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Prof. Reginald Whitaker

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REVOLUTION THROUGH PEACE?

An Inquiry into the Meaning and Significance
of the Thought of Dom Helder Câmara
in the Light of
"Political Theology" and the Quest for a Gospel of Liberation

by
Gerald Schmitz, M.A.

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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The undersigned recommend to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies
acceptance of the thesis

"Revolution Through Peace?"

submitted by Gerald Schmitz, M.A.,
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

N. W. White
.....
Thesis Supervisor

Robert J. Jackson
.....
Chairman, Dept. of Political Science

Carleton University

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ABSTRACT

The object of this study is to explore several of the most salient aspects of recent major developments in radical Christian thought, in particular, through their impact on the ideas of one of the most important and widely-respected representatives of the accompanying renewed Christian social militancy, Archbishop-Helder Câmara of Recife and Olinda, Brazil. To that end, the discussion proceeds from an introduction to the intellectual movements -- namely, "political theology" and "liberation theology" -- which are giving shape and direction to the political action of the most progressive sectors within the organized churches, to an examination of the remarkable adoption of a "liberation" perspective within the mainstream of Latin American Christianity, and notably by Helder Câmara, to, finally, a detailed analysis of the principal problematics being encountered in these contemporary attempts to join Christian faith to a revolutionary imperative.

The overall theme of "revolution through peace", taken from the title of one of Câmara's books, reflects the intensely searching and unusual character of the revitalization of Christian belief and Christian practice to which he has been contributing on an international scale. That the phrase itself is so strikingly enigmatic is appropriate, since for many persons, Christian and non-Christian alike, there could be few paradoxes greater than the conjunction of

both Christianity and peace with revolution, especially with the complete socialist revolution advocated by the Archbishop. Be that as it may, the axioms and assumptions of the past cannot cancel out the type of selfless, prophetic engagement which he exemplifies, and which has become an increasingly common form of Christian witness in the Third World.

It should be noted, finally, that the question of "revolution through peace?" is not so much one of a pre-determined ideology and tactics, as it is of the meaning and significance of a metaphor which symbolizes the still evolving struggle, above all in Latin America, to rediscover the validity of the original Christian message from within concrete history, -- even when that means participation in a revolutionary, secular politics. Câmara's great vision has not come through any 'a priori' manual of "applied Christianity", but through this will to realize the total imperative of the gospels by first actively confronting the dehumanizing violence of all power which exploits and oppresses. For contemporary radical Christians such as Helder Câmara there can be no truth, "religious" or otherwise, which prescind from social and political praxis. They know, too, that it is according to the same rule that their efforts at liberation will ultimately have to be evaluated.

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Professor Reginald Whitaker directed the supervision of the thesis, and his incisive criticisms have always been fruitful, even where differences of interpretation may persist. Professors Willard Mullins and Lynn Mytelka also provided many comments of great help in preparing the final draft. I am especially grateful to Dr. Gregory Baum, who graciously consented to read an earlier version, and whose remarks have been extremely penetrating. The full responsibility for the positions ultimately taken, or not taken, remains, of course, mine alone.

The Canada Council provided vital financial support during my last two years of doctoral study without which the research for, and writing of, this thesis would not have been made possible. Another form of support deserving of particular recognition is the extraordinary hospitality and unstinting aid of men and women in Recife and Maceió, Brazil, who will know without being named how essential their contribution has been.

Finally, this thesis is dedicated to all those in Latin America whose lives of total and militant service have convinced a skeptical author that it is sometimes because of, rather than in spite of, uncompromising Christian belief, that the real-life liberation of all human beings becomes a step closer to reality.

PREFACE

In April 1970 an article appeared in the influential American journal Commentary which spoke in glowing terms of a great religious drama unfolding in the continent to the south.¹ The events taking place were of such transfiguring magnitude that they might have been collectively described as constituting a veritable new Reformation. Strangely, though, there was in this "Reformation" none of the hell-raising flavor of a religious revival; nor was the focus of concern the liberty of religious expression within society. Rather, the object of all the transforming zeal was a secular consciousness-raising, and the political liberation of society itself.

The two major geographic centres of this Christian renewal were identified in the article as Chile and the Northeast of Brazil. In many ways these two areas are a study in contrasts. Certainly the prevailing buoyant and highly-charged atmosphere of democratic, industrializing Chile was far removed from the predominant rural fatalism and urban desperation of an impoverished Brazilian Northeast growing daily more underdeveloped under the yoke of military neo-fascism. Nonetheless, the two regions did have something in common: the former seemed to be on the threshold of breaking out of the vicious circles of oppression and dependency within which the latter was still firmly entrapped. It hardly needs to be stated that with the murder of Salvador Allende this promise was nipped in the bud. In the inter-

vening years repression has intensified throughout most of Latin America. In the Northeast of Brazil the situation has changed very little.

