, or redemption, of humanity proposed by Dussel is an ideology, if that word implies some relatively complete system for social organization and values. He admits that he has said almost nothing about the form of the state in which the liberated community will live. For Church authorities, however, this general revision of Christian beliefs to support the complete rejection of a widely prevailing system in human societies is an ideological revision, and an unacceptable one. Although there is no reference to liberation theology, or to Dussel, in the warning about ideological dogmatism contained in the Papal Encyclical, *Centesimus Annus*, in 1991, there can be no doubt that John Paul II was pointing to some of the extreme attitudes in the liberation movement.

Nor does the Church close her eyes to the danger of fanaticism or fundamentalism among those who, in the name of an ideology which purports to be scientific or religious, claim the right to impose on others their own concept of what is true and good. Christian truth is not of this kind.

Since it is not an ideology, the Christian faith does not presume to imprison changing socio-political realities in a rigid schema, and it recognizes that human life is realized in history in conditions that are diverse and imperfect(15).

The response of the Church to a "fanatic" or "fundamentalist" use of the Exodus account, and insistence on the social sin inherent in "structures", makes three points, among others. They have to do with a correct understanding of the Exodus event itself, with an erroneous emphasis on that event which diminishes the role of Christ as a central element in the faith and with sin in human institutions and practices.

In 1986, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, commenting on the issues raised by the liberation movement, affirmed the fundamental importance of the Exodus and the Covenant of Mount Sinai, the foundations of the people of God. The hope generated in that Covenant was never effaced. Through the captivity in Babylon, the people of Israel "lived in the hope of a new liberation and beyond that, awaited a definitive liberation". That liberation must be correctly understood.

The major and fundamental event of the Exodus, therefore, has a meaning which is both political and religious. God sets his people free and gives them descendants, a land and a law, but within a Covenant and for a Covenant. One cannot, therefore, isolate the political aspect for its own sake; it has to be considered in the light of a plan of a religious nature within which it is integrated (16).

The second point was made by the Congregation in 1984. Exodus in the Old Testament pointed to a coming and fuller liber-

.....

(15) *op. cit.*, Chapter V, Section #46.

(16) *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, Vatican City, 1986, Chapter III, Section #44.

ation but was not an event defining and limiting the interpretation of the entry of a Redeemer into human history. Liberation theologians, said the Congregation, present an "inversion of symbols"; they emphasize the "symbol of the political liberation of the people" rather than a "figure of Baptism in the Exodus" (17). In other words, the liberation theologians were accused of wanting to interpret Christ as a social and political liberator, by drawing on the earlier paradigm of a collective and liberative action against oppression, instead of understanding Exodus in the light of the much more complex set of doctrines about the Kingdom of God and a Gospel not easy to fit into an ideology about radical transformation of human institutions in the twentieth century.

The third point, about the sin of institutions, has been made in a number of ways by Church authorities in the course of the debate about liberation. The following passage indicates a well-known position of the Church.

One can, therefore, speak of structures marked by sin, but one cannot condemn structures as such. The criteria for judgment also concern economic, social and political systems. The social doctrine of the Church does not propose any particular system; but, in the light of other fundamental principles, she makes it possible at once to see to what extent existing systems conform or do not conform to the demands of human dignity (18).

In summary form, the passages noted above, from Dussel and from the Vatican, point to some fundamental disagreements.

.....

(17) *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation*, op. cit., Chapter 10, Section #14.

(18) *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, op. cit., Chapter V, Section #74.

A confrontation over an inversion of symbols involving Exodus and the Redemption offered by Christ provides prospects of endless theological debate, a subject well beyond the scope of this thesis. In his apparent intention to equate a particular ideological system with original (or "originary") sin, Dussel seems closer to heretical deviation than to mere risks of deviation about which the Vatican warned liberation theologians. He is determined to push the Church into wholesale condemnation of existing human institutions and the advocacy of others. At the same time, his strictures against the worship of possessions and the sins of the rich have a well-known and substantial basis in the New Testament. The Church admits that there is an important political meaning in Exodus. Dussel can point to the fact that the Church in Nicaragua, with the approval of Rome, accepted the legitimacy of the national uprising in 1979. In the broad spectrum of liberation thought, however, Dussel represents a hard and intransigent extreme, which the present Pope clearly considers to be political fanaticism resting on doctrinal distortion.

(2) THE HISTORICAL AND IMMANENT JESUS: JON SOBRINO

The Exodus example of liberation, combined with Dussel's insistence that the possession of capital and the derivation of profit from it must be defined as idolatry, sanctioned only by the Evil One, define a hard edge of the liberation movement. The life, teachings, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, as well as the communitarian ethics of the early Christians, also illuminate a Promised Land into which the oppressed can enter by radical transformation of existing society if they have confidence

in the teachings of the liberation movement. Christology is a major element in the writings of the liberation theologians.

Jon Sobrino is a Jesuit, originally from Spain, who has lived for some years in El Salvador. He is a professor of systematic theology in San Salvador and the author of *Christology at the Crossroads*, of *Jesus in Latin America*, and of other major works on the Church and spirituality (19).

In a recently published book on historical and contemporary christologies, the Anglican scholar John Macquarrie points to Jon Sobrino and Leonardo Boff as the principal representatives of liberation christology. He finds that the writings of the two Latin Americans, although "not in the mainstream of Catholic thought" are "on the whole, quite orthodox and traditional". They do, however, present christologies with "radical implications for ethics and politics", based on the historical Jesus and, in line with most liberation thought, emphasizing orthopraxis rather than orthodoxy, doing rather than thinking (20).

Jon Sobrino insists that the "figure of Jesus has been the key to liberation theology from the outset[...]Jesus has always held the ultimate primacy and[...]cannot be compared to, still less surpassed by, other liberating biblical figures" (21). He refers to the comment by Gustavo Gutierrez, noted earlier, about Exodus not

.....

(19) *Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American View*, London, S.C.M. Press, 1987 (original 1976). *Jesus in Latin America*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1987 (original 1982)

(20) *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought*, London, S.C.M. Press, 1990, p.316 and following pages.

(21) *Jesus in Latin America*, op. cit., p. 11.

being the only liberation paradigm. Continuing the praxis of Jesus is the central core of the liberation definition of a spiritual and ethical imperative for Christians.

Sobrino does, of course, like the other members of the liberation movement advocate a radical transformation of society which would do away with the institutions, practices and ethos combined for them under the word "capitalism". His interpretation of the intentions of Jesus and of the essential message of the Gospel is a "political" one, but much more in the sense of a divine "polity" for the shaping of human society in history, combined with a transcendental promise, than in the more immediate sense of "politics", as suggested earlier.

Jesus does not advocate a love that is depoliticized, dehistoricized, and destructuralized. He advocates a political love, a love that is situated in history and that has visible repercussions for human beings. Rather than simply advocating the complete abolition of the Zealot spirit, he proposes an alternative to Zealotism. Historically speaking, Jesus acted out of love and was for all human beings. But he was for them in different ways. out of love for the poor, he took his stand with them; out of love for the rich, he took his stand against them. In both cases, however, he was interested in something more than retributive justice. He wanted renewal and re-creation. (22).

How is the Church to judge this type of liberation advocacy? The specific conclusions of Sobrino about an economic and political system cannot be accepted as the position of the Church as an institution. The Church does not, however, prevent lay members from making such judgments and from participating in the political process. It claims not to try to influence them unless

.....

(22) *Christology at the Crossroads: a Latin American View*, op. cit., pp.369-370.

there are issues involving ethics, doctrine or the survival and operations of the Church in society which require judgment.

As for the clergy, and theologians coming in some way under the formal discipline of the Church (we continue to refer only to the Roman Catholic Church, of course) there are limits on political advocacy and involvement. If the theologian is presenting interpretations and arguments which are considered erroneous, seriously misleading and embody "risks of deviation" from doctrinal norms, then the Magisterium will certainly act. If the theologian passes a test of religious orthodoxy but makes clear what sociopolitical conclusions he, or she, has drawn from that theology relevant to action in society, then, at least since Vatican II, there seems to have been a considerable latitude for political advocacy.

The authorities of the Church have faced particular problems in dealing with the liberation movement because of an almost inextricable mix of doctrinal interpretation leading to political conclusions. Cardinal Ratzinger found that the various liberation theologies presented a "phenomenon with an extra number of layers ...a whole spectrum from radically Marxist positions to a correct and ecclesial theology" (23). The Congregation, in 1984, referred to the difficulty of knowing where the doctrinal frontiers of liberation lay, and, in 1986, warned of dangerous ambiguity (24).

.....

(23) quoted in Vittorio Messori, *op. cit.*, p.174.

(24) Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *op. cit.* 1984, Chapter III, section #3 and *op. cit.*, 1986, Chapter I, section #19.

Because it has been contaminated by deadly errors about man's condition and his freedom, the deeply-rooted modern liberation movement remains ambiguous. It is laden both with promises of true freedom and threats of deadly forms of bondage (25).

Where would Sobrino come in Ratzinger's "whole spectrum" of liberation theologies? He can hardly be reproached for "inversion of symbols" when he has insisted on the incomparable centrality of Jesus Christ for an understanding of liberation. The passage quoted above about a "political love[...]situated in history", typical of a good deal of what Sobrino has written, while it supports the particular political stance of the liberation movement in Latin America, is not particularly radical and could support active social mission by Christians with a reformist political orientation instead. There are three points which give the reader some idea of the degree of conflict, or of compatibility, with regard to the Church in his particular case.

One of the warnings given to the liberation movement by the authorities of the Church was about "historical immanentism". Liberation theologians, said the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, seemed to propose liberation within one history "in which the distinction between the history of salvation and profane history is not longer necessary".

Affirmations such as these reflect historical immanentism. Thus there is a tendency to identify the Kingdom of God and its growth with the human liberation movement, and to make history itself the subject of its own development, as a process of the self-redemption of man by means of the class struggle (26).

.....

(25) *idem*.

(26) *op. cit.*, 1984, Chapter IX, section #43.

It is impossible within this thesis to discuss the theological issues involved in contemporary concepts of the transcendent and of the immanent, of the "vertical" as opposed to the "horizontal" approach to understanding redemption, of the divinity of Christ and of the christologies of "ascent" (development of a divine nature in Christ) or of "descent" (with emphasis on a pre-existent Christ).

In this very broad area of debate among contemporary Christian theologians, Sobrino claims that liberation theology "accepts the conciliar formulations with loyalty and fidelity", both with regard to the content developed by the Church and with regard to the Church's authority to define that content. (27). Liberation christology may have been "silent about themes that bear on the divinity of Christ " but that christology "rejects neither the christological mystery nor its dogmatic formulations although it has not considered it its task to analyze these formulations speculatively" (28).

In response to criticism of his first book, *Christology at the Crossroads*, Sobrino admitted in a later work that there was a danger in liberation advocacy that a divine "Liberator would disappear behind the liberation" sought in society and that the liberation movement would be guided only by a theology of history (29).

.....

(27) *Jesus in Latin America*, op. cit., p.18.

(28) *ibid*, p.44.

(29) *ibid*, p.10.

What he and others had written, Sobrino admitted,
by virtue of the relative novelty of their own formulations and at times through a certain imprecision in language, have lent themselves to misinterpretation as attacks on dogma and on the truth about Jesus Christ (30).

At a symposium at which classical christology was under attack by theologians who argued that it was based on a myth about divinity, Sobrino took his distance from that group, stating that "no liberation theologian known to me has ever denied the divinity of Christ" (31).

Sobrino's belief in the divinity of Christ is maintained within the framework of a christology of ascent but with confidence in transcendence as a reality beyond history. The "vertical" and the "horizontal" in human preoccupations are united in practice (32).

These affirmations by Sobrino tend to substantiate comments by Macquarrie about liberation christology being "orthodox and traditional". The emphasis on Christ as liberator in history in quite specific sociopolitical terms, however, and the problems posed for Sobrino by the persistence of popular religious beliefs and practices resistant to the new message of liberation, and to new religious thinking generally, take him at least out of any "traditional", "conservative" or "classical" categories of theology. The following passage about popular religion, or

.....

(30) *ibid*, p.45.

(31) John Macquarrie, *op. cit.*, p. 316. He was at the symposium *The Myth of God Incarnate*, in New York in 1977.

(32) *The True Church and the Poor*, London, S.C.M. Press, 1985, p.276.

"religious ideology" indicates how the liberation movement intends to transform the focus of hope among the people.

The great majority of the Latin American poor are Christians. Transcendent hope? They are filled with it. And they manifest it in all the eucharists they celebrate for their dead and their murdered. Transcendent hope is now secure, then, at the level of religious ideology. The novelty consists in the fact that this transcendent hope is now subsumed into a more primordial, more elementary hope--a "meta-hope", if you will--in which historical and transcendent hope constitute two distinct but complementary moments. For these poor, historical hope is genuine novelty, miracle and scandal--the scandal of the Beatitudes (33).

The theological arguments, combined with a certain reliance on Marxist ideology and demands for radical social action by the Church, on the part of a number of members of the liberation movement, have produced the intra-ecclesial conflict which we are studying. Sobrino almost never mentions Marx; he finds the basis for social criticism and the "meta-hope" in Scripture, in traditional doctrine, in contemporary theologies of ascent and in his own developing christology. He advocates "concrete praxis" in particular situations which will lead to "discipleship and to functional ideologies that may help us". He warned that "God's coming[...]cannot be hastened[...]by a theocratic revolution in arms as the Zealots would want, nor can it be discovered by analyzing the signs of the times in apocalyptic terms". The central core of christology should not be subjected to direct ideological use (34).

.....

(33) *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1988 (original, 1985), p. 165.

(34) *Christology at the Crossroads: a Latin American View*, op. cit., pp. 65-66.

The movement of which Sobrino is a member may cause Church authorities difficulties with respect to decisions about its mission in particular political circumstances. The theological roots of political convictions in his case do not seem to be in serious conflict with the teaching of his Church.

(3) A NEW VISION AND MODEL OF THE CHURCH: LEONARDO BOFF

The revolutionary political implications of an Exodus Church proposed by Enrique Dussel suggested that, sooner or later, adherence to his concept of liberation, would be found incompatible with continuing membership in the Church. As we have noted, the christology and moderate approach to societal transformation of Jon Sobrino throw a different light on the future prospects of the liberation movement. A third element in the thinking of the liberation theologians is that found in its ecclesiology, in its concepts of the nature, structure and social mission of the Church itself.

Having called for radical change in almost all the institutions of the society they know, these theologians could scarcely exempt their own Church from at least partial blame for the sorry state of humanity, or from proposals for change in this "structure" also. Leonardo Boff has had a leading role in castigating the Church and in communicating a new vision and model of its true nature, structure and role (35).

.....

- (35) The account of Boff's thinking in this section is derived primarily from *Church Charism and Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church*, London, S.C.M. Press, 1985; from *Ecclesiogenesis: the Base Communities Reinvent the Church*, London, Collins, 1987 and from *Salvation and Liberation*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1985 (with his brother).

The attack by Boff on the record and imperial identity of the Church after the conversion of Constantine is harsh, alleging "paganization of Christianity" (36), development of an institution comparable to a "giant multinational corporation" and the growth of "pallogies of true principles" (37). A few saints only, in this dark picture, meet liberation standards.

It is not surprising that this challenge to the official Church was met by equally strong language from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, directed towards Leonardo Boff and other members of the liberation movement.

[There is] a challenge to the sacramental and hierarchical structure of the Church, which was willed by the Lord Himself. There is a denunciation of members of the hierarchy and the magisterium as objective representatives of the ruling class which has to be opposed. Theologically, this position means that ministers take their origin from the people who therefore designate ministers of their own choice in accord with the needs of their historic revolutionary mission (38).

Once again, in the light of some firmly expressed positions on both sides, it might be concluded that the liberation movement could not be contained within the Roman Catholic Church. It must be pointed out, however, that the conflict, so far, has been a controlled and complex one and that there remains a considerable degree of ambiguity about the full implications of liberation rhetoric on one side and of prudent institutional silence about tactics on the other. In this continuing confrontation, what are

.....

(36) *Church Charism and Power*, op. cit., p.50.

(37) *ibid*, p.53.

(38) op. cit., 1984, Chapter III, Section #13.

the ecclesiology and ecclesiastical politics of Leonardo Boff as a leading representative of liberation thinking? Three points illustrate his approach. They deal with these themes: (1) the "model" of a new Church, (2) a Latin American Church and (3) authority and individual judgment.

Boff identifies three other types of Church, in terms of very general attitudes, within the existing institution. There is a pious, inward-looking community, resigned to the world as it is and seeking to attain through the sacraments contact with, and promise of salvation in, another world altogether. Other believers see their Church as a conservative, orthodox and authoritarian institution concerned with the use of power to maintain order and morality in society in accordance with traditional concepts. The third model is that emerging from Vatican II, with an ethics of progress in bettering the human condition in a universally inclusive way, but without any radical change in structures or new vision of a social role. The fourth, or liberation, model is that of a Church of the poor and oppressed masses which would transform the Church from below in accordance with the communitarian ethics attributed to the pre-Constantinian Christian communities and carry that same message of liberation to the non-Christian masses in the world today. In it, true democracy will be practised, power and functions redefined and new ministries exercised by lay people, both men and women. Celibacy would not be required of the clergy and women could be ordained to that office (39).

.....
(39) *Church Charism and Power*, op. cit., pp. 5-10 outline the four models.

Boff maintained that the "Vatican II Council sought to strike a compromise between the two great ecclesiastical currents of *communio* and of *sacra potestas* without, however, altering the outlines of the prevailing concept of ministry" (40).

Liberation thinking attributes primary importance, as a point of departure, to the first of these guiding principles.

The hierarchy has the sacramental function of organizing and serving a reality that it has not created but discovered, and within which it finds itself. The theologico-mystical element always has primacy over the juridical (41).

That reality is one of communal equality. The hierarchy must function as a service to that fundamental unit of the Church Universal, the particular Church or local community. Instead of spiritual-juridical powers transmitted only in a historical, linear and hierarchical sense, there is divine Power present in the midst of the community.

The basic church communities are helping the whole Church in the process of declericalization, by restoring to the People of God, the faithful, the rights of which they have been deprived in the linear structure (42).

Boff uses various diagrams to illustrate his concepts of the Church as a community of services, and as a world-wide network of equal communities with the Papal office retained as the pre-eminent service of unity (43).

The most tangible example of the birth of a new Church (or the restoration of a quite early one) is found in the "base"
.....

(40) *Ecclesiogenesis*, op. cit., p.68.

(41) *ibid*, p.26.

(42) *ibid*, p.32.

(43) *ibid*, These diagrams will be found on pp. 25,29,30 and 32.

communities" which have developed within the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America, more or less coterminous with the liberation movement (44). These communities will be the subject of a following chapter. For the purpose of rounding out Boff's ecclesiological concepts in this chapter, the essential characteristics of the communities should be noted. They are small groups (30 to 50 persons), normally from the same neighbourhood, meeting regularly for Bible study, services of worship, discussion of social issues and organization of local "self-help" projects. Lay administrators, or coordinators, men and women, lead the groups, aided whenever possible by priests and sisters from the parish, diocese or religious orders. Services of worship can include commemoration of the Last Supper, stopping short of the full mass, if there is no priest there.

There is now a growing literature about the base communities as a religious and social phenomenon. Whether seen primarily as both a spontaneous and institutional response to a shortage of priests and changing social conditions, or as the "morning stars of the Liberation" (to borrow and adapt the reference to John Wycliffe), the development of these communities is indeed relevant to the question we are pursuing of conflicting concepts of social mission. For Leonardo Boff, the base community is the model of a new Church, "a community of the faithful living in comradely relationships of sharing, love and service" (45).

.....

(44) In Portuguese, *comunidades eclesiais de base*; "base communities of the Church", or CEBs, or "base communities"

(45) *Introducing Liberation Theology*, op. cit., pp. 59-60.

Is it, however, a model destined to change dramatically the institutional nature of the Roman Catholic Church in the direction of the democratic and revolutionary ministry of the masses feared by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith? Boff, at least, does not seem to have any such expectation.

The communities are not a global alternative to the Church, in the argument put forward by Boff in defence of his concept, but only a ferment for renewal, a "rejuvenating leaven" (46). They constitute a "vast network[...] alongside a diocesan and parochial structure". The new Church of the Poor will be open to communion with everyone and will attempt to avoid "even the slightest possibility of a break that could destroy unity and charity" (47). "The Church at large, structured as a network of institutional services, converges with the Church as a network of base communities" (48).

In terms of intentions, therefore, the ecclesiology of Boff does not appear to present a direct, and immediate challenge to the institutional structures of the Church. There is much more emphasis on the operations of the Holy Spirit, fused with the liberative intuitions of the poor, in creating a new Church than on difficult questions of power, authority and dogma with respect to the institution as it is. The religious stance is in marked contrast to the socio-political one in which there is no doubt whatsoever about the need to get rid of the institutions of

(46) *EcclesioGenesis*, op. cit., p. 9.

(47) *Church Charism and Power*, op. cit., p.117-118.

(48) *ibid*, p.121.

the market economy as soon as possible. It is also significant that in the primary sources of liberation thinking consulted for this thesis, there is almost no interest displayed in the varied forms of Church governance developed since the sixteenth century by Protestants (although contributions to liberation theology from Latin American and other Protestants have been welcomed).

Two other points about the intra-ecclesial conflict must be mentioned, but not explored, to conclude the examination of the ecclesiological dimensions. The Latin American liberation theologians generally put their case in universal terms, certainly aspire to leadership in the Third World but want, most of all, to get on with radical change in Latin America. As noted in Chapter One, liberation arguments achieved a certain breakthrough at the Medellin Conference at an episcopal and regional level. This naturally raised hopes that the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America would move in a liberation direction, with activist and radical concepts of social change, in spite of opposition from what the liberation movement saw as a conservative and Eurocentric Magisterium in Rome. Throughout liberation writings, there is an insistence both on their dogmatic orthodoxy and on the right of Latin American theologians and Church leaders to apply dogma to the development of social teaching and action in their own region.

Before he went to Rome in 1984 for a "colloquy" with Cardinal Ratzinger, Boff formally proposed that a meeting in Brazil "would be more in keeping with the Second Vatican Council's spirit of 'collegiality' (sharing authority with the

bishops) and of 'subsidiarity' (doing everything possible at lower rather than higher levels)" (49).

In Brazil, a meeting would necessarily have involved the Brazilian Bishops' Commission on Doctrine, whose President, Cardinal Aloisio Lorscheider, was sympathetic to the liberation movement. Boff's proposal was refused but he had made a point indicative of liberation thinking and tactics. In any case, several members of the Brazilian hierarchy, sympathetic to the general concepts of liberation and to Leonardo Boff as an individual, went to Rome at that time in an effort to ensure that the liberation protest could be understood in its own context. The Pope later wrote a letter to the Brazilian hierarchy as a whole, explaining the nature of his concerns about the liberation movement and its theological arguments (50).

.....

(49) Harvey Cox, *The Silencing of Leonardo Boff*, op. cit. p.24.

(50) "Letter to the Brazilian Episcopal Conference", Vatican City, 1986, in Alfred T.Hennelly, ed., *Liberation Theology, a Documentary History*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis Books, 1990. The principle of subsidiarity evoked by Boff refers, in Roman Catholic usage, to a complex set of ideas about interdependence, mutual support, delegated authority and the integrity and rights of various institutions and levels within the whole structure of the Church. No superior body should undertake responsibilities and actions and make decisions which belong properly to the sphere of a subordinate or dependent body. See Otto Karrer, "Le principe de subsidiarité dans l'Eglise" in *L'Eglise de Vatican II; Etudes autour de la Constitution conciliaire sur l'Eglise*, Paris, eds. Barauna, Guilherme, Les Editions du Cerf, 1966. The liberation theologians could hardly argue that subsidiarity would permit the Latin American Church to call for the overthrow of capitalism while Rome insisted on ideological neutrality, but it does seem to permit the Latin American bishops a good deal of discretion about the conditions under which the liberation movement can promote its ideas within various subordinate institutions.

The conflicting concepts in ecclesiology already noted, and the ideological tensions arising out of differing judgments of socio-political realities, do not explain all the dimensions of the controversy created by the impact of the liberation movement within the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America. The radical political positions of the liberation theologians and the Vatican assertions about deviation from doctrinal orthodoxy may lead to mistaken assumptions about the nature of the challenge presented to the present Pope and a Magisterium now generally considered conservative. The assessment of the theological positions of Leonardo Boff by a liberal Protestant theologian, Harvey Cox, throws light on some aspects of the confrontation and seems to be borne out by a careful reading of the major works of the Brazilian. Cox points to the consequences of the liberation attempt to re-read the Scriptures strictly from the standpoint of those subject to constant poverty, injustice and alienation.

This results in a form of Christian theology that is biblical in its content, but is not easily subject either to hierarchical control or academic assessment. Naturally this makes both the curia and the academy apprehensive.... Boff's hope is not to bring the Church "up to date" or to put it more in line with modern models. Rather, it is to align it more closely with the gospel. Boff is an evangelical radical, not a modernist. To confuse the two is to miss his point completely (51).

.....

- (51) *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12 (see also p. 52). Cox points out that both Leonardo Boff and Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and a theologian of importance from the time of Vatican II, are concerned by the dangers to the faith posed by liberal modernity and secularization. In a certain sense, therefore, they share "conservative" positions, while disagreeing about social mission and Church authority. For Boff, the Church is too conservative and those in power in Latin America too "liberal" (for Boff, this term means economic liberalism).

In Cox's view, Boff understands the dependence of his own movement on institutional authority and is no Quaker or "free floating mystic"(52). Cox's point is supported by what we have already noted about Boff's intention to preserve Church unity and by a passage such as the following about the base communities.

[They] have come, more and more, to understand their need of the Church as great institution, for the maintenance of their continuity, for their Catholic identity, and for their oneness with one another (53).

Boff hopes, as do other liberation theologians, to maintain a firm Scriptural basis for social mission, to identify and act in the spirit of those acts of prophetic righteousness which have taken place in the history of the Church and to keep popular religion alive while expanding its social horizons and understanding of the faith. Since Boff also looks to St. Francis and St. Bonaventure for inspiration and understanding, it can hardly be said that the theological roots of his concepts of liberation are shallow.

If the liberation theologians were, in fact, as deeply immersed in Marxism as the Vatican suggested in 1984, they would have no reason to be surprised or disturbed by the Church's reprimands. Both sides in the dispute, however, are, in certain respects, conservative. The liberation theologians are defending the power of their faith and its relevance to social issues against those, anywhere in the political spectrum, who would reject any such relevance. The

.....

(52) *ibid*, p.50.

(53) *Ecclesiogenesis*, *op. cit.*, p.8.

loyalty of Leonardo Boff to that faith, and to its institutional expression in the Church, has been noted at several points. At the same time, after the general reprimand of the Vatican in 1984, and after the admonitory silencing of Boff himself, he and his brother wrote with some bitterness of the "limitation and finitude of all things created, including the organs of Church authority" and of the need for conversion "not only of persons in the Church but of the structures through which power in the Church is distributed and exercised" (54). The dispute over "liberation" is not, therefore, limited to concepts of social mission, with all their attendant contemporary ideological tensions, but has to do also with power and authority within the Church. This is not the first time such questions have arisen, but they make it more difficult to judge the outcome of the conflict (55).

(4) DEGREES OF DEVIATION

The review, so far, of theological positions taken by three writers of the liberation movement indicates the difficulty of judging, in each case, how far, in the eyes of Church authorities, the individual concerned has gone from orthodoxy to risk of deviation to actual deviation of serious nature.

.....

(54) *Liberation Theology: from Confrontation to Dialogue*, San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1986, p.90.

(55) In July, 1992, Leonardo Boff resigned from the Franciscan Order and the priesthood. He referred particularly to censorship by the Vatican of his writings and to forced resignation from an editorial position (*Globe and Mail*, Toronto, July 2, 1992).

Dussel's development of the sin of covetousness, and of the concept of a chosen people seeking liberation, into an absolutist ideological system condemning all others, seems to belong to the last of these categories. The christology and ecclesiology of Sobrino and Boff, although supporting tendencies towards a highly politicized concept of social mission and towards a process of democratization in the Church, are characterized more by "risk" than by "deviation". What they have asserted in those fields does not seem to commit them, so far, to contesting and then discarding an essential element in Roman Catholic belief as it is currently formulated.

In order to pursue questions about the theological roots of conflict, we have to turn to another sector, or level, of theological reasoning, one which concerns the actual role of the Church in society in witnessing to, and acting upon, fundamental belief. This might be called a theology of "means and ends" and it obviously brings us close to the conflict over social mission and to the indeterminate line between religion and politics.

CHAPTER THREE

THEOLOGICAL ROOTS OF CONFLICT; MEANS AND ENDS

As noted at the end of the preceding chapter, we turn from an examination of liberation theology in relation to some fundamental beliefs of the Church to questions about the policies of that institution with regard to society, that is the means and ends of social mission. Over the centuries, fundamental dogma has been used to justify a variety of social actions by the Church (for example, forced conversion or the suppression of heresy). It is logical, therefore, to ask the liberation theologians how they intend to advance the progress of the Kingdom of God in history.

(1) CHURCH AND SOCIETY: MORALITY OF MEANS

In rejecting contentions of liberation theologians about the inherent sin of the capitalist system, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, as we have noted, stated that "one can [...] speak of structures marked by sin, but one cannot condemn structures as such". The social teaching of the Church will provide the ethical criteria for judgments as to whether particular political and economic systems "conform to the demands of human dignity" (1). Throughout that social teaching and in the critique of liberation theology by the Vatican, the need is stressed for "integral liberation", that is acceptance of the Christian gospel, redemption from sin and conformity to the ethical requirements of that faith, which apply to conduct in all spheres of life, including, of course, the political one. Among

.....

(1) See p. 45 above.

these requirements are ones about a "morality of means" and about the conditions under which recourse to armed conflict can be considered just; teachings about a "just war" have had to be adapted to deal with the question of a "just revolution" (2).

The liberation theologians are concerned, primarily, with constructing a Christian case for doing away with capitalist structures and the whole set of values, or the lack of values, which they associate with the operations of a market economy. They are sensitive to the points made by Church authorities about ethical criteria and a morality of means. Accordingly, to support their case, they emphasize Scriptural roots and teachings of the Church, which, since *Rerum Novarum*, have contained abundant criticism of "liberal individualism" (that is, modern capitalism) along with rejection of Marxism. They go beyond those bases, however, in introducing their own concepts of the "New Man", the liberated individual who has absorbed, in thinking and practice, a more advanced communitarian ethical teaching. The poor are fully entitled to liberation from oppression, whether or not they are individually "sinful", or free from sin, in terms of the whole range of the Church's traditional criteria.

The liberation theologians are prudent enough to realize, however, that overthrowing something called a "system", in the world of politics and power, without considering the conditions required for establishing a more just society, is a dangerous

.....

- (2) *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, op. cit., Chapter V, Section #79, permits armed struggle against "prolonged tyranny", after "rigorous analysis" by the Church. Obviously only the Magisterium can make that judgment.

operation. They might discover that the masses had, in fact, been "introjected" (Dussel's word) with the capitalist mentality to a greater extent than they had feared. The people, then, would not provide a very secure base, ethically, for a new order, leaving aside other criteria for judging the political and economic effectiveness of a new system for achieving social objectives.

The agenda must, therefore, include ethical and spiritual emancipation or conversion of the masses, as well as conversion of the Church as an institution, as a prelude to radical transformation of social structures as a whole. This is a formidable agenda, covered by the simple phrase "means and ends". We are brought right to the frontier between religion and politics, but still on the religious side. Theologians, not social scientists, are being asked how they intend to apply religious belief to the shaping of society.

The two theologians chosen to provide examples of tentative answers to difficult questions of strategy are Gustavo Gutierrez and Juan Luis Segundo. The writings of Gutierrez, the single most influential figure in the systematic and vigorous presentation and propagation of liberation beliefs, could be used to illustrate almost any aspect of those beliefs. In this chapter, we try to understand only his contemporary strategy of social mission. Juan Luis Segundo has been equally systematic and articulate, but in a different vein. Although both would complain about any rigid categorization, the approach of Gutierrez is a populist one, and that of Segundo elitist.

(2) LIBERATION MEANS AND ENDS: GUSTAVO GUTIERREZ

The points of departure for Gutierrez are those of the liberation movement as a whole, as described in Chapter One.

Only a radical break from the status quo, that is, a profound transformation of the private property system, access to power of the exploited class, and a social revolution that would break this dependence [on the capitalist system and the wealthier nations] would allow for the change to a new society, a socialist society--or at least allow that such a society might be possible (3).

The other major theme is that of finding a "new way to be man", in "permanent cultural revolution", involving "profound renewal", democratic in nature, but also revolutionary and utopian, following the ideas of contemporary educators and ideologists about self-realization of the oppressed masses and their empowerment for social action (4). As for the role of the Church, Gutierrez hopes for the best of all worlds in this sense also. The Church "must place itself squarely within the process of revolution" and put its "social weight" behind transformation (5).

At the same time, Gutierrez warned, the Church must not oversimplify the Gospel message and risk the danger of making it a revolutionary ideology. That would be an unrealistic and unwise strategy. The Kingdom of God must not be confused with with any one historical stage. Gutierrez recognizes the ambiguity of human efforts and achievements and the need to avoid absolutist concepts of revolution. In the new social order to be
.....

(3) *A Theology of Liberation; History, Politics, Salvation*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis Books, 1973 (1971), p. 27.

(4) *ibid*, p.234; Gutierrez was influenced particularly by the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, and by neo-Marxists.

(5) *ibid*, p.138-139; he pursues this theme in pp. 266-271.

achieved, "social appropriation of the means of production would be accompanied by social appropriation of the conduct of politics and finally, of liberty; so preparing the way for a new social consciousness" (6). The German Protestant theologian, Jürgen Moltmann, generally sympathetic to the liberation cause in Latin America, theologically and politically, and a supporter himself of the Socialist Party in Germany, has expressed apprehension about the menacing implications of the reference by Gutierrez to the "social appropriation of [...] liberty" (7).

These are the objectives for the Church in its social mission, from the perspectives of Gustavo Gutierrez. In what way does he hope to move towards them? In his basic, and initial, presentation of a liberation theology in 1971, as noted above, he disclaimed any intention of advocating a revolutionary ideology for the Church. Liberation theology, with its frequent references to radical transformation, to the oppressive and "structuralized violence" of the capitalist system, to the apparently irreconcilable interests of different classes and to revolution itself, often sounds very much like a revolutionary ideology, and is often alleged to be that by its opponents. The distinctions made by Gutierrez between liberation and revolution are, therefore, important in relation to a morality of means.

.....

(6) "Liberation Movements and Theology" in Edward Schillebeeckx, Bas von Iersel eds., *Jesus Christ and Human Freedom*, New York, Herder and Herder, 1974, p.141.

(7) See "An Open Letter to José Miguez-Bonino" in which Moltmann expresses disquiet about authoritarian tendencies in liberation theology; in Gerald Anderson and Thomas Stransky eds., *Mission Trends No.4*, New York, Paulist Press, 1979, pp.57-63.