Yet, in the face of all these odds, the struggle continues against the massive ruling apparatuses of injustice and fear. At the centre of that struggle the prophetic testimony of one man stands out above all others. He is Helder Câmara, a Roman Catholic priest who has been archbishop of Recife, the main port city of Northeast Brazil, ever since the military coup of 1964. Although Archbishop Câmara has achieved world renown only relatively recently (he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970 and received the "People's Peace Prize" in 1974), he has been the most outstanding member of the Brazilian church hierarchy since being made a bishop over twenty-five years ago, and a controversial figure in Brazilian public life since the early 1930s.

The Brazilian Catholic Church, traditionally an ally of the state and servant of the ruling classes, is now being forced to agonize over the dilemmas of repression and revolution. The major ecumenical Catholic theologies which have arisen since Vatican II, first in Western Europe and soon after in Latin America, demand a politically revolutionary faith. Already prior to the Council militant lay movements, notably in Brazil's northeast, were laying a groundwork for the radical re-reading of Christian tradition. Significantly, Brazil has the largest Catholic population of

any country in the world. It also has one of the most brutal and conservative governments in the world. To be sure, most Brazilian Catholics are Catholic in name only, or have at most a pre-literate knowledge of the faith. But Brazilian mass culture is still extremely receptive to the Judaeo-Christian idiom in an uncomplicated way not allowed by the more skeptical, secularist sophistication of "developed" western culture. And if that idiom were to include popular revolution as a right, even a duty? Small wonder that the military junta has reserved its greatest ferocity for Catholic social activists, who would once have numbered among its chief ideological supporters.² The institutional church, finally realizing too its own impotence and "underdevelopment", is caught between irrelevance and the outright suppression, perhaps even martyrdom, of its progressive and most vital sectors.

Dom Helder, as Archbishop Câmara is usually known, has survived several attempts on his life and countless assaults on his reputation. But because of his international stature and the high esteem in which he is held within the church, the government in fact does not want to risk eliminating him in a way which would almost surely cause it grave embarrassment. So, although subordinates and associates have been terrorized, for the time being Dom Helder continues to be able to spread his message of struggle and hope outside Brazil. Within the country, of course, he has been virtually silenced. The government waits and grinds

its teeth recognizing that the greatest danger would be to create a great martyr of someone who has already become a genuine "hero" within the annals of Latin American Christianity.

The other great "hero" of the new breed of Christians in Latin America, Colombian priest-sociologist Camilo Torres, was shot by army troops in 1966 shortly after he had joined a guerilla liberation front. Even in Cuba he has since become a symbol of revolutionary dedication, alongside, of course, the titanic figure of Che Guevara. It is interesting to note that during the early sixties, when Dom Helder was launching his crusade for "justice not charity" which was to find such powerful expression as a philosophy of "revolution through peace", Fr. Torres had explained to an interviewer:

I discovered Christianity as a life centered totally on love of neighbor It was later that I understood that in Colombia you can't bring about this love simply by beneficence. There was needed a whole change of political, economic, and social structures. These changes demanded a revolution. That love was intimately bound up with revolution.³

Those plain words were spoken before a radically new idiom of "political theology" and "liberation theology" had taken shape, and yet they sum up its essential matrix. For Dom Helder, too, the roots of Christian reflection must be in a transformative social praxis. In a world marred by massive inequities that praxis means primarily a revolutionary overthrow of neocolonial structures of injustice and of the "institutionalized violence" needed to perpetuate such structures. Peace, on the other hand, means the concrete practice of love and justice towards all men. To truly follow

the path of peace, therefore, is necessarily to be a revolutionary.

Dom Helder exemplifies the conviction that it is in deeds not doctrine that the mystery of faith lies. He is, moreover, a poet not an academic, above all a man of action, not a theologian or a theoretician. For him to speak of "revolution through peace" is to touch something so central, so basic, that it demands only to be lived not explained. There is no time to temporize for the sake of making "beautiful statements", as he calls documents that are more looked at than listened to. Yet the phrase "revolution through peace" is so seemingly paradoxical, so intriguing in its very simplicity and directness, that it would be to miss a great opportunity not to open it up to its full richness.