In two essays written late in the 1970's, Gutierrez placed his own theology in a broad Christian and modern context, writing of the "limitations of modern theology" generally and arguing that it was the Latin American liberation movement alone which understood the Christian gospel properly, intellectually and in action. It had the true perspective, that of "the underside of history", of the oppressed masses of the Third World. Even the progressive political theologies of the Europeans, Johann Baptist Metz and Jürgen Moltmann, for which Gutierrez showed a friendly respect, fell considerably short of that understanding (8).

The points made by Gutierrez in this survey which are most immediately relevant to our thesis arise in his effort to distinguish the theology of liberation from the theology of revolution. He finds evidence of the latter type of thinking in the works of Richard Shaull and Hugo Assmann. It includes "as a segment, a theology of violence". Its proponents attempt to "baptize the revolution" on a theologically inadequate basis, a "simple *ad hoc* revolutionary thematization of certain biblical texts, especially from the Old Testament, in somewhat fundamentalist interpretation" (9). They have reached their conclusions about social action in the same theoretical and doctrinal way as conservative theologians and propose to overthrow regimes on the basis of a conviction that revolution is obviously the best response to widespread injustice.

.....

(8) See the chapters with those titles in *The Power of the Poor in History: Selected Writings*, London, S.C.M. Press, 1983 (1979)

(9) *ibid*, pp. 43-44.

Liberation concepts of social mission, and of the type of action required, revolutionary in a violent sense or not, so Gutierrez argues, are based on theological reflection "from within the liberation process" with a basis of faith "as liberating praxis" (10). Gutierrez' efforts to define a political position for the liberation movement somewhere between revolution and reform are difficult to follow. He appears to advocating a politically prudent formula, revolution if necessary, but not necessarily revolution. This could lead to a decision about the right revolution at the right moment, to be made only by those immersed in liberation thinking and praxis. Liberated humanity (Gutierrez: "New Man") will know what has to be done. Gutierrez does not, in my view, have any adequate response to the most obvious questions and objections. Since it takes more than a few spiritually and ethically liberated individuals to initiate, and manage, the right revolution, which political paths should be followed while the pre-revolutionary processes of changing mentalities are continuing? It is, presumably, in base communities, in pastoral exhortations and good works and in theological conclaves that the pre-revolutionary message must be spread.

To be fair to Gutierrez, we must note that he does address

(10) *ibid*, p.44-45. See also p.199. Questions about the political strategy of the movement are pursued, for example, in Andrew Kirk, *Liberation Theology: an Evangelical View from the Third World*, London, Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1979, p.55. Also in Juan Carlos Scannone, "The Theology of Liberation; Evangelic or Ideological?" in Schillebeeckx and Van Iersel, eds. *op. cit.*, pp.149-151. On the question of armed conflict to support a just cause, research by the writer of this dissertation identified about four different answers in the broad range of the liberation movement, ranging from unconditional pacifism to a quasi-Maoist, or Leninist mentality.

questions of strategy and of the availability of agents able to effect profound change. The liberation strategy is "only just on the drawing board"(11). The "liberation process is the greenhouse, the warm rich planter, of a theology that will open up altogether new perspectives" (12). Liberation theologians are seeking to articulate and assist a theology of the poor which has long existed and is directed towards obtaining justice. Theologians have a role (Gutierrez calls them "organic intellectuals"), but the poor are the real initiators, agents and beneficiaries.

They are speaking less and less through intermediaries now and are beginning to have their direct say....They are beginning to be less and less the objects of demagogical manipulation, or thinly disguised social services, and are gradually becoming the agents of their own history, forgers of a radically different society (13).

For those, in Latin America and elsewhere, who hope that much-needed social reforms can be achieved peacefully, these are reassuring words about the intentions of the liberation movement. One obvious point to be made, relevant to this thesis, is that if the poor are to be helped towards the right kind of revolution, then the liberative process will apparently be dependent on having, within the Church, an audience which can actually be moved by Scriptural arguments within a "warm rich planter" created by an extensive institutional infrastructure. We will return to the perspectives of Gutierrez in this Chapter, but after considering the different approach of Juan Luis Segundo.

.....

(11) *Power of the Poor in History*, op. cit., p.64.

(12) *ibid*, p.66.

(13) *ibid*, p.37.

(3) LIBERATION MEANS AND ENDS: JUAN LUIS SEGUNDO

Since Gutierrez was described above as a populist, within the particular context of the liberation movement, it must be added that he, and other liberation theologians, were suspicious of populism on a broader political front, such as that exemplified by Juan Peron. They were careful generally not to speak of "the people", as opposed to the poor, the oppressed or the alienated, because the wider category could contain oppressors, or those of doubtful commitment to a just liberation. Nevertheless, Gutierrez had faith in the masses as the principal initiators of radical change and regarded the liberation movement as the first surge of a vast collective effort to implement prophetic concepts of justice.

The Uruguayan liberation theologian, Juan Luis Segundo, has seen means and ends from a quite different perspective, even although he agrees with Gutierrez and other members of the liberation movement on most of the major socio-political objectives they seek.

Jesus certainly did not present a pastoral program for the masses in his teaching. In line with this 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 wordly society and its mass mechanisms (14).

Segundo agreed with political analysts and ideologists who insisted on the need for a revolutionary vanguard and argued that typical mass conduct was "dominated by inertia" (15).

.....

(14) *The Community Called Church*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1973, p.90

(15) *Liberation of Theology*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1976, p.221.

Segundo said that his attitude was not elitist, aristocratic or anti-populist; "any and all minority growth simultaneously conditions and is conditioned by a rise in the level of mass conduct". God does, however, use the numerical few as a leverage point (16). This is because there is a constant struggle between two opposing forces,

[...]mankind's "majority tendency" which looks for easy and short term solutions to its problems and the "minority tendency" which looks for a richer and more creative synthesis on a long-term basis (17).

Segundo made it clear that he did not believe in a rapid break-through to a new awareness, following a theory of "mass contagion", religious or political, except in the dangerous directions of political populism. In Latin America, there is a "majority Christianity of very low religious calibre" but there is a "minority Christianity" with a much more profound grasp of the meaning of faith (18). In general, the masses had been only in some "minimal level of adherence" for two thousand years, making ambivalent the question of how Christian society ever was. (19). He blamed the processes of secularization on the readiness of most people to take whatever secular benefits could be won, "without having to pay heed even to the most minimal exigencies of Christian membership[...]the easier way out" (20).

.....

(16) *Liberation of Theology*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1976, p.226.

(17) quoted in Andrew Kirk, *op. cit.*, p.65.

(18) *Liberation of Theology*, *op. cit.*, p.185.

(19) *ibid*, p.214.

(20) *ibid*, p.200.

With this gloomy view of the ethical and spiritual standards to be expected at the level of mass conduct, what hope is there for the liberation cause? What role is there for the Church as a whole? From the beginning, Segundo says, the place of the liberation movement within the Church was an uncertain one.

The ambivalent position of liberation theology vis-a-vis ecclesiastical structures, its uncertain position between acceptance on the one hand and mistrust or neglect on the other, meant that the groups influenced by this liberation theology developed within the Church rather than outside the Church as heretical groups. There was no break or rupture. These groups sought to grow and for their growth they took advantage of all the means supplied by a Church that was structured for the sake of the masses and directed towards the latter (21).

It might be conjectured from this that Segundo would advocate an eventual departure from the Church of a liberation vanguard determined to preach, and practice, the true Gospel. On the contrary, it is the whole Church which he wishes to make into a universal vanguard (if its leaders rise to the challenge). It should be a "sign community", as opposed to a "Church of the masses". Faced with the complex realities of human affairs, it must be a "leaven of light and critical judgment" (22).

[The Church] has a vital role in God's design for the humanisation[...]of the whole creation[...]ultimately the only organism which can act as a catalyst and permanent symbol of all the true paths to final salvation (23).

In order to understand the importance attributed by Segundo to that permanent and universal role of the Church as teacher,

.....

(21) *ibid*, p.233.

(22) *ibid*, p.204.

(23) The comment of Andrew Kirk on Segundo's concept of the Church, *op. cit.*, p.65.

judge and sign of salvation for all humanity, it is essential to take into account his distinction between faith and ideologies and his concepts of primary and secondary learning. These are expressed in a complex body of thought from which we can only extract some points indicative of his approach to the role of the Church in a continuing, evolutionary and liberative process with respect to the ethical and spiritual development of human society. Faith is a basic commitment to liberation in that sense and ideologies provide the specific modes of political analysis and action chosen to advance that liberation at particular moments in history. There are also two levels of learning. Faith and ideologies coexist at all levels in the Bible.

When, for example, we read how faith came to expression at one time in an ideology of fighting one's way out of bondage and at another time in nonviolent resistance to bondage, we are engaged in simply learning. When we reflect on these expressions, together with other strategies of fighting oppression, in order to determine what we should do about oppression in our situation, we are learning to learn (24).

Faith, then, insists Segundo, is not a "universal, atemporal, pithy body of content"; it is "maturity by way of ideologies", the "total process to which man submits" (25). This learning to learn, or "deutero-learning process, requires some sort of community. We call this community of faith 'the Church'" (26).

There is no doubt that the ideology leading toward relief from oppression in the present age, so far as Segundo is

.....

(24) from a summary of Segundo's analysis in Norman Gottwald ed., *The Bible and Liberation*; Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1983, p.5.

(25) *Liberation of Theology*, op. cit., p.495.

(26) *ibid*, p.125.

concerned, is essentially the liberation one espoused by Boff, Sobrino, Gutierrez and others. Is Segundo simply stating the obvious, that the liberation movement would be very happy indeed to take over the whole Roman Catholic Church and set it "squarely within the process of revolution", as Gutierrez demanded? In speaking of the role of the Church as "sign community" and "leaven of light" is he not using traditional, or at least Vatican II, concepts of social teaching and mission in the world? Those concepts accompany evangelization in the traditional sense. Segundo would simply change the content of social teaching to conform to liberation orthodoxy and "orthopraxis". The answer to these questions is a conditional, a hesitant, "not quite".

In a book described as a "response to Cardinal Ratzinger" after the publication in 1984 of the *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation"*, (27), Segundo did not argue that liberation theology should be the theology of the Church, only that it was not heterodox, did not threaten the core of the faith and should be one acceptable trend in Catholic thinking. A Church united by a supernatural and Scriptural faith could, he argued, permit a "pluralist synthesis" in theological exposition of conclusions to be drawn about such matters as social mission.

Segundo pointed to the judgment of the eminent Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner, that the theology of Gustavo Gutierrez was "entirely orthodox". "Today there are diverse schools and it has always been thus", said Rahner, "and it would be deplorable

(27) Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *op. cit.*

if this legitimate pluralism were to be restricted by administrative means" (28). Rahner was not a liberation theologian and had once expressed puzzlement as to what a "political" theology was. Segundo argued also that many convictions of the liberation movement were in accord with the thinking of Vatican II. There can be no "transcendence proper to the individual that does not extend to the history wherein people seek to give to society more just and congenial structures" (29).

Maintaining a liberation and leftist position within the Church will not endear him to other members who reach different political conclusions or who insist on a rigorous neutrality. Nevertheless Segundo's liberation case is not made with the messianic zeal and dogmatism of Enrique Dussel, and not even with the milder version of that zeal to be found in Gustavo Gutierrez. By conceding that liberation theology need not be enshrined as "official" and by emphasizing elitist concepts of leadership, he seems to take account realistically of the problems of the Church in managing internal, and universal, tensions over social mission.

Segundo's doubts about mass movements, emotional activism and absolutist approaches to institutions and revolution, arose from an intellectual temperament more philosophical, reflective and inclined to dialectical balancing than those of other liberation writers. These qualities led him to judge more accurately than others what he called the "complexity of the real" in political

.....

(28) *Theology and the Church: a Response to Cardinal Ratzinger and a Warning to the Whole Church*, New York, Seabury, 1985, p.17

(29) *ibid*, p.154.

matters. This is, at least, the view of the writer of the thesis, as will be evident in later sections. Although we are beginning to leave theology as such at this point, some indication must be given of how he saw that complex reality behind the revolutionary and liberation rhetoric. Consistent with his views about faith and ideologies, he relied on the cumulative wisdom embodied in faith in putting the ideologies of the day into perspective.

Segundo saw, and lamented, what ill-considered and indiscriminating attacks against existing institutions, particularly when accompanied by guerilla warfare, could do in damaging the social fabric, or, as he usually called it, social ecology.

For example, it has often been observed that people in a situation of dire poverty seems more capable than others of expressing joy about the positive aspects of life[...] And we notice that such virtues often tend to disappear when we get a more just social structure in which the social product is distributed more equitably. To state this is not to succumb to romantic conservatism [...].

My assertion here has to do with a point fundamental to anthropology; even unjust societies constitute ecologies in the long run. They constitute social systems with a complicated equilibrium, and hence they must be changed as such (30).

Segundo pointed to the destructive effect of a civil war on confidence in all institutions and in personal and group relationships. "Wittingly or unwittingly the guerillas destroyed the political future of the parties which were seeking the same end through legal means". Radicals threatening, or engaged in, revolutionary activities naively assumed that society could not get any worse as a result of their attacks; a panicky middle class

.....

(30) *Faith and Ideologies*, op. cit., p.285.

assumed that a military intervention, for a limited period to prevent a leftist coup, would not effect their world very much either. Both were wrong. Segundo did not turn against the liberation initiative, so far as a general direction was concerned. His criticism of some radical means of effecting change "would go double for the irreparable destruction of the social ecology caused by the efforts to repress the sedition[...]the repression did not even succeed in being conservative" (31).

(4) ROOTS OF CONFLICT: THEOLOGICAL, ECCLESIOLOGICAL,
OR IDEOLOGICAL?

Gustavo Gutierrez also took care to dissociate himself from any theological argument seeking to justify immediate revolutionary overthrow of existing institutions simply on the grounds that their sinful nature required their elimination, regardless of the means which might prove necessary to achieve that result. Jon Sobrino insisted that the social ethic of Jesus Christ, which clearly demanded a fundamental sense of obligation towards ensuring the well-being of the neighbour, the community and the poor, as a distinguishing mark of the Kingdom of God, should not be subject to manipulation by any contemporary ideology. Leonardo Boff has set forth an ideal base community as a model of the Church of the Poor, one combining altruism, democracy and spirituality, firmly linked to the Universal Church in which the hierarchy accept their roles as coordinators and unifiers.

So far as four mainstream liberation theologians are

.....

(31) *ibid*, p.285; see pp. 285 to 291 on this theme.

concerned, Sobrino, Boff, Gutierrez and Segundo, serious conflict with authorities of the Church seems to arise less over issues of fundamental theology than with respect to concepts of the degree of social and political activism appropriate for the Church and with respect to the partisan option advocated . The attempt by Enrique Dussel to equate the market economy with original sin does challenge and test that contention, but he did not develop the theology very far, being more concerned with immediate political advocacy.

The other four, with less dogmatic attitudes, seem prepared to pursue their case about the true implications of the Christian faith for social ethics within the teaching and pastoral functions of the Church, hoping to achieve substantial influence over a period of time. That prospect does not eliminate the possibility of tension and confrontation between individuals and the hierarchy, depending on the local political context and the degree and nature of advocacy by individuals who are subject to the discipline of the Church. It does, however, offer a tentative answer to the questions identified in the Introduction to the thesis about the future of the liberation movement.

Most liberation theologians seem to have concluded, at the end of two decades of experience after the Medellin Conference, that possibilities of converting the Church in any systematic and dramatic way to their concepts of social mission were remote. They also seem to have concluded that progress in Church and society in relation to the propagation of their beliefs was satisfactory enough to warrant their making the most

of possibilities available to them within the institutional framework. To the extent that they remain open to neo-Marxist thinking, they could, apparently, find support there for a strategy of trying to change a political culture within some institutions as preparation for eventual more dramatic change in all institutions. Whether one could say that the liberation movement had, in that event, been "domesticated" is a matter on which comment will be reserved, for the moment.

There are other reasons for reserving judgment about some aspects of the assessment made above, at least until we have considered what the social sciences say about the liberation movement as a factor contributing to institutional and general societal change. We have been identifying theological positions and following what theologians have said about their social strategies. It is equally important to note what actually happened in situations in which the Church had to make difficult choices in the two decades following Medellin. How accurately did the liberation theologians read the signs of the times and how effectively did they use the influence which their movement had begun to accumulate in the 1960's?

There is also the possibility that a rather surprising amalgam of a type of religious fundamentalism with political radicalism will break apart because of the inherent inconsistency of its constituent elements. The comment by Harvey Cox about the evangelical radicalism of Leonardo Boff, and the need to distinguish between that kind of religious and political project and trends of liberal modernism elsewhere, at least points to one

aspect of the problem of making judgments.

It is obvious that, since 1968, the liberation theologians have gained a certain renown outside of Latin America because they seemed to offer a comprehensive system for relating fundamental religious belief, capable of generating real political will, to the solution of endemic social problems. This is true, up to a point. So far as systematic exposition is concerned, it is not clear that they have done much more than to put up a reasonable case to Christians that faith in a Scriptural and revealed religion need not inhibit consideration of radical change in society, within the limits defined by Christian ethics. This was a liberating experience within a Church in Latin America which had been consistently conservative and defensive with regard to secular liberalism, Marxism and competing evangelization by Protestants. That experience did not necessarily indicate new insights with regard to those social problems.

The liberation theologians have been accused of being far too political in their writings. They could be accused of the opposite fault. Having embarked on an argument about relating a body of religious belief to the case for revolutionary change in society, they have, in fact, so far, said very little that is new about concepts of the state, about politics and specific regional situations. In making such comments, however, we are moving out of theological territory and have to turn to the social sciences for further illumination of the liberation phenomenon.

CHAPTER FOUR

EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL CRISES:

THE POLITICAL CONTEXT FOR CONFLICT.

In 1989, a British social scientist, David Lehmann, completed a book on democracy and development in Latin America in which he paid tribute to a generation of Latin American social scientists. They "lived a particularly precarious life between *lo proprio* --their own heritage, itself of mixed origin--and a variety of Western intellectual traditions";

[...]they have produced a string of ideological and theoretical innovations which, through successive waves of enthusiasm and disillusion, have left an abiding mark on social thought far beyond their own frontiers. Of these the most significant are structuralist economics, 'dependency' and 'world system' theory, Liberation Theology, and most recently the 'grassroots' ideology of development, which I have termed *basismo*, [...] (1).

.....

- (1) *Democracy and Development in Latin America: Economics, Politics and Religion in the Post-War Period*, Cambridge, England, Polity Press, 1990, p.xi. For the assessment of liberation theology in the socio-political context in this chapter and for surveys of events, personalities and positions taken by Church leaders, liberation theologians and others, I have found Lehmann's book, and several others, particularly helpful and stimulating. They are based on considerable knowledge of, and research in, various parts of Latin America and have appeared towards the end of the period 1968-1988 in which the liberation movement became a notable phenomenon in the Roman Catholic Church: Arthur F. McGovern, *Liberation Theology and its Critics: Toward an Assessment*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis Books, 1990... Paul E. Sigmund, *Liberation Theology at the Crossroads: Democracy or Revolution*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990... P.J. Williams, *The Catholic Church in the Politics of Nicaragua and Costa Rica*, London, Macmillan, 1989... Michael Fleet, *The Rise and Fall of Chilean Christian Democracy*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1985... Daniel H. Levine ed., *Religion and Political Conflict in Latin America*, Chapel Hill, N.C., University of North Carolina Press, 1986... "The Church in Latin America", a special issue of *Thought*, vol. 59, no. 233, June 1984, New York, Fordham University Press.

By *basismo* Lehmann means developmental populism, social change initiated "from below" at a local or "micro-level" by groups not dependent upon national, traditional and political structures of authority at a "macro-level". He approaches the subject of change and development primarily as a sociologist, content to "leave to the theologians the debates about the God of the Poor" and to economists any detailed analysis of dependency theories and ~~and~~ economic systems. From that perspective, however, he attributes to the Church and to religious factors in social affairs an influence which does not "normally enter the consciousness of sociologists, political scientists and economists" (2). He finds that liberation theology offers the "only systematic written exposition of a *basista* philosophy in Latin American thought" (3). He devotes a chapter to the theme that the "Church returns to centre stage".

An assessment of the social impact of liberation theology from a quite different perspective is not incompatible with the views of Lehmann but adds an important corrective to the first impressions of importance which one might derive from the latter's analysis. The American Jesuit, Arthur F. McGovern, has made an evaluation in 1990 of the liberation theologians and their critics which both defends those theologians against many of the charges levelled at them and has earned tributes for balance and fairness from some of those critics (e.g. Michael

.....

(2) *op. cit.*, pp.xv-xvi.

(3) *ibid*, pp.191-192.

Novak and others usually identified as "neo-conservatives" on the political and religious fronts in the United States). McGovern finds, both among supporters and opponents, very exaggerated views of the power of the liberation movement. Its influence in Latin America is "quite small" and "most Latin Americans have probably never heard of liberation theology" (4). The influence exerted in a relatively short period, however, must not be overlooked and McGovern's assessment fits Lehmann's interest in the development of *basismo*;

[...]liberation theology does not exert great influence on the 'macro' level of policy making in Latin America (for example whether a given country will opt for socialism); [it tries] to mobilize the Church's concern for the poor and to help generate actions as at 'micro' level--for example, in defense of peasant rights, in protest against human rights violations and in promoting land reform (5).

The comments of Lehmann and of McGovern provide a useful starting point for an attempt to locate the liberation movement in a socio-political sense. They respond realistically to those who feared that it represented the vanguard of a new Marxist attempt to subvert Western civilization in the Americas, or hoped that it might "turn out to be as significant as the Protestant Reformation" (6).

Can the strength of the liberation movement in the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America be defined in some tangible and quantitative way? The evidence is fragmentary.

.....

(4) *op. cit.*, p.134.

(5) *ibid*, p. xv.

(6) Phillip Berryman, *Liberation Theology*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1987, p. 6.

(1) STRENGTH OF THE LIBERATION MOVEMENT

In his book (1989) on the Church and the political situation in Nicaragua, the British political scientist, P.J. Williams, both consulted the findings of Nicaraguans who had conducted opinion surveys and conducted a systematic survey himself of attitudes among the clergy towards the Sandinista Government. He reported in his book that 37.5% of respondents might be classified in the categories of "direct participation, active or passive collaboration, with respect to that Government. The other 62.5% seemed to be in the "passive or active opposition category", led strongly by the Primate, Cardinal Obando y Bravo (7).

Those supporting the Sandinistas have probably been strongly influenced by liberation thinking, although support in this case for the main political force which overthrew Somoza cannot be equated very closely with the full liberation theology or ideology. Williams points out that those in the "passive" category on both sides amounted to 62.5%. It is a reasonable assumption that many in these groups hoped that the crisis creating polarization in the Church would pass and had no intention of taking strong political stands. In 1990, the Canadian academic, John Kirk, who had also been doing research in Nicaragua on the Church and politics, stated that what he called the "progressive" wing of the Church (sometimes called the "popular" Church, and attacked as such by its opponents) had the support of 15% to 20% of clergy and practicing Catholics (8).

.....

(7) *op. cit.*, pp. 77-78.

(8) Unpublished paper at a conference at York University, 1990.

In that same year, the Sandinistas were defeated by a centre-right coalition in an election.

In Argentina, the institutional Church was very largely silent and passive during the period of military rule and of notorious violations of human rights. There was a "Priests for the Third World" movement, however, reflecting the influence of liberation theology and of the theology of revolution, from which Gustavo Gutierrez took his distance. Out of a total of 5,000 priests, 800 were reported to be involved in the movement. In a different context, that of the Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops at Puebla, in 1979, Phillip Berryman judged from the results of debates and drafting of the final reports that the largest group of bishops was that of the "centrists", those "most concerned with Church unity" and that "conservatives" and "liberationists" on either wing were minorities (9). In Chile, as will be noted later in this chapter, a group of 80 priests proposed that the Church should align itself with the Popular Unity Government of Salvador Allende and were later joined by two hundred or more priests from elsewhere in Latin America making the same demand.

These scattered bits of evidence from the sources available in this research project confirm what is evident in the writings of liberation theologians and of their opponents, and is evident in the course of events in various countries. There has been during the period under review, and perhaps is now, an important

.....

(9) op. cit., p.12 (and following section).

minority within the Church prepared not only to preach the liberation message but to engage in some action in support of that message, even at political risk or at risk of disruption within the Church. The nature of that action, and the vigour with which it is pursued, depend on the general political context, which has changed considerably since the period in which liberation theology made its mark at Medellin.

Other factors make it difficult to measure, or to predict for the future, the real strength of a liberation movement guided by the theological and socio-political precepts described in preceding chapters. Liberation sentiments and initiatives have been manifested at all hierarchical levels; particular Brazilian and Peruvian bishops have obviously been a source of preoccupation to the Vatican. At the level of bishop, however, considerations of prudence, the power of the majority (including the financial support of the middle class), and also regard for the survival of liberation concepts within the Church, probably moderate the inclination to engage in risky political actions. The involvement of clergy and lay workers from outside Latin America in Church activism in Latin America is a phenomenon of particular interest, but also difficult to measure in terms of effects. References to this involvement often include the comment that the foreign clergy are more radical politically than the native clergy, but none of the sources available here provide systematic analysis of this factor in assessing the liberation movement. What evidence there is with regard to the situation in number of countries indicates the importance of

research on this aspect of the liberation movement (10).

Liberation theology has close, but selective, links to the social teaching of the Roman Catholic Church as a whole. The social activism of the Church in Latin America, particularly under the difficult conditions of political repression by authoritarian regimes, is sometimes attributed vaguely to the liberation movement without regard to the actual doctrinal basis for Church action. Certainly the critique of unrestrained capitalism found in Church teaching has appeared radical enough to many circles in Latin America to make the further elaborations of Gutierrez and his associates unnecessary (for example, to those in Chile and Brazil who organized themselves under the banner of "tradition, family and private property" as their preferred interpretation of Church doctrine). The overlapping of liberation and general Church teaching supports the argument that the movement will stay within the Church and also makes it hard to define doctrinal motivation in particular crisis situations.

.....

- (10) Phillip Berryman states that 80% of the clergy in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, Venezuela, Panama and Bolivia are foreign (*op. cit.*, p.12). Another book refers to 10,000 "foreign Catholic missionaries" in Brazil alone (Trevor Beeson and Jenny Pearce, *A Vision of Hope*, London, Collins, 1984, p.89). Financing from outside Latin America, both for Church activism (including liberation projects), and against the liberation movement, is another factor in the political equation. New projects of social mission undertaken by the Church in Chile under conditions created by the Pinochet regime received 95% of their financing from abroad (Brian H. Smith, writing on Chile in Daniel H. Levine ed., *op. cit.*, p.174). There are other types of involvement by agencies of the Catholic Church outside Latin America. The principal publisher of liberation theology in English is Orbis Books an agency of the U.S. Catholic Foreign Missions Society. This agency was organized by Miguel D'Escoto, who later became the Foreign Minister in the Sandinista Government in Nicaragua.

These considerations about the fundamental and continuing strength of liberation theology tend to support the judgment of Arthur McGovern that, whatever the contribution it may make to concepts of social mission, or the capacity and inclination it may manifest in challenging the discipline of the Church, the liberation movement has not taken over the Church (11). Other perspectives on this point have to be explored, however, since it seems equally true that the Church has not remained unchanged with respect to social mission.

We have been considering the position of the liberation movement so far in this chapter, rather than that of Church leaders with respect to that movement, or of the Church as a whole in relation to Governments and societies. It is impossible, given the principal focus and limitations of scope of this paper, to comment on this last point, that of the importance of the Church in Latin American society, except in the briefest of terms. Some comment is necessary, however, to put the internal conflict over social mission into the proper perspective. An internal conflict

.....

- (11) Roland Robertson, an American sociologist in the field of religious studies writing about "Liberation Theology, Latin America and Third World Underdevelopment" reaches the same conclusion as McGovern. Neither supporters nor opponents have produced much evidence that the liberation movement is strong and growing. There is "much to be said for the view that its political significance has been greatly exaggerated" (in Richard L. Rubinstein and John K. Roth eds. *The Politics of Latin American Liberation Theology*, Washington, Washington Institute Press, 1988, pp. 129, 131.) The sub-title of this book of essays expressing different viewpoints by well-qualified authors is "The Challenge to U.S. Public Policy"! This is some indication of the concern felt in certain circles in the U.S.A. that the Roman Catholic Church, of all institutions, might be heading steadily towards the left.

on the same issue in some other Christian Churches in Latin America, or in Churches elsewhere, including the Roman Catholic Church, might have almost no discernible effects in society generally. This can scarcely be said of the Roman Catholic Church in several of the recent crises of political orientation in Latin America. The only generalization one can risk from reading the histories and analyses of events in Nicaragua, Chile and Brazil, for example, is a two-fold one: (1) the Church as an institution could not decisively determine the course of events; (2) public positions taken by official representatives of the Church and by lay members could not be ignored as factors, along with others of a quite different nature, influencing those events.

Some might argue that the internal conflict was little more than a reflection of opposed social or class interests, for which teachings of the Church had no relevance. This argument is not valid with respect to confrontation between advocates of messianic liberation and defenders of a different concept of social mission, although the influence of secular ideologies is apparent in judgments made of social realities, institutions and processes. It is because members of the Church do become seriously divided by economic interest, political and cultural affiliation and ideological assumptions, that an institution claiming access to fundamental truth about the human condition must make some judgments. The societal judgments made by bishops at Medellin and at Puebla indicate the difficulties in defining a consensus with a doctrinal basis which could guide the Church, as an institution, and its members, as individuals, in situations

presenting ethical challenges going beyond the normal competition of interests in political life. It is in the judgment of social realities and in the choice of strategies for undertaking action based on faith that the divergence in concepts of social mission begins.

(2) THREE CRISES FOR THE CHURCH

Almost any judgment about the role of the Church in Nicaragua, Chile and Brazil, in the period under review, that is after the Medellin Conference of 1968, and in the light of the further definitions of Church polity at Puebla in 1979, is bound to be controversial for one group or another in Latin America, or for sympathizers elsewhere. The controversy arises not only from what are often irreconcilable ideological positions, from which Church actions are viewed, but from different contentions about motivation of individuals and groups and the facts of a given situation. The material available for this dissertation certainly does not settle many disputed points but from it one might at least derive and define some leading impressions.

The common or connecting elements in Church policy in these three countries seem to have been a strong wish to act in the socially progressive spirit of Medellin and Puebla, combined with a strong intention not to allow the Church to be ship-wrecked on some obvious reefs in politically turbulent seas. If the policy emphasizes and initiatives, ecclesiastical and prophetic styles, of the national hierarchies seemed different (and often were), there are several obvious explanations. Church leaders were faced, in Brazil (1964) and in Chile (1973) with formidable military regimes,

intent on developing the controls and philosophy of a modern national security state. In Nicaragua (1979) a quasi-Marxist, highly ideological, regime took control, permitting opposition but apparently intending to guarantee its own future with armed forces equally imbued with ideology. Differences in current political situations reflected also important differences in the political cultures and social histories of the three countries. The guidelines to be derived from Medellin and from Puebla, even from the teaching of the Vatican at and after the Second Council, could not settle all the problems of social mission and political stance which arose in these cases.

As noted above in this chapter, there were three strands of theology and ecclesial strategy at Puebla, adhered to by "centrists, conservatives and liberationists". If the bishops in Chile and Brazil took positions which could be described as "progressive", even mildly "liberationist", in spite of the rightist regimes they faced, while the position of Cardinal Obando y Bravo in Managua was generally agreed to be increasingly "conservative", the explanation is to be sought not only in different political situations but in the obvious diversity and uncertainty with regard to social objectives apparent in the documents of the Episcopal Conferences.

In his analysis of the political problems of the Church at the beginning of the 1980's, Norman H. Levine noted the existence of "a growing group of bishops and key Catholic institutions striving to maintain the unity of the Church against fierce pressures from Right and Left alike". They sought ways "to

preserve the unity and autonomy of the Church" and demonstrated "great organizational flexibility" in doing so (12). Another writer, referring to the situation in Chile commented that "just as in 1970-1973 [the Allende period] centripetal pressures seek to move the Church from its centrality" (13). It was clear to those following the course of events in Nicaragua after the overthrow of Somoza that, because of divergent political views among clergy and church members generally, "the conflict within the Church was more threatening to its religious and institutional integrity than conflict between the Church and the Government" (14).

In various formal statements by Popes Paul VI and John Paul II, and by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith after the Medellin Conference, one can find three major themes relevant to these ideological pressures. The first was an admonitory one, referring to the dangers of ideological fanaticism, assumptions about class struggles and pitfalls of Marxism; the second was a reassuring one, referring to the continuing commitment of the Church to social justice and to a preferential attention to the needs of those most afflicted by poverty; the third was an appeal for unity in the Church. In 1988, officials at

.....

(12) Norman H. Levine, *Churches and Politics in Latin America*, Beverly Hills, Calif., Sage, 1980, pp.208 and 34.

(13) Tomas Moulian, "Religion and Authoritarianism" in *Social Compass*, vol.xxvi, 1979, Louvain, Centre de Recherches Socio-religieuse, Université Catholique de Louvain, pp.2-3.

(14) M.Dodson and L.N.O'Shaughnessy, in T.Walker, *Nicaragua, the First Five Years*, New York, Praeger, 1985, p.141.

the central office of Celam (the permanent secretariat in Bogota of Latin American Episcopal Conference) said that the "problem" posed by liberation theology had passed. Pope John Paul II, however, in a visit to Peru in the same year criticized those who sow "seeds of confusion among the faithful and attack the unity of the Church". He referred to the two sets of Instructions issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1984 and 1986 with warnings about doctrines of class struggle (15).

Such calls for "unity" have, of course, often been interpreted as demands for a conservative conformity in theology and in social mission. Some authorities of the Magisterium may have thought in exactly those terms. Considering events in Latin America, however, one would have to concede that there were wider considerations in understanding "unity". They were identified in the terms already mentioned: "unity and autonomy", "religious and institutional integrity", in the face of political conflicts which no religious institution could prevent, or, in the short term, influence fundamentally. The positions defined at Medellin and Puebla, for the reasons already noted, could hardly be said to demonstrate uniformity with respect to the most difficult issues of social mission. Liberation theological and intellectual perspectives, and advocacy with regard to political action, were not reconciled with the approaches of their chief rivals. These latter included both conservatives and clergy influenced rather by the social Christianity of Jacques Maritain

.....

(15) Arthur F. McGovern, *op. cit.*, p.19

and by pragmatic and reformist attitudes towards economic development and political change (best exemplified in the Christian Democratic party in Chile).

The plea for unity was a plea to keep the debate over social mission within the discipline and processes of Church authority and not to allow the Church to be dragged into an irretrievable commitment to a political course in society generally which would damage a spiritual unity. From the standpoint of the Vatican, liberation theology contains, to use the words of Cardinal Ratzinger already quoted, a whole spectrum of positions, including those based on a "correct and ecclesial theology" (16). The problem for leaders of the Church, most of whom clearly are not prepared to accept the liberation case as a whole, is to find a mode of accommodation which involves neither systematic rejection nor legitimation of radical political commitment by the Church. This is not the first time that the Roman Catholic Church has faced such a problem internally or has had to find means of surviving as an institution, exerting political influence when necessary but controlling the extent of involvement (17).

.....

(16) See p.49.