This does not at all mean that Dom Helder's work can be probed in isolation from either the recent radicalization of Christian theology, or the general course of events in Latin America, and Brazil in particular. On the contrary, both are the very context in which the core of that work assumes its innermost meaning and significance. It is too early perhaps to judge the extent of Dom Helder's historical contribution, but his example and his message are nonetheless an obvious point of reference for anyone who wishes to understand the momentous changes which have, over the past several decades, shaken the Latin American churches to their foundations, and which may well have broad repercussions beyond these churches' own walls and dogma. As the noted

American theologian Harvey Cox has pointed out: "Nearly everyone has heard of Helder Camara or Camilo Torres even if they have not read about the theologians or about the movement called 'Theology of Liberation'."⁴ In the most important survey of the liberation theology movement to date, José Miguez Bonino concurs that: "It is hardly necessary to dwell on the views and attitudes of the man who has become the living voice of the Christian conscience in Latin America, a little man whom the government and reactionaries slander and denounce but do not dare to touch"⁵

My approach to the activities and statements of Dom Helder will not be in the main biographical or expository. Neither will it be sociological. The present work is, rather, committed to a thorough philosophical exploration of the meaning, import, and validity (i.e., truth content) of the symbols which together make up Dom Helder's eloquent witness to the contemporary sense of a revolutionary, 'political' Christian faith. Following Marx I believe that philosophical analysis of this sort cannot simply be left hanging in the air, but always requires empirical and historical grounding. I have tried to do this specifically in chapters three and four. Such grounding, however, will in no way attempt to tie the ideas of Dom Helder or of radical theologians to an exogenous, impersonal "model" or dynamic which then becomes the conveniently manipulable "independent" variable in respect of which the primary evidence may be "explained", or as often happens, explained away.

The methodology which will be resolutely followed in this thesis might be described, at the risk of considerable misunderstanding or even antipathy, as "post-critical".

(The term is from the subtitle of Michael Polanyi's seminal book Personal Knowledge. The relevance of Polanyi to the question of "revolution through peace" is summarized in the third section of part four.) By "post-critical" I understand not a-critical or pre-critical, but rather primarily a refusal to capitulate to the objectivism and reductionism which, unfortunately, have tended to become a characteristic feature of our increasingly specialized and compartmentalized institutions of higher learning, despite their now rather paradoxical appellation of universities. This is not the place for a critique of conventional social science, or of the academic division of labor under modern capitalism and industrial technocracy. Nevertheless, it needs to be made clear that -- as radical Christians in Latin America have understood so well -- there is a real, even if non-quantifiable, distinction between purpose and function, truth and orthodoxy.

It is especially important that the above consideration be borne in mind when dealing with a religiously-based idiom such as that employed by Dom Helder. Too often, political scientists acknowledge only external causes and effects, or adopt approaches (e.g. noncognitivism) which trivialize the subject matter 'a priori'. In the pages which follow I shall not be concerned with the orthodoxy of

the positions taken by Dom Helder and various theologians. That is the task of dogmatic theology and ideology, not political philosophy. Nor shall I be concerned with the "scientific" measurement or prediction of the probable functional consequences of certain ideas, either within the Latin American body politic or within any artificial system. That is a task which can only be carried out, if at all, through very narrowly-defined case studies. What I will be concerned with is to ascertain the scope and intent, the meaning and significance, and ultimately the validity of the problematic of "revolution through peace", as it is posed by Dom Helder, and as it is situated within both the current evolution of a politicized Christian theology, and the current quest, above all in Latin America, for a Christian community unequivocally committed to a historical agenda of total human liberation.⁶

To that end, part one will set out the parameters in which a "secular" Christian language of liberation and revolution is being articulated and developed contemporaneously with the sharpening and maturation of Dom Helder's own thought. Beginning with the school of "political theology" which originated in Germany in the mid 1960s, the opening chapters will attempt to delineate the theoretical basis for an integral relationship between faith and politics which differs radically from pre-modern syntheses as well as from what has come to be known as the "social gospel". The particular approaches to politics and core political concepts

which this involves will also be examined. In the second chapter, attention is focussed specifically on the "theology of liberation" movement through which has evolved the dominant -- indeed, virtually the only -- paradigm for advanced Christian reflection in Latin America during the past decade.