(17) The politics of the Church itself continues to be a subject of fascination for sociologists and political scientists: "the more general genius of the Catholic Church for co-existence with and co-optation of its enemies" (Roger O'Toole, *Sociological Studies in Roman Catholicism*, Lewiston, Edwin Mellen, 1989, p.ix); "the Vatican is seeking to maintain a dialogue with the Brazilian episcopacy, to refrain from polarizing positions[...] liberation theology is legitimated and then domesticated" (T.C.Bruneau, in *Thought*, Vol.LXIII, No.250, 1988, p.305); "a vast capacity to absorb all sorts of movements[...] domesticated if possible but cut adrift readily [if] problematic" (N.H.Levine, *op.cit.* 1986, p.199).

(3) NICARAGUA

One could use Cardinal Ratzinger's image of a spectrum to describe the political positions of the Roman Catholic Church in the period 1968-1988 in Nicaragua. Shifting tactics sometimes are baffling to an observer of an institution devoted to consistency of doctrine and internal unity (18). At the beginning of this period, the policy appeared to be one of passive and realistic acceptance of, even relatively friendly relations with, the Somoza regime, led by one of the worst caudillos in the history of this and other Latin American countries. After the elevation of Bishop Obando y Bravo to the position of Archbishop and Primate in 1970, the Church began to take its distance from Somoza, to identify itself with forces of moderate opposition and even to take a critical position galling to the political leader himself. The bishops ventured to "criticize the inadequacies of the political order[....]the Church should abstain from political struggle, but never from the struggle for a more just social order" (19).

When a national insurrection, led by the Sandinistas but supported by most of the population, overthrew Somoza, the hierarchy surprised and heartened the liberation and pro-Sandinista groups within the Church by a declaration concerning social justice and the legitimacy of an armed uprising. Within a year, or so, however, the Church had moved to a critical position. The

.....

(18) The account given of the position of the Church follows that in P.J. Williams, *op. cit.*, Others, regardless of political sympathies on controversial matters, basically agree.

(19) *ibid*, p.28.

Primate and most bishops were concerned both by the entry of several politically influential priests into cabinet positions, in defiance of Church policy, and by the general development of Sandinista policy, including the importation of several hundred Cubans to assist in a literacy campaign. By 1983, when the Pope visited Nicaragua and delivered some harsh admonitions about a "popular Church" and a "parallel Magisterium", Archbishop Obando y Bravo (later Cardinal) was in a state of chronic confrontation with the Government and was accused of supporting the insurrection of the *contras* and United States intervention in the civil war.

Since considerations supporting the thesis that the liberation movement would stay within the Church have been presented in preceding chapters, it must be noted also that the situation in Nicaragua is indeed a test of such a thesis. At least at the end of the period under review, relations between the hierarchy and a "progressive sector" within the Church, consisting of most of the members of base communities, lay teachers of Scripture and a Christian Revolutionary Movement of students, were polarized in political terms and in terms of concepts of a Church. It was possible to speak of "two models", although people in the base communities said that their model still belonged within the Church (the concept of Leonardo Boff) and that it was a conservative hierarchy which had invented terms such as "parallel" or "popular" Church or a rival Magisterium. After 1988, an election put the Sandinistas into opposition (retaining formidable political and military power), the civil war ended and

Nicaragua entered into a new, but still very unsettled political period, presumably reflected within the Church (20).

The experience of the Church in Chile and Brazil, however, in the 1970's and 1980's, faced with military regimes of a strongly right-wing orientation and with new concepts of a national security state, was more reassuring to Church leaders concerned with the fundamental goal of unity. The divergence of concepts of social mission between the liberationists and the reformers described earlier was not ended by their common experience in that period. Under hostile political pressures, however, they had common interests. By the end of the 1980's, transitions back to civilian governments and electoral processes had been completed in both Brazil and Chile. The two national Churches were given credit for defence of human rights, pragmatic extension of welfare and other services to those most adversely affected by the policies of the military regimes and maintenance of an independent, or neutral, space in society in which local self-help initiatives could be taken without repression from state authorities.

In both cases, the bishops as a whole maintained their independence from pressures by Catholic groups directly supporting the military and proclaiming their adherence to tradition, the family and private property. In both cases, the strength of the institutional Church, containing liberation

.....

(20) With respect to polarization and two models, see P.J. Williams, *op. cit.* p.62. His book was published in 1989. A similar account of the situation was given by John Kirk on the occasion in 1990 mentioned on p.89 above, fn.8.

movements, in effect protected those movements. A break-away Church trying to implement the full range of liberation objectives would have been an easy mark for repression. The return to civilian governments and electoral processes did not advance the liberation cause very far, since politically centrist parties committed to the operations and philosophy of the market economy enjoyed popular support. The course of events had given the liberation theologians reasons to be prudent about their relations with the majority of members of an institution which had helped to maintain, restore (in the case of human rights, extend) the civilized social fabric, about which Segundo wrote.

(4) CHILE

The experience of the Church in Chile very much supports what has already been said about the difficulty of maintaining independence, autonomy and unity, in terms defined within the Church itself, under the stress of pressures from the political right and left (21). Four years before the Medellin Conference, in 1964, a Christian Democratic Government was elected in Chile with a very strong majority (56%), led by Eduardo Frei. The Christian Democratic Party had been created by two groups which had broken away from the Conservative Party and which proclaimed their intention of developing a programme based on the principles of social, or reformist Christianity. Most of its members and, it appears, most practicing Catholics expected, and hoped, that the

.....

(21) I have relied particularly on the analyses of Michael Fleet, *op. cit.*, and of Thomas Sanders in special issues of *Thought*, vol. 59, no. 233, 1984, New York, Fordham Univ. Press and vol. 63, no. 250, 1988.

Christian Democratic Party would win several Presidential elections and advance a cause of "revolution in liberty" (Frei's slogan in 1964) which was in accordance with the spirit of Vatican II and with Chile's own democratic traditions. The actual course of events, in spite of some substantial accomplishments by Frei, pointed to the hazards of politics, the vulnerability of the Church in this field and the difficulty of formulating, and implementing, objectives said to be "Christian". Michael Fleet listed the "seemingly endless and often harmful divisions within a party claiming inspiration in the social teaching of the Catholic Church".

How is it[...]that the values and ideals of the progressive Catholic tradition can be so variously understood, given such different weights mediated through such diverse sociological perspectives, and applied in practice with such dissimilar strategies and purposes (22).

A leftist wing of the Christian Democrats, with younger Party members, broke away and moved into alliance with the Socialist and Communist Parties. Conservatives who had supported Frei in 1964 abandoned him in 1970. In the Christian Democratic Party, serious divisions occurred between those who supported the pragmatic policies of Frei and those who called for a more dramatic advance towards an ideal social policy. In the election of 1970, a Socialist-Communist alliance under Salvador Allende won with 36% of the vote. During the period of his Government (until the military coup of 1973), the Church was summoned by a group of four hundred priests, Chileans and other Latin Americans, meeting in Santiago, to extend support to the Union Popular of Allende.

.....

(22) op. cit., p. xiii.

After long deliberation, the bishops refused, reiterating the position that "the mission of the Church is to proclaim and live out the Gospel. The Church itself is not tied to any political system, nor does it have the competence to pronounce on specific solutions of a political or economic nature" (23).

The next challenge came from the Pinochet military regime. The Church had organized an Ecumenical Committee of Cooperation for Peace in Chile to attempt to deal with some of the consequences of the coup but was forced by Pinochet to close it down. Cardinal Silva then set up the Vicariate of Solidarity under his direct control and this survived to carry out a difficult task of the nature already described. It is a reasonable conjecture that if the Church had not taken a firm stand against the Christians for Socialism in the Allende period, it could not have maintained the degree of independence accorded it by the military Government. What was the position of the liberation theologians about Church policy? They invariably praised Allende, denounced Pinochet and supported the work of the Vicariate but were silent or ambiguous about the Church strategy preceding the coup. Gustavo Gutierrez was at the conference of the Christians for Socialism; all that he had written seemed to require the Church to take the partisan option proposed; in fact, at a later date, he opposed the organization of a Christians for Socialism in Peru on the grounds that this might bring the Church into too close an alignment with political organizations.

.....

(23) Arthur F. McGovern, *Marxism: an American Christian Perspective*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1980, p.224.

(5) BRAZIL

The liberation movement appears to have its strongest base in the Church in Brazil, both in promoting social activism and criticism of Governments and in strengthening an impressive network of base communities within the Church. In view, however, of the general course of political events in a return to democracy, pressures from Rome to impose limits on political involvement by the Church generally and preoccupations with traditional priorities in defending positions on education and morality, the Church may not be greatly influenced by the liberation movement for a while (24). In the period 1968 to 1988, the major developments relevant to the liberation movement involved, first, an independent and critical role by the Church in relation to social conditions and the policies of a succession of Governments following the military coup of 1964 and, secondly, relations between the Brazilian bishops and the Vatican on issues of liberation activism.

From being politically conservative, the Brazilian Church, under the impact of Vatican II and developments in Latin America, including, of course, the Medellin Conference, moved to a social policy of active insistence on respect for human rights and promotion of the interests of the poorest classes, the

.....

- (24) The assessment by Thomas C. Bruneau, based on research in Brazil between 1985 and 1987, and on earlier work, and published in 1988, has been the most useful source for this assessment. He concluded that about a third of the Brazilian clergy, at various levels of authority, had been strongly influenced by liberation theology. "Cooperation or Conflict? The Church in the Brazilian Transition" in *Thought*, vol. 63, no. 250, 1988, New York, Fordham Univ. Press.

aboriginal population and rural and urban organizations of workers. In 1977, the National Conference of Bishops issued a declaration entitled "Christian Requirements of a Political Order". Mgr. Helder Camara, Cardinals Paulo Evaristo Arns and Ivo Lorscheider and a number of bishops took public positions which identified them with the main thrust of liberation thinking, if not with its full agenda. The Church has been credited with contributing to pressures for a transition to civilian and democratic government accomplished by 1989.

In the 1980's, however, concern in Rome about the liberation movement, and the firm intention to maintain the unity of the Church, in the full sense described earlier, led to the Pope's paying particular attention to consultations with the Brazilian bishops. These took place after the 1984 Instruction of the Congregation and the silencing of Leonardo Boff. Reference has already been made to objectives of "legitimation and domestication" of liberation theology (25). Thomas C. Bruneau further describes the purpose and direction of those consultations: "unity and dialogue are promoted while the Vatican defines a certain view of the Church's mission in the world. This mission has far less political prominence and action than the present role of the Brazilian Church" (26).

These brief account of developments in three countries between 1968 and 1988 have been intended to provide some basis

.....

(25) p. 99, fn.17.

(26) *op. cit.*, p.305-306; appointments of bishops since then and further measures against Leonardo Boff confirm this trend.

for judging the extent to which the liberation movement has influenced the social mission of the Church and the extent to which its concepts of that mission and its specific ideological objectives can be contained within the Church. That it provided effective support for what the Church in Chile and Brazil did, in carrying out a politically sensitive social mission, seems quite clear. That it was the dominant force in steering the Church in that direction, as opposed to a general consensus among bishops at Medellin and Puebla about a reformist social mission in keeping with Vatican II, is not evident so far.

In Nicaragua, liberation theology (and, of course, its more radical cousin, the theology of revolution) certainly influenced the Christians who gave their political allegiance to the Sandinistas before and after 1979. The gain for the liberation cause in this case seems to have been offset by polarization within the Church, which the liberationists wanted to convert as a whole. The degree of politicization achieved in the "popular" Church caused many leaders there to seek careers in the Government or the Sandinista party.

In all three countries (and in others) liberation leaders pledged loyalty in general to the Church, for whose ultimate conversion they had not given up hope. By 1988, the policy of the Vatican, in the internal conflicts caused by liberation demands, seemed to be one of containment, based on a judgment that the liberation movement was a diminishing force. European and Latin American political trends supported this judgment.

(6) LIBERATION EXPERIENCE AND STRATEGIES

A span of twenty years is not very long, however, for the achievement of the liberation envisaged. We can scarcely write off the liberation theologians on the grounds that the socio-political impact has been less than hoped for. Both Gutierrez and Segundo, as we have seen in considering means and ends, seemed to have longer-term strategies in mind. In those twenty years, however, have they developed a clearer idea of political strategies and realities, as opposed to engaging in additional theological justification of their positions, at which they are expert and prolific? They began not only with "praxis" and "commitment" in an immediate moral and pastoral sense, the urgent conviction that "something must be done", but with political assumptions and judgments. They seem to have taken on faith the current assessments of others, particularly economists and adherents of various leftist ideologies. It is important to take into account, in reading the theology, what David Lehmann called "the ideological moment of the early 1970's".

It was a political moment, Lehmann points out, when, for many Latin Americans there seemed to be no middle way between revolution and counter-revolution. Reformism seemed either too weak or ethically discredited as a facade for oppression.

If the existing system failed to ensure development or social justice, then it needed to be replaced in toto by its opposite[....]This accent on the systemic character of the diagnosis of the region's ills and their remedy is central to understanding the ideological moment[...](27).

.....

(27) *op. cit.*, pp. 48.

Lehmann takes this analysis a step further, perhaps a step too far, but makes a point which it is helpful to take into account with respect to the particular theologians we are studying.

Common to all the radical projects of the time was the vision of a final stasis, in which the contradictions of society and economy would be overcome and a state of harmony achieved--again reflecting the influence of Catholic thought (28).

Those who stood in the way of that state of harmony would obviously merit the condemnation hurled at them, as we have noted, by Enrique Dussel. This aspect of liberation thought led one of its principal critics in Latin America, Cardinal Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, to describe it as "theological and political Manicheanism" (29).

The fact that Latin American countries, in spite of turbulent events in a number of places, did not suffer (or enjoy) radical and lasting conversion (or suppression) in terms of the ideological extremes foreseen, does not necessarily discredit the ethical principles which the liberation theologians applied in their rejection of capitalism. It does underline the importance of examining critically the various elements in the "ideological moment" in which Boff, and his associates, had a vision of an "ecclesio genesis" leading to fundamental social regeneration.

Gutierrez apparently still believes in an inherent theology of the poor which will lead the masses towards a clearly

.....

(28) *ibid*, p.50.

(29) quoted in Paul E. Sigmund, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

articulated and politically implemented communitarian ethic (the reason for saying "apparently" will become clearer below). Parties and organizations occupying the sector of the democratic left in the political spectrum have substantial numbers of supporters in the democratic systems now prevailing, more or less, in Latin America. It cannot be said, however, that the masses have moved perceptibly closer to any more dramatic ideological system or solution. The intuitive hope of Gutierrez that some such awakening and articulation would take place is not new in Latin America. In his own country, Peru, one of the major forces in political life in this century has been that defined and initiated by a charismatic leader who managed to integrate, in his own mind and to some extent in a movement, a mystical and local Marxism with millennialist expectations, the Protestant social gospel and an enthusiasm for theosophy (30).

In the first phase of the liberation denunciation of capitalism, considerable use was made of analyses developed by economists and politicians about the economic dependency of the nations of the periphery in the developing world on "the centre", that is the most industrially advanced countries. In liberation perceptions, this dependency amounted to a totally unjust

.....

- (30) Frederick B. Pike, "Religion and Utopia in Peru; From Aprismo to Liberation Theology" in *Thought*, Vol. 63, no. 250, 1988, New York, Fordham Univ. Press. Pike refers to Victor Haya de la Torre and the *Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana*, or Apra, hence Aprismo. Pike argues that the history of Peru, and other parts of Latin America, demonstrates the "degree to which masses have remained relatively indifferent to the saviours who promised to lead them into the millenium". (p. 267). Pike is not referring to some political populists who attracted mass support...for a while.

stranglehold imposing permanent under-development at the periphery if there should be no radical, indeed revolutionary, change in economic and political structures. In less judgmental language, the dependency theory (or theories) arose from" a blend of Marxist influenced sociology and economics in the Latin American universities and the structuralist economics of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America" (31). "The confluence of marxism and nationalism known as dependency theory became extraordinarily popular among the Latin American intelligentsia during a brief period which ran from about 1965 to 1975" (32). After that, analyses by economists with more data, and changed perceptions of national interests, altered earlier views about dependency, or inter-dependency, in international economic relations. In 1988, Gustavo Gutierrez admitted that assumptions about, or perceptions of political and economic reality, drawn from the social sciences at the time, including the dependency theory, might have to be modified or dropped (33).

The liberation theologians have been attacked by opponents within the Church for politicization of the faith; they have been criticized from a quite different direction, in the Church and

(31) Paul E. Sigmund, *op. cit.*, p.182.

(32) David Lehmann, *op. cit.*, p.20.

(33) Arthur F. McGovern, *op. cit.*, p.136. There is, of course, a voluminous literature in the field of economics on this subject. With respect to its importance in the political gospel of the liberation theologians, see Arthur F. McGovern in Marc H. Ellis and Otto Maduro eds., *The Future of Liberation Theology*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1989, pp.272-286 and also William R. Garrett in *The Politics of Latin American Liberation Theology*, Washington; Washington Institute Press; pp.174-198.

elsewhere, for their failure to provide much more explicit indications of the political philosophy which guides their call for radical change. The German theologian, Jürgen Moltmann, whose reference to "seminary Marxism" was noted in a preceding chapter, has also pointed out that the Latin Americans did not do much social analysis. Arthur F. McGovern, on the whole a defender of the liberation theologians, makes the same point about class structures and political institutions (34). Enrique Dussel, in expounding the political ethics of liberation, said that he would not deal with questions about the nature of the state in an era of total transformation; the subject would be tackled by another theologian in the "Theology and Liberation" series. An enquiry a short time ago to the principal English language publishers of liberation theology, Orbis Books, received the reply that they were not aware of any such plan yet.

Although giving their general blessing to leaders who initiated radical change in Cuba, Nicaragua and Chile, the liberation theologians rarely give any indication of the political options they recommend in specific situations. They support democracy and attack military governments and the capitalist system. To varying degrees, individual theologians have made use of Marxist analysis with regard to the economic basis for conflict in society. Most have disavowed any dependence on it for a political agenda (or, needless to say, for a materialist philosophical system).

.....

(34) Arthur F. McGovern, *Liberation Theology and its Critics*, op. cit., pp. 162-163 (also p.185).

By the end of 1988, several important liberation theologians had admitted the need for revision, or at least clarification, on the political front. Hugo Assmann (perhaps better considered a theologian of revolution) said that he preferred democratic institutions and was against "abstract revolutionism" and "chaotic social explosions" (35). José Miranda and Otto Maduro turned emphatically against Marx, so far as any implications of revolution and authoritarian government were implied. Juan Luis Segundo was enigmatic; perhaps some form of socialism but no particular ideology or philosophy. Gustavo Gutierrez stated that he was a "radical anti-capitalist rather than a Marxist" and then made the surprising statement, in an interview with Arthur McGovern in February, 1988, that "socialism is not an essential of liberation theology; one can support liberation theology, or do liberation theology, without espousing socialism". Leonardo Boff conceded that there might have to be a pragmatic compromise with regard to dependency and economic growth (a "Canadian form"!) but held fast to his principles: "it is as impossible to create a moral market system as it is to build a Christian brothel" (36).

At the level of political and economic systems in general, and in terms of converting the Church to their concept of a consistently radical prophetic role, the liberation theologians did not, in twenty years of external and internal crisis, meet

.....

(35) Paul E. Sigmund, *Op. cit.*, p.174 and generally pp. 176-198.

(36) Arthur F. McGovern, *Liberation Theology and its Critics*, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

(37) *ibid*, p.139 (the author reviews revised political attitudes in the liberation movement from p.137 to 148).

with much success. At another level, however, and in relation to change in society and in the Church on a broad front, the influence of the liberation movement merits close attention. Whether it is seen as a provocative vanguard, a transformative agent, or rather as one element in, or symptom of, processes of change in the Church in the second half of this century, the movement is important. Its role in provoking theological reflection and new definitions of the obligations of the Church in social mission should be evident from the account given of liberation theology in preceding chapters. Its demands for a heroic political role for the Church have tested the limits beyond which a religious institution would be unwise, or not well qualified, to act on the frontier between religion and politics. There remain, however, other areas of social change in which concepts with a religious base and means of expression can influence, or will be influenced by, the ideas and demands for reform emerging in society generally. We go on, therefore, to consider transformation as exemplified by the development of the base communities within the Church and by the beginnings of a feminist liberation theology.

CHAPTER FIVE

LIBERATING CHANGE:

BASE COMMUNITIES; FEMINIST LIBERATION THEOLOGY

At the beginning of the previous chapter about political tension and conflict, we noted the view that Latin American liberation theology had left an "abiding mark on social thought" because it had offered the "only systematic written exposition" in Latin American thought of a philosophy of change from below (1). The attack by the liberation theologians on capitalism was certainly not original (except in some of its theological grounding, which does not interest David Lehmann). Their original pre-suppositions about certain economic and political conditions in their region were taken on faith and have had to be modified. They have written almost nothing about the nature of the state and political processes in their own societies except in terms of denunciation of capitalist oppressors. Lehmann's tribute to the liberation theologians is explained, therefore, only by their contribution to the development of religious and political concepts guiding members of base communities of the Church. He offers analyses "of contemporary social movements, since it is among them that we find the most important influence of Liberation Theology" (2). To this example of liberating change we must add the initiation of a significant movement to achieve equality between women and men in the Church and in society.

.....

(1) p.86; David Lehmann, *op. cit.*,

(2) *ibid*, p. xvi.

(1) BASE COMMUNITIES

The base communities have already been described in general terms in Chapter Two, commenting on the ecclesiology of Leonardo Boff. For him, and for liberation theologians generally, the base community "is the place where the theological essence of the Church is realized and, at the same time, the practice of liberation of the poor by the poor themselves" (3). The communities "establish the miniature model of a new society" (4). Latin American bishops, at the Puebla Conference in 1979, judged the development of the base communities to be an "important ecclesial event", indeed, in many respects, "the hope of the Church". They combined that assertion with some firm admonitions about the need to have the communities integrated within Church structures and disciplines and about the "ideological radicals" who were losing any authentic feel for the Church" (5). In these admonitions, the Latin American bishops anticipated similar warnings from Rome in 1984.

From the standpoint of social scientists not committed to any theological or ecclesial judgment, the following description, referring to the communities in Brazil, seems to be representative with regard to the communities generally in most

.....

(3) quoted in Daniel H. Levine ed., *Churches and Politics in Latin America*, Beverly Hills, Cal., Sage, 1980, p. 234.

(4) quoted in *Thought*, vol. 63, no. 249, 1988, New York, Fordham University Press, p. 165.

(5) Puebla Final Document "Evangelization, Liberation and Human Promotion" in Alfred T. Hennelly ed., *Liberation Theology; a Documentary History*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis Books, 1990, p. 249.

parts of Latin America.

Predominantly lay, lower-class and often politically oriented, the base ecclesial communities are frequently seen as the most visible expression of the Brazilian Church's newfound commitment to the masses (6).

A reader might conclude, in following what the liberation theologians say about the base communities, that these communities were invented by their movement as the tangible, communal expression of the liberation concept. While there is no doubt about the impact of that thinking on the most politically active members of the communities, the origins and continuing nature of these groups do not lend themselves to any one simple explanation. With regard to Brazil alone (which is thought to have half or more of such communities in Latin America) knowledgeable scholars differ on the weight to be assigned to various factors: local spontaneity among the poor who rarely saw a priest, the initiative of committed members of the liberation movement or the pastoral plan of the Church. There seems to be, however, agreement on some general points.

.....

- (6) W.E.Hewitt, *Base Christian Communities and Social Change in Brazil*, Lincoln, Nebraska, Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1991, p.ix. The analyses of the communities by the Canadian sociologist W.E.Hewitt, based on extensive research in Brazil in the 1980's, have been particularly helpful in bringing the communities into focus from a "purely social-scientific point of view". Other accounts and analyses, from this and other perspectives, on which the comments in this paper are based, are the following: Marcello de Carvalho Azevedo, *Basic Ecclesial Communities in Brazil: the Challenge of a New Way*, Washington, D.C., Georgetown University Press, 1987...Alvaro Barreiro, *Basic Ecclesial Communities; the Evangelization of the Poor*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1982....Thomas C. Bruneau, "Basic Christian Communities in Latin America, their Nature and Significance" in Daniel H. Levine, *op. cit.*; Edward Cleary, *Crisis and Change; the Church in Latin America Today*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1985 (chapters 4,5) and David Lehmann, *op. cit.*

The Brazilian bishops drafted a plan (influenced by the work of an American priest in Panama) for the period 1965-1970. It was intended to reinforce the presence of the Church in areas where there was a great shortage of priests. A unique conjuncture of events, Vatican II, the emergence of the liberation movement and the military coup of 1964 stimulated new ideas about social mission and about the value of solidarity in small groups. In Nicaragua, in the pre-revolutionary situation of the 1970's, the growing power of the Sandinistas and the political "conversion" to their cause of influential members of the clergy, such as Ernesto Cardenal, provided a powerful stimulus for the growth of politicized base communities, and, as we have seen, polarization within the Church.

In Chile, such communities originated under somewhat similar conditions and survived, protected in various ways by the Church during the years of the Pinochet regime. In Colombia, under quite different political conditions and with a powerful and conservative hierarchy, groups of a good deal more traditional orientation within parishes, might have been called "base communities" but, for the most part, scarcely fitted the Brazilian model and certainly not the Nicaraguan one (7). In all cases, members of the base communities claimed to remain fully within the Roman Catholic Church.

.....

(7) W.E.Hewitt has described this consensus in a chapter about lay leadership in *Forging Identities*, Toronto, Canadian Scholars' Press, 1991. What he says seems compatible with the earlier analysis of other scholars: Azevedo, Bruneau, Cleary.

How many base communities are there in Latin America, with how many members? The question seems to be as difficult to answer as the earlier one about the quantitative dimensions of the liberation movement. Those apparently best qualified to find and report reliable information are almost unanimous in referring to the difficulties in doing so. They point to problems of definition, the informal and transitory nature of groups, the lack of official statistics and the possible political or ecclesial motivations of those offering estimates. Making a rather arbitrary judgment about the origins of figures and about the diligence and credibility of authors, and relying on the recurrence of certain figures in the literature about the communities, I choose the following figures.

By the end of the period we are studying, 1988, there were probably from 80,000 to 100,000 such communities in Brazil with a membership of 20 to 50 persons in each; within these ranges, membership could vary from 1.6 to 5 million. Depending on the figures used to measure active Church membership, community members could constitute 6% to 15% of practicing Catholics. For all other countries in Latin America, as a group, the totals and ranges would be roughly equivalent to the ones cited for Brazil. We are witnessing, therefore, an ecclesial and social phenomenon of substance and significance but not the Church of the Poor (8). "Not yet" Leonardo Boff would say.

.....

(9) I have relied mostly on the estimates of the writers cited in fn. #6 on p.117. Some estimates go as high as 150,000 communities in Brazil (Leonardo Boff).

The preceding chapters surveying the theological roots of conflict suggest that liberation theology, in making a strong case for an obligation to shape society in accordance with Christian ethical principles and a Scriptural mandate, has not committed its adherents to doctrinal beliefs fundamentally incompatible with orthodox teaching. The particular political paths advocated, at least in the initial phase of the movement, were unacceptable to the authorities of the institutional Church. We are now considering a different arena, or context, for tension over liberationist aspirations, that of the base communities.

The existence, nature, and, generally, the activities of the communities do not create a major problem, in principle. Bishops in particular places may have reasons to feel uneasy about the full implications of new elements in Church structures and a changing balance of power. The liberation leaders do not really have any assurance that their Church of the Poor, looking to radical change, is being formed in the base communities. The political volatility inherent in many regional situations, however, the role of the laity, the sustained proselytism by the liberationists, all raise the question of whether, at the level of the *basismo* taken seriously by social scientists, the liberation movement will formally challenge the Church (9).

.....

- (9) Edward Cleary (*op.cit.*) suggests that the liberation trend is "empowering lay persons to a degree and an extent unknown in most other regions of the world"(p.126). At a "national encounter" of representatives of base communities in Brazil in 1989, Clodovis Boff suggested that they should form a "representative association...use the tool called party". See W.E.Hewitt, *Base Christian Communities and Social Change in Brazil*, *op. cit.*, p.109.

The evidence and analysis available for this dissertation, from the research of social scientists, indicate that such a challenge, on a scale leading to some dramatic result of success, failure or major institutional disruption, is unlikely. Following are five sets of considerations supporting that assessment.

(1) A Church of the Poor, with the particular communal basis in question, and with aspirations to be a religious/political force of consequence, would require an ideological coherence and discipline consistent with the essential liberation arguments. There is little indication that the people in the base communities, in spite of political activism on a local level, and varied allegiances on the national political level, are likely candidates for such a venture (10).

(2) In liberation theory, and hopes, the base communities will generate their own distinctive, and democratic leadership from within their own ranks, with help from "organic

.....

- (10) "The political influence of base communities would be difficult to judge. To picture them as a powerful new socio-political force would be to misjudge and misinterpret their significance[....]Many communities[...]remain at a low level of political awareness" (Arthur F. McGovern, *Liberation Theology and its Critics*. Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1990, p.212). "[...]the popular church has not conceptualized a model of the way to promote social change" (Scott Mainwaring, quoted in McGovern, *idem*). There is "no exclusive movement of the believing and faithful poor and oppressed of the intensity or size envisioned by liberationists" (W.E. Hewitt in Roger O'Toole ed., *Sociological Studies in Roman Catholicism*, Lewiston, Edwin Mellen Press, 1989, p.157). The communities constitute a "much more organizationally and ideologically diverse society than previously thought" (W.E. Hewitt in *Thought*, vol.63, no.249, 1988, New York, Fordham Univ. Press, p.165). At the grass-roots level of *basismo*, groups "sprout up, decay and disappear" (David Lehmann, *op. cit.* p.135).

intellectuals" from outside (theologians, pastors, agents, lay and clerical) but little control and direct guidance from traditional and hierarchical authorities. While there is little doubt about the importance of the laity in the normal operations of the communities, and while there is, as yet, only limited study of a widespread phenomenon within the Church, sociological sampling in one place of central importance casts doubt on some liberation expectations (11).

(3) Even if the base communities, as the principal ecclesial and social sphere for liberation praxis, do not constitute a coherent political force and are dependent on traditional institutional structures, they do represent a phenomenon which social scientists find important and positive in relation to processes of democratization and institutional support of human rights and stable political processes. These processes are not,

.....

- (11) In his surveys of 22 base communities in the Sao Paulo urban area in 1984 and in 1988, combined with interviews with Church authorities and research on positions taken by the Church in Brazil on social issues, W.E.Hewitt points to the "problem of generating and sustaining viable and autonomous structures of leadership" in the communities. There is a need for "autonomously functioning yet loyal cohort of lay-based leaders". There is no doubt that the communities are "tied to the agenda of the hierarchy", "firmly part of the ecclesiastical structure". These comments refer to Brazil. Hewitt concluded about the communities in general in Latin America that their success in promoting "democratic participation" at the base level in society "is largely dependent upon an enduring and strong commitment to the groups on the part of the institutional Church". Hewitt's reports are in: (1) *Forging Identities* (op.cit.) p.197. (2) *Base Christian Communities and Social Change in Brazil*, (op.cit.) p.107 (3) R.L.Rubinstein and J.K.Roth eds., *The Politics of Latin American Liberation Theology*, Washington, D.C.; Washington Institute Press; 1988; p.148. (4) *Thought*, vol.63, no.249, 1988; New York; Fordham Univ. Press, p.174.

however, revolutionary and the liberation contribution must be considered in a wider societal context (12).

(4) Since the point has been made that the liberation movement is still very much part of the institutional Church and dependent on it, there is a very important corollary to be stated as well. The institution, at different levels of authority and in terms of the complex processes of continuity and change with respect to concepts of social mission, does not remain static. The bishop may ensure that his agents, clerical or lay, provide guidance and cautious control for the base communities, but if these agents (even, perhaps their bishop) have absorbed a good deal of the liberation thought, then continuity with respect to ecclesial processes does not necessarily impede change with respect to social mission. This consideration supports the argument that the liberation movement will be contained within

.....

- (12) David Lehmann, in his enthusiasm for the development of *basismo* on a much wider front, welcomes the contribution of the Church and the base communities, but points out that the contribution is "cellular and incremental, rather than bombastic subversion". He adds : "the irony is that an almost millenarian zeal fired with religious invocations was needed to 'get the people organized' in the manner of a modern civitas. (op.cit. pp. 188,147). Scott Mainwaring concludes that the Church and the communities can strengthen popular movements and contribute "a basically democratic, participatory space in a generally elitist society" (in Daniel H.Levine ed., *Religion and Political Conflict in Latin America*, Chapel Hill,N.C.,Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1986,p.127. W.E.Hewitt agrees with other social scientists that transformation is "far more subtle, indirect and multifaceted than liberationism has envisioned". There are interactions of religion and politics which "support and best fit the mold of Weberian sociology" (in *The Politics of Latin American Liberation Theology*, op. cit., p.136;and in *Base Christian Communities and Social Change in Brazil*, op. cit., p. 5).

the Church because, since Medellin, it has been a force which has exerted effective influence, (to varying degrees, of course, in different Latin American countries) within that Church (13).

(5) Continuity within the Church, balancing the changes noted, should not be thought of only in terms of structures, authority and theological orthodoxy. Realistic accomodation with those forces which have achieved controlling power in civil society, in order to ensure survival of the institution and the faith, has been, and is, an obvious requirement affecting social mission. The eruption of liberation theology and of base communities since the 1960's can hardly be considered as a carefully contrived plan in ecclesial polity to make adjustments required by that principle of realistic accomodation to changing social realities. To the extent that these new developments can be accommodated within the Church, they can help the whole

.....

- (13) The Canadian social scientist, Thomas Bruneau, made this assessment in 1980: "Ironically, it seems that as political structures have grown more closed and authoritarian throughout the region the churches (once models of hierarchical rigidity themselves) have moved in the opposite direction: praising the values of participation and democracy while in practice defending and preserving an open space for hope and change" (in Daniel H. Levine, *Churches and Politics in Latin America*, op.cit. p. 197). The Brazilian, Marcello Azevedo, writing about the base communities seven years later, spoke of a "paradigm shift": "Brazilian basic ecclesial communities are a relevant and important ecclesiological factor from the theological, pastoral and institutional standpoints. They represent and embody a significant transition or paradigm shift: what is known in English as a 'breakthrough' (op.cit. p.245). Azevedo then defined the shift with six examples related to authority, social mission and theological perspectives affecting the nature of the Church itself. Nothing was said about a paradigmatic shift towards a full acceptance of the political agenda of the liberation movement.

institution to navigate prudently under the present conditions of pluralist and liberal democracy, without partisan commitments to any one of the various options in that context.

Basismo enables Christian communities both to influence, and to be influenced by, other groups and organizations directly, for a variety of essentially local social purposes. For conservative members of the hierarchy, worried about a repetition of the Nicaraguan pre-revolutionary situation where local became national and ideological, this is not a welcome development. For others, who were prepared to compromise between conservative and liberation wings at Puebla, the perception is different. A Church moving towards a new image in social mission, and new types of involvement in society through varied ecclesial structures and intermediary organizations, has to face dangers to unity. It can be rewarded, however, not only with survival but with renewal of strength (14).

To these sets of factors determining the role of the Church in social transformation must be added a different set, that emerging from the development of a feminist liberation movement.

.....

- (14) Thomas Bruneau notes that "the institutional Church has lacked[...]effective intermediary groups for relating its changing ideological orientations to a changing environment" (in Daniel H. Levine, *op.cit.* p.230-231). Marcello Azevedo, in pointing to the role of the base communities in bringing about a "paradigmatic shift", argues that these communities will need to form coalitions and to collaborate and compromise with groups in different sectors of society to help bring about social change (*op.cit.* pp.82-88, 139-142). These processes carry political risks for the Church in social mission, but not of the same order as those involved in the extreme demand of the liberation movement at the beginning that the Church should choose liberation/socialism over repression/capitalism.

(2) FEMINIST LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Whatever may have been said in the early years of the liberation movement about the oppressed masses, the main thrust in the prophetic summons to a dramatic new social mission for the Church was in a vertical direction. The liberation theologians who managed to get some of their points registered in the conclusions of the Medellin Conference called on those at the top level of the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America to choose the side of the oppressed in confrontations between the forces seeking radical transformation and those defending the status quo or engaging in counter-revolution. These theologians claimed that they were not initiating, but articulating and representing, the cry of the masses for liberation. The transformation they demanded was defined first in terms of Latin American realities but was global in scope, and highly ideological in content, with respect to a fundamental change in structures of economic and political power.

By the end of second decade after Medellin, even if the vertical thrust and global ideological summons had not been abandoned, the emphasis in liberation thinking, practice and expectations might be described as a horizontal and local one. Although the theologians of liberation might contest this observation, conversion of the masses over a longer term in a changed political and ecclesial climate became the basic strategy. If the people in the base communities, allied with other forces seeking social justice, but insisting on their own Scriptural faith, did not provide a leaven of conviction and a

beacon of light, where would the impulse be generated to convert the whole Church and society?

In this secondary phase of the liberation movement, the development of feminist liberation theology has added emphasis to the trend defined above and has initiated a re-examination of objectives, strategies and priorities within that movement. In the earlier stage, the theology of the liberation movement was written almost entirely by men, called for the liberation of the poor, made almost no mention of gender inequality, attempted to construct a rational case for radical transformation at a global and political level and, when it turned to the spiritual and psychological dimensions of change, talked of a "New Man".

Although there had been reflective writing and advocacy on liberation themes by women within the Church in Latin America in the 1970's (essentially in support of the main contentions of the movement initiated in the late 1960's), specifically feminist approaches to liberation, manifested within groups with a sense of common purpose, became apparent in conferences in Buenos Aires in October, 1985 and in Oaxtepec, Mexico, in December, 1986. The publication of *Bible of the Oppressed* by Elsa Tamez (original text in Spanish in 1979, English in 1982) and of *Mary, Mother of God, Mother of the Poor* by Ivone Gebara and Maria Clara Bingemer, in 1989 (original 1988) identified leading figures in the articulation of feminist theology and praxis (15).

.....

- (16) Both of these books were published by Orbis Books, Maryknoll N.Y.; Rosemary Radford Ruether said of the latter that it was "a landmark work in the freeing of Mariology from patriarchal use..integral part of a feminist liberation theology".

The existence of some works of feminist liberation theology does not tell us much about the actual, or potential, audience and impact of that theology in ecclesial or in socio-political terms. The difficulties in assessing the influence of liberation theology in general, and the extent to which the base communities are fully committed to the movement which that theology engenders, become greater when we try to identify the specific contribution and identity of women as a group. Catholic women advocating liberation in one sense or another have varied associations. They join hands with members of secular groups at the level of local, or neighbourhood action. They share concepts of liberation with Protestant women theologians and activists. The impulse towards liberating change, according to Yvone Gebara, is felt throughout Catholic religious orders of women, not concentrated in any one of them (16). In addition, in a movement just getting under way, the liberative direction is clear but the defining characteristics still tentative (17).

.....

(16) The "feminine movement" in Brazil is defined in terms of mothers' clubs, housewives' associations and groups linked to the Catholic Church in Jane S. Jaquette ed., *The Women's Movement in Latin America*, Boston, Unwin Hyman, 1989, p.21. Of 12 women writing on these themes in two collections consulted, 8 were Roman Catholic (3 in religious orders, 5 academic theologians) and 4 were ordained ministers of the Methodist Church. The comment of Gebara appears in a seminar paper "Eglise Locale; Pratiques et Théologies" distributed by SEDOS in Rome, 1990.

(17) Arthur F. McGovern (*op,cit.*) quotes a Peruvian sociologist, writing about women in popular movements, who says that "overcoming silence", rather than a direct attack on *machismo*, is the first inclination (p.92). Mary Judith Ress, commenting in 1984 on a movement "just beginning" referred to "a feminist perspective...all but absent from an otherwise vibrant theological climate" (in Alfred T.Hennelly ed., *op, cit.* p.385, "Feminist Theologians Challenge Churches").

At the same time, women carry out tasks and exert influence, in the Church and in Latin American society, which might predispose them to listen to, and to act upon, the essential message of the feminist movement, that gender equality is an indispensable part of liberation from oppression. To what extent they will do so, and in what manner, it is impossible to say. Sociologists point to the role, and the power, of women in the base communities in the Church and in the local groups committed to a political praxis of *basismo*. They hesitate to conclude that any radical movement in the direction of feminism (as understood outside of Latin America) is necessarily under way.

In the Church, with a shortage of priests, the functions carried out by women, religious and lay, are extensive and, under the impact of liberation theology and the development of the base communities, apparently growing. In a revolutionary situation in Nicaragua, leading to polarization within the Church, the participation of women in armed combat and in a radical political transition cannot be overlooked, even if Sandinista and ideological zeal, rather than any assertion of gender equality in a Christian context, provided the principal motive (18).

.....

(19) In his study of 22 base communities in São Paulo, W.E.Hewitt found that 14 were "predominantly female" (over 60%) and only 2 "predominantly male" (in R.L.Rubinstein and J.K.Roth eds. *op.cit.* p.141). He draws no conclusions about feminist militancy or a traditional pattern. David Lehmann points to the "predominantly feminine character of popular movements in cities" (*op.cit.* 172) At the time of the Sandinista victory in 1979, 40% of their army were women (Thomas Walker, ed., *Nicaragua: the First Five Years*, New York, Praeger, 1985, pp.145-162 on "Women"). Edward Cleary lists Church functions carried out by women in Brazil and elsewhere: "preaching, baptizing, giving communion". "In a sense, then, some women in Latin America have made greater inroads than have most women in U.S. churches; power[...] grows from practice" (*op.cit.* 143)

That there is also a rebellious spirit among women in the Church with respect to structures of power of that institution is evident. It cannot be measured in quantitative terms but the determination of male leaders of the liberation movement to bring about change is equalled by that of women, even if the latter are defining priorities and directions in their own terms. Ivone Gehara makes one essential point about liberation and justice.

Des femmes redécouvrent l'importance de leur rôle dans la transmission de la foi, et cherchent leur place à l'égalité, dans l'Eglise[....]Est-ce que nos anciennes structures, modernisées souvent du point de vue "technique", pourront accueillir le "vin nouveau" qui est en train de se fermenter ou faut-il vraiment chercher de nouvelles outres pour que le "vin nouveau" ne risque pas de se perdre (19) ?

Sister Katherine A. Gilfeather, an American Maryknoll Missioner spent several years participating in a project of the Church in Chile in which small groups of sisters moved into houses in communities of the poor. She conducted surveys among them about attitudes towards the Church and confirmed the judgment of others. "Religious women (sisters), above all in Latin American countries, carry immense responsibilities in pastoral work without enjoying even the most minimal participation in the ecclesiastical power structure" (20). A member of a Mexican group of liberationist women said that "this group started in response to our disappointment with the machismo and verticalism of the institutional church manifested at the CELAM meeting in Puebla, 1979" (21).

.....

(19) "Eglise locale; pratiques et théologies" *op.cit.* p.9,10.

(20) in Daniel H.Levine ed., *op.cit.* p. 202.

(21) in *Thought*, *op.cit.* p.184.

Apart from the insistence that liberation be defined in terms of gender equality as well as in terms of justice for the poor, how can feminist liberation theology be differentiated from that written by men in the initial phase of the movement? The political and ideological orientations are almost identical. There does not appear to be any real incompatibility, or tension, between what are often referred to as two currents in one liberative stream. Leonardo Boff has given full support to the feminist cause in his *The Maternal Face of God* (22). Feminist theologians pay tribute to what Gustavo Gutierrez and other men have done in articulating Scripturally based concepts of liberation. Participants in the 1985 Buenos Aires Conference on theology "from the perspective of women" sought to define significant characteristics, "our own method", in terms of a "unifying and inclusive way of perceiving life" but also spoke of walking in "common paths with men" (23). Boff, in speaking generally about the "male-female relationship" pointed to a distinction valid for the two currents of theology in question;

{...}a patriarchal culture based on the predominance of male rationality is giving way to a more personal model centered on the individual and on personal equilibrium (24).

Yvone Gebara agreed that in feminist liberation theology there is a "manner that does not demand that reason alone be regarded as the single and universal mediation of theological

.....

(22) San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1987.

(24) Virginia Fabella and M.Amba Oduyoye eds. *With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1988, p.182.

(25) *ibid*, p.1.

discourse". At the same time, she and Maria Clara Bingemer consider it useless to attempt to define an eternal feminine identity. If women and men share equally in the process, a new synthesis of belief will emerge. For Gebara and Bingemer, the Virgin Mary is the "collective figure, symbol of the faithful people from whose womb emerges the New Creation" (25).

Others make different points about the feminist liberation current. Feminism in theology is seen as "a theology of relationships" (26). "Nos théologies ne sont pas de grands principes à appliquer à la réalité, mais une orientation pour clarifier notre engagement et notre praxis" (27). "Social personalism" or a "personal socialism" would be the alternative to our present society. One of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo spoke of "gaining small victories every day"; "the struggle for freedom, justice and life is over and above ideology, religion, race". "When we speak of the feminine perspective we are referring to an accent, not proposing a polarization" (28).

Discussion of institutions, ideologies and the evidence from Scripture and the social sciences supporting liberation, dominant themes in the theology written by men, do not vanish from feminist horizons but the focus of perception with

.....

(25) Virginia Fabella and Amba Oduyoye eds.*op. cit.* p.128 and *Mary, Mother of God, Mother of the Poor, op. cit.* pp.15-16 and 174.

(26) J.C.B.Webster and E.L.Webster, *The Church and Women in the Third World*, Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1985, p.12.

(27) Maria C.Bingemer in *Concilium*, Paris, #219, 1988, p.153.

(28) Elsa Tamez ed., *op.cit.* pp.80, (see also 138-140).

regard to liberation is more personal, immediate, local and pragmatic. It is a focus particularly appropriate to the current situation, limitations and opportunities of the liberation movement. A rebellious spirit among women about power in the Church and a Utopian and democratic political activism among men and women in the relatively unstructured base communities (compared to the traditional parish) do present problems for the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church. Nevertheless it should be clear from what has been presented in earlier chapters that a Church striving both to hold its members and to evangelize is not likely to contemplate too rigorous disciplinary measures in communities in which people read the Bible and proclaim their adherence to the fundamental dogmas of the Catholic faith. It should be equally clear that, although the present Pope is unyielding on the ordination of women, the institutional Church must treat the aspirations of women with care when, in words already quoted , "power grows from practice".

(3) CATALYST AND STIMULANT FOR CHANGE

The Church has not been moved by liberation exhortations to accept the most radical political concepts of social mission urged upon it since the 1960's. At the level of the local community, however, and in terms of daily practice and of the slow development of theological concepts of mission in history, processes of change may, eventually, produce a transformation which could be called "radical". The questions about the future of the liberation movement posed in the Introduction still seem to lead to the same answer: it is not a movement capable of

taking control of ecclesial policy, nor is it a schismatic sect committed irreversibly to its own concept of salvation; it is both catalyst and stimulant, helping to determine the nature of the adaptation of a religious institution to new ideas and to changes in secular society.

These comments refer to the Church itself. The concluding comments must refer to the socio-political considerations with which this chapter began. The feminist movement within the Church is part of a much wider movement in Latin American society, even if it retains its institutional and intellectual identity.

In the 1970's and 1980's, Brazilians witnessed the emergence and development of perhaps the largest, most varied, most radical, and most successful women's movement in contemporary Latin America. By the mid-1980's, tens of thousands of women had been politicized by the women's movements[....](29).

To a lesser extent, this was happening in Peru and Chile. Those skeptical about the influence of religion in society might argue that feminism in the Church was, therefore, merely a pale reflection of essentially secular radicalism. The Church as an institution, however, (influenced, certainly, by the liberation movement) and the women within it aspiring to a new role, were not simply passive recipients of what Ivone Gebara called the "irruption of history into women's lives...as though a strong wind had begun to blow" (30).

The political and institutional transformation of the Brazilian Catholic Church proved to be a critical factor in the genesis of contemporary feminism.

.....

(29) Sonia E. Alvarez, in Jane S. Jaquette ed., *op.cit.* p.18

(30) in Virginia Fabella and M.Amba Oduyoye eds.*op.cit.* p.130.

Actively promoting the organization of the popular classes, [...]the progressive Church also provided a vital organizational umbrella for the opposition and cloaked its activities with a veil of moral legitimacy[....]the politicization of gender within Church-linked community women's groups provided nascent Brazilian feminism with an extensive mass base (31).

It is impossible here to pursue the theme of women's roles in politics and in social change in the region. Their influence in politics in Latin America has been generally considered to be conservative. This conservatism was attributed, to an important extent, to concepts of the role of the women and of the ordering of society derived from the Roman Catholic Church. Revisionist thinking by female theologians, particularly when centred on the complex and evocative symbolism in Mariology, is obviously important not only for the future of the Church but, in the longer term, for the Latin American political culture. Conservative members of the hierarchy might well view this process as yet another example of the corrosive effect of liberation thinking on traditional faith.

There is another, and more positive, way of judging what is happening. A Church-based feminism, radical as it may now seem, is not necessarily destined to be engulfed in secular feminism. As with the liberation movement generally, it is a force which not only acts upon traditional belief to effect change, but also derives a continuing intellectual and moral sustenance from the fundamental elements in that faith and projects it into society.

.....
(32) Sonia E. Alvarez, *ibid*, pp.21-22. It would be interesting to pursue the question of whether feminist theology will reinforce, rather than diminish, the essentially conservative appeal of *marianismo* a "cult of feminine spiritual superiority"; see Ann Pescatello, *Female and Male in Latin America*, Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1973, p.89-101.

CONCLUSIONS

Before pulling together some of the contentions made about conflicting concepts of social mission and the situation of the liberation movement within the Church, I should point to the limitations to what a dissertation of this type can hope to achieve. The subject, whether considered in terms of intellectual themes, geographical extent, historical background or ecclesial and socio-political events, is a very wide one. It has to be dealt with in the relatively short space assigned to this academic project. This means that analysis has to be presented on the basis of a limited selection of what seemed to the writer to be pivotal evidence, with only limited opportunity to pursue the argument and meet anticipated objections.

Writers about many subjects involving Latin American societies often warn about the dangers of assuming that "Latin America" is much more than a convenient designation for countries with common linguistic and varied social characteristics from an Iberian colonial past and indigenous cultures, but different in many ways as they are now. Can one attempt some general conclusions, then, in a relatively short analysis of conflicting concepts of social mission which refers to such an extensive backdrop?

The first point supporting an affirmative answer to that question is that the Roman Catholic Church, whatever the divergences in social policy and pastoral practice between one national conference of bishops and another, is one institution with a well-developed discipline with regard to the maintenance

of unity, in a broad sense. The episcopal conferences in Medellin and Puebla provided reliable indications, on a regional basis, of a range of options in social mission and pastoral practices within the agreed doctrinal limits. The liberation theologians, with their acknowledged diversities of emphasis, are reasonably convincing when they claim to constitute a movement; they support one another, consult one another and, for the time being at least, seem to have a common cause. It is legitimate, therefore, to examine conflicts within the Church in terms of some general themes, with due regard for the fact that, in the relationship between religion and politics, national situations are different.

As for the difficulties of dealing with so wide a theme, without pursuing the argument at greater length, or testing impressions at greater depth in a diversity of regional or ecclesial situations, there is a balancing consideration. In order to judge where, and how, to carry forward such investigation, one must develop, on the basis of a systematic review, a general perception of what is at issue within the Church. An initial intensive investigation of one quite limited sector might, or might not, lead to such a perception. The review in this case, of course, is limited to data available here, that is translations of primary sources and analyses, commentaries and research done mostly by authors from outside the region. There is little doubt, however, given the testimony of Latin American friends and opponents, that the liberation writers referred to in this paper are reliable representatives of their cause. One can hardly question the authoritative nature of pronouncements

from the Vatican or national hierarchies, even if these are not exempt from ambiguities, implicit contradictions or political pressures of the moment. The North American and European writers who have dealt seriously with liberation theology in its Latin American setting, from different disciplinary standpoints, have produced academically credible studies based on their own research in the region and on what Latin Americans have done. The writer of the thesis has a general familiarity with the political background for the affairs of the Church, derived from professional assignments in Latin America (1).

It is on such a basis, but in recognition of limitations also, that conclusions are drawn. Partial answers to the questions posed at the beginning of the paper about the future of the liberation movement are noted in different chapters. The principal conclusion is provided towards the end of the preceding chapter: "it is not a movement capable of taking control of ecclesial policy, nor is it a schismatic sect committed irreversibly to its own concept of salvation; it is both catalyst and stimulant helping to determine the nature of the adaptation of a religious institution to new ideas and to changes in secular society".

Partisans of liberation sometimes refer to a mandate at the Medellin Conference for them to pursue an ideological goal. They received only a conditional legitimation of some of their

.....

(1) These were diplomatic assignments in Chile (4 Years), Cuba (2 1/2 years) and at the Organization of American States (3 1/2 years).

contentions, in a general atmosphere of optimism and activism about the role of the Church in reforming society. The incompatibility of the full liberation agenda, on one hand, and the judgment of the institutional Church about theological warrant and political reality, on the other, became apparent as first Paul VI and then John Paul II warned the liberation theologians that a shared option for the poor was not a license for their agenda. Perceptions of political and economic reality by the liberation leaders were flawed and some began to admit that they might have misjudged complex situations.

One of the most realistic members of that group, Juan Luis Segundo, pleaded only for an acceptance of theological and political pluralism within the Church. He scarcely needed to plead for it, since it exists already; it is partly because of this diversity on sensitive matters that Church leaders have to exercise caution with regard to a social and political role, if they want to preserve a genuine community of the faithful. It is true that in situations of authoritarian repression, such as the Brazilian and Chilean ones, the Church did undertake a courageous and "progressive" role, one which authorities of the state, at times, obviously judged to be "political". Nevertheless, the essential position of the Church was one of ideological neutrality, combined with a very practical concern for human welfare. By imposing prudent limits on involvement in the politics of the state, the Church retained a greater capability to act in accordance with the objectives of its own polity and concept of social mission.

This position enabled it to be effective with regard to the defence of human rights and in an intermediary role in the resolution of conflict or in a transition to democratic government. The liberation leaders welcomed what the Church did do in such situations, although it did not meet all their hopes. Where the liberation movement did commit itself openly to a political cause in Nicaragua, it chose identification with a party which suffered the changing fortunes of politics and lost majority support and control of the Government. That loss, in itself, did not invalidate the ethical legitimacy of liberation objectives, in the eyes of members of the movement. Whether it represented a longer-term loss for the movement in terms of its ability to influence the majority within the Church is another matter. The resulting polarization can only be interpreted, for the time being at least, as a fracturing of that sense of community of the faithful already mentioned.

Given the setbacks, or limitations, for the liberation movement, it might be assumed that the most zealous of its proponents might lose heart, settle back into a traditional pastoral role, or pursue political objectives outside the Church entirely. While conflict and tension will certainly continue (for example, the pressures on Leonardo Boff and his decision to leave the Franciscan Order and the priesthood) the movement does not appear to be fragmenting or eroding. The chapter on the base communities and feminism presents some of the evidence about social ferment and change in Latin American society generally to which liberation thinking does contribute positively. Liberation

is scarcely a lost cause, even if it may become increasingly difficult, in concepts of social mission and in actual practice, to distinguish between liberation objectives and the social reformism already under way in the Church, which Gutierrez and others rejected with scorn in the 1970's as being far too timid with regard to social change.

The conclusions noted above are derived from study of primary sources and depend also very much on the research and analyses of a number of writers approaching the subject from varied standpoints. They constitute the thesis which has been outlined with respect to the nature and significance of the tensions arising within the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America as a result of the emergence of the liberation movement in the period 1968-1988.

This assessment raises a number of questions which go beyond the scope of the thesis but which would obviously be worth pursuing, even if answers, for a variety of reasons, might be tentative and conjectural.

Roger Vekemans, a Catholic theologian originally from Belgium, became an important figure among advisers to the Christian Democratic Party led by Eduardo Frei in Chile in the 1960's and later became a strong critic of the liberation theologians. He accused these theologians of "establishing theology on errors of social analysis" (2). In doing so, he made a very important point about the vulnerability of the liberation

.....

(2) Arthur McGovern, *Liberation Theology and its Critics*, op. cit., p.50.

argument that theology was a second step, one of reflection after praxis. "Praxis" obviously involved not only compassion for the poor but ideological commitment and social analysis, in which the liberation theologians took a good deal on faith from others. Is liberation theology, as theology, therefore, seriously undermined by the weakness of its political application in particular circumstances, by errors in judgment, tendencies to make sweeping assumptions about human societies and trust in ideological positions which people outside any theological frame of reference change pragmatically in the light of new assessments of social realities and interests?

Juan Luis Segundo wrestled with this basic problem in writing about faith and ideologies. One can only conjecture that the future influence of liberation theology, its acceptability as one current in Roman Catholic social teaching and its relevance to some of the acute and endemic social problems of Latin America depend very much on the ability of the liberation theologians to follow the logic of the intellectual discipline advocated by Segundo, that of the continuing revision of ideas in a "hermeneutical circle" (3). If they can assimilate the experience of recent years, come to terms with the majority view about limitations on the social role of the Church in relation to partisan and ideological commitment and re-examine theological assumptions about faith and ideologies, religion and politics, they might develop a more subtle political theology which could

.....

(3) *Liberation of Theology*, op. cit., p. 66.

strengthen the social role of the Church rather than disrupting it. This merely a hypothesis to keep in mind. It serves to remind us of some important factors in the Latin American situation.

The Roman Catholic Church has a traditional inclination toward a communitarian, rather than an individualistic, ethic and a predisposition, manifested from time to time, toward corporatist models in political affairs. Although the present trends in Latin American affairs are in a different direction, political leaders for many years have adhered to policies of State intervention, economic protectionism, regulation and ordering of social relations. Current moves towards open markets and economic globalization, following the political ideology defined as "neoliberalism", may well stimulate economic growth but continue to present difficult problems of reconciling that growth with social equity. There will be a need for an ethical critique with respect to various aspects of public policy. So far as the Roman Catholic Church is concerned, gaps between traditional teaching, the progressive attitudes of Vatican II and a less dogmatic liberation movement do not appear unbridgeable. If they were reconciled, that Church could maintain the role of ethical critique and initiative which it has established under difficult circumstances in various parts of Latin America in recent years.

In that event, there would be a certain irony in a situation in which liberationists, first demanding radical transformation of all structures and institutions, ended up by strengthening one of the oldest institutions in Western society, one moreover, with a very firm belief in hierarchical legitimacy and authority.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

SECTION A: PRIMARY SOURCES

Bingemer, Maria Clara, "Théologies du tiers monde: la conversion à l'autre" in *Concilium*, Paris, No.219, 1988.

Bingemer, Maria Clara and
Gebara, Ivone, *Mary, Mother of God, Mother of the Poor*,
Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1989.

Boff, Leonardo, *Jesus Christ, Liberator; a Critical Christology for our Time*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1978.

.....*Liberating Grace*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1979.

.....*Saint Francis: a Model for Human Liberation*, New
York, Crossroad, 1982.

.....*Church Charism and Power: Liberation Theology and the
Institutional Church*, London, S.C.M.Press, 1985.

.....*Ecclesiogenesis: the Base Communities Reinvent the
Church*, London, Collins, 1987.

.....*The Maternal Face of God: the Feminine and its
Religious Expressions*, San Francisco, Harper and Row,
1987.

.....*When Theology Listens to the Poor*, San Francisco,
Harper and Row, 1988.

.....*Trinity and Society*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1988.

Boff, Leonardo and
Boff, Clodovis, *Salvation and Liberation; In Search of a
Balance between Faith and Politics*, Maryknoll, N.Y.,
Orbis, 1985.

.....*Introducing Liberation Theology*, Maryknoll, N.Y.,
Orbis, 1988.

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith,
*Instruction on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of
Liberation"*, Vatican City, 1984.

.....*Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*,
Vatican City, 1986.

Dussel, Enrique, *A History of the Church in Latin America;
Colonialism to Liberation*, Grand Rapids, Michigan,
W.B.Eerdmans, 1981.

- Dussel, Enrique (cont.), *Ethics and Community*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1988.
- Fabella, Virginia and Oduoye, M. Amba eds. *With Passion and Compassion; Third World Women Doing Theology*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1988.
- Ferm, Deane W., *Third World Liberation Theologies: a Reader*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1986.
- Gebara, Ivone, *Eglise locale; pratiques et théologies*, Rome, Sedos (Servizio di Documentazione e Studi), 1990.
- Gremillion, Joseph ed., *The Gospel of Peace and Justice: Catholic Social Teaching since Pope John*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1976.
- Gutierrez, Gustavo, *A Theology of Liberation; History, Politics, Salvation*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1973.
- *The Power of the Poor in History; Selected Writings*, London, S.C.M. Press, 1983.
- *We Drink from our own Wells; the Spiritual Journey of a People*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1984.
- *On Job; God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocents*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1987.
- Hennelly, Alfred, *Liberation Theology: a Documentary History*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1990.
- John Paul II, *Lettre encyclique, "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis"*, Vatican City, 1987.
- *The Mission of Christ the Redeemer: Encyclical Letter "Redemptoris Missio"*, Vatican City, 1990.
- *"Centesimus Annus": the Hundredth Year*, Vatican City, 1991.
- Maugenest, Denis, ed., *Le discours social de l'Eglise catholique de Léon XIII à Jean-Paul II*, Paris, Le Centurion, 1985.
- Messori, Vittorio, *The Ratzinger Report: an Exclusive View on the State of the Church*, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1985.
- Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops, *The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council*, (Medellin Conference), Bogota, General Secretariat, CELAM, 1970.

- Segundo, Juan Luis, *Evolution and Guilt*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1974.
-*The Community Called Church*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1973.
-*The Hidden Motives of Pastoral Action; Latin American Reflections*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1978.
-*Liberation of Theology*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1976.
-*Faith and Ideologies*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1984.
-*Theology and the Church; a Response to Cardinal Ratzinger and a Warning to the Whole Church*, New York, Seabury, 1985.
-*The Historical Jesus of the Synoptics*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1985.
-*The Humanist Christology of Paul*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1986.
-*The Christ of the Ignatian Exercises*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1987.
-*An Evolutionary Approach to Jesus of Nazareth*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1988.
- Sobrino, Jon, *The True Church and the Poor*, London, S.C.M. Press, 1985.
-*Jesus in Latin America*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1987.
-*Christology at the Crossroads: a Latin American View*, London, S.C.M. Press, 1987.
-*Spirituality of Liberation; Toward Political Holiness*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1988.
- Tamez, Elsa, *Bible of the Oppressed*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1982.
-*Through Her Eyes: Women's Theology from Latin America*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1989.
- Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops,
Evangelization at Present and in the Future of Latin America, (Puebla Conference), Bogota, General Secretariat of CELAM, 1979.

SECTION B: SECONDARY SOURCES

- Anderson, Gerald H. and Stransky, Thomas
Mission Trends No. 4: Liberation Theologies, New York,
Paulist Press, 1979.
- Barbé, Dominique, Grace and Power: Base Communities and Non-
Violence in Brazil, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1987.
- Barreiro, Alvaro, Basic Ecclesial Communities: the Evangelization
of the Poor, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1982.
- Beeson, Trevor and Pearce, Jenny, A Vision of Hope: the Churches
and Change in Latin America, London, Collins, 1984.
- Berryman, Phillip, Liberation Theology: the Essential Facts about
the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America and Beyond,
New York. Pantheon, 1987.
-The Religious Roots of Rebellion: Christians in Central
American Revolutions, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1984.
- Cardona Velasquez, Luis Evelio, Comunidades eclesiales de base:
una experiencia de solidaridad, Madrid, Graficas
Urgel, 1988.
- Carvalho Azevedo, Marcello de C., Basic Ecclesial Communities in
Brazil: the Challenge of a New Way, Washington, D.C.,
Georgetown University Press, 1987.
- Chaney, Elsa, Supermadre: Women in Politics in Latin America,
Austin, Texas, University of Texas Press, 1979.
- Cleary, Edward, Crisis and Change: the Church in Latin America
Today, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1985.
- Cook, Guillermo, The Expectations of the Poor: Latin American
Base Ecclesial Communities in Protestant Perspective,
Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1985.
- Cox, Harvey, The Silencing of Leonard Boff: the Vatican and the
Future of World Christianity, Oak Park, Illinois,
Meyer-Stone, 1988.
- Dodson, Michael and Montgomery, Tommy Sue,
"The Churches in the Nicaraguan Revolution" in Thomas
W. Walker, ed., Nicaragua in Revolution, New York,
Praeger, 1982.
- Ellis, Marc H. and
Maduro, Otto The Future of Liberation Theology: Essays in
Honor of Gustavo Gutierrez, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis,
1989.

- Ferm, Deane William, *Third World Liberation Theologies: an Introductory Survey*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1986.
- Fleet, Michael, *The Rise and Fall of Chilean Christian Democracy*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1985.
- Gottwald, Norman ed., *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1983.
- Haight, Roger, *An Alternative Vision: an Interpretation of Liberation Theology*, New York, Paulist Press, 1985.
- Hanratty, Denis M. ed., *Thought*, vol. LXIII, No.250, New York, Fordham Univer.Press, 1988 (special issue: Latin America)
- Hewitt, W.E., "The Preferential Option for the Poor in the Archdiocese of São Paulo" in the *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, Vol.xii, no.23 1987, Université de Montréal.
-"Liberation Theology as Social Science: Contributions and Limitations" in Roger O'Toole ed., *Sociological Studies in Roman Catholicism: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, Lewiston/Lampeter/Queenston, Edwin Mellen Press, 1989.
-"The Evolution of Lay Leadership within Brazilian Comunidades Eclesiais de Base" in Diaz, Harry P. et. al., *Forging Identities and Patterns of Development*, Toronto, Canadian Scholars Press, 1991.
-*Base Christian Communities and Social Change in Brazil* Lincoln, Neb., University of Nebraska Press, 1991.
- Hug, James E. ed., *Tracing the Spirit: Communities, Social Action and Theological Reflection*, New York, Paulist Pr., 1983.
- Iglitzin, Lynne B. and Ross, Ruth, eds., *Women in the World: a Comparative Study*, Santa Barabara, Cal., Clio Books, 1976.
-*Women in the World: 1975-1985*, Santa Barbara, Cal., ABC-Clio Press, 1986.
- Jaquette, Jane S., ed., *The Women's Movement in Latin America: Feminism and the Transition to Democracy*, Boston, Unwin Hyman, 1989.
- Jelin, Elizabeth ed., *Women and Social Change in Latin America*, London, U.N. Research Institute for Social Development, 1990.
- Kammer, Charles L. *Ethics and Liberation: an Introduction*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1988.

- Kirk, J. Andrew, *Liberation Theology: an Evangelical View from the Third World*, London, Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1979.
- Kliever, Lonnie D. ed., *The Terrible Meek: Essays on Religion and Revolution*, New York, Paragon House, 1987.
- Lehmann, David, *Democracy and Development in Latin America: Economics, Politics and Religion in the Post-War Period*, Cambridge, England, Polity, 1990.
- Levine, Daniel H. ed., *Churches and Politics in Latin America*, Beverly Hills, Cal., Sage, 1980.
-*Religion and Political Conflict in Latin America*, Chapel Hill, N.C., Univ. of North Carolina, 1986.
-*Thought*, vol. 59, no. 233, New York, Fordham University Press, 1984 (special issue on Latin America).
- MacEoin, Gary, ed., *Cross Currents*, vol. xxviii, no. 1, West Nyack, N.Y., 1978, (special issue on Latin America).
- Maduro, Otto, *Religion and Social Conflicts*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis; 1982.
-ed., *Social Compass*, vol. xxvi, nos. 2, 3, Louvain, Univ. Catholique de Louvain, 1979 (special issue).
- McCann, Dennis, *Christian Realism and Liberation Theology: Practical Theology in Creative Conflict*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1981.
- McGovern, Arthur F., *Liberation Theology and its Critics: Toward an Assessment*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1989.
-*Marxism: an American Christian Perspective*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1980.
- Neves-Xavier de Brito, "Brazilian Women in Exile: the Quest for Identity", in *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Riverside, Cal., 1986.
- Núñez C., Emilio A., *Liberation Theology*, Chicago, Moody Press, 1985.
-"The Church in the Liberation Theology of Gustavo Gutierrez" in Carson, D.A. ed., *Biblical Interpretation and the Church*, Exeter, Eng., Paternoster, 1984.
- O'Gorman, Frances, *Base Communities in Brazil: Dynamics of a Journey*, Rio de Janeiro, Fase-Nuclar, no date (1985?).

- Pescatello, Ann, ed., *Female and Male in Latin America: Essays*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973.
- Rubenstein, Richard L., ed., *Spirit Matters: the World-Wide Impact of Religion on Contemporary Politics*, New York, Paragon House, 1987.
- Rubenstein, Richard L. and Roth, John K., *The Politics of Latin American Liberation Theology*, Washington, D.C., Washington Institute Press, 1988.
- Schooyans, Michel, *Théologie et libération: questions disputées*, Longueuil, P.Q., Le Préambule, 1987.
- Sigmund, Paul E., *Liberation Theology at the Crossroads: Democracy or Revolution*, New York, Oxford Univ. Press, 1990.
- Smith, Christian, *The Emergence of Liberation Theology: Radical Religion and Social Movement Theory*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- Sweeney, Ernest S., ed., *Thought*, vol. 63, no. 249, New York, Fordham Univ. Press, 1988 (special issue: Latin America)
- Tabak, Fanny, "Women's Role in the Formulation of Public Policies in Brazil" in Margherita Rendel, ed., *Women, Power and Political Systems*, London, Croom Helm, 1981.
- Van Lunen-Chenu, M.-Th., "Women's Liberation: the Church's Opportunity", in Metz, René, and Schlick, Jean, eds., *Liberation Theology and the Message of Salvation*, Pittsburgh, Pickwick Press, 1978.
- Walker, Thomas W. ed., *Nicaragua: the First Five Years*, New York, Praeger, 1985.
- Webster, J.C.B. and Webster, Ellen Low, *The Church and Women in the Third World*, Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1985.
- Welch, Sharon D., *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity: a Feminist Theology of Liberation*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1985.
- Williams, P.J., *The Catholic Church in the Politics of Nicaragua and Costa Rica*, London, Macmillan, 1989.