Part two shifts to the more concrete and immediate, personal matrix of Câmara's philosophy. One of the hazards is that "charismatic" activists as highly visible and internationally renowned as the Archbishop, are often portrayed in the mass media as "lone rangers" on white chargers. A false impression is thereby created, and it is one which clearly annoys the "Dom", as he always insists that he is but one small voice in a great worldwide struggle of what he calls the "abrahamic minorities". In effect, a narrowly individual focus severs ideas from the roots which have nurtured them and from the environment which has given them shape and vitality. It may also seriously distort their overall sense and import. Accordingly, the first chapter in this section will outline and interpret the major events which form the institutional and societal backdrop to Dom Helder's emergence as a Spokesman for Third World concerns, the subject of the next chapter. Chapter five will then survey the normative political content of the speeches and essays of Dom Helder which have established him among the first rank of shapers of world Christian opinion in this century.⁷

The heart of the analysis, as it relates to the

primary theme of "revolution through peace", will take place in part three. There are three great issues which merit detailed examination: the question of violence versus non-violence as it relates to the achievement of revolutionary ends and the choice of revolutionary means; the validity and utility, in Christian terms, of the Marxist perspective for revolutionary theory and revolutionary praxis; and finally, the relationship between the revolutionary role of the community of faith or 'ecclesia' (church), and the ultimate (eschatological) role of revolution. Chapter six will therefore attempt to discover the sense(s) in which the way of revolution might also be a way of peace. Chapters seven and eight seek to define the logical grounds -- both theoretical and practical -- upon which an authentically 'political' Christianity approaches Marxism as the inescapable, and perhaps indispensable, ideology and "science" of modern revolution. Chapters nine and ten explore the difficult nexus between revolution and "salvation": chapter nine focusses on the meaning of societal development and the direction of revolutionary processes as these impact upon the intrahistorical duties and capacities of the community called church, and chapter ten focusses on the meaning of the Church's salvational goals as these impact upon the political evolution of society.

By way of conclusion, part four will summarize the symbolic association of "revolution" and "peace" in the political paradigm popularized by Helder Câmara, and the

significance of this dialectical symbolization for revolutionary theory and practice. The final section of this chapter will suggest a potentially broader application of the subversive message of "revolution through peace" to the perception of the political and intellectual vocations in a world increasingly regarded by academics as "post-Christian". (That a philosophical study of the present profound radicalization of Judaeo-Christian expression -- as attested to by the heroic example of Helder Câmara, the growth of a political theology, and the Latin American movement toward a theology of liberation -- runs the risk of being devalued, and perhaps dismissed, as politically irrelevant or "unscientific" (i.e., noncognitive) by those engaged in social research, is also a measure of the spiritual impoverishment, technocratic fragmentation, and addiction to "neutrality" which has often been the fashion in modern epistemological orthodoxy.) In the appended epilogue the object will be simply to identify the ongoing problems being faced by exponents of a prophetic, socially revolutionary Christianity, Dom Helder in particular, and to reflect on the unlikely prospects for immediate progress being made toward their resolution in Latin America.

It should now be clear why the title of this thesis is in the form of the interrogative. In a truly secular culture the whole enterprise of a revolutionary, minority politics -- indeed of all socio-critical activity up to and including scientific inquiry -- can only be punctuated with

a question mark. Specifically, the political insertion of a radical Christian-based idiom into that culture is a deliberately risky exercise fraught with contradictions and uncertainties, as well as with hopes and confidences which demand urgently to be fulfilled. The challenge of "revolution through peace" is addressed not only to Christians, but to the courage and imagination of modern man. It is here, finally, that theology and politics meet on the threshold of, to paraphrase Marx and the bible, a "new heaven" and a "new earth".⁸ As Arend van Leeuwen declares in

Development Through Revolution:

What the new revolutionary needs if he is to carry on a long and arduous struggle without absolutes and without utopian illusions, is the possibility of believing that the future is really open, the hope that weakness can be victorious over established power, and that meaning and fulfillment are possible in a life lived in an intense revolutionary struggle. He needs those resources of transcendence and nonconformity which free him to break the bonds of the secular, empirical ethos, dream new dreams about the future of man, and cultivate the creative imagination so as to be capable of thinking about new problems in new ways, and defining new goals and models of a new society. Therefore, the real question before theology is that of "the vitality of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, in its diverse forms, and its capacity to relate to the human situation today in such a way as to liberate old images, symbols and concepts and create new ones that can perform this task...."⁹

NOTES

1. See N. Gall, "Latin America: The Church Militant", Commentary, vol. 49, April 1970, pp. 25-37.
2. Cf. Marcio Moreira Alves, O Cristo do Povo, (Rio de Janeiro: Sabia, 1968); and L'Eglise et la Politique au Brésil, (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1974); Emmanuel de Kadt, Catholic Radicals in Brazil, (London: Oxford University

- Press, 1970); Charles Antoine, Church and Power in Brazil, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973).
3. Cited in Phillip E. Berryman, "Latin American Liberation Theology", in Sergio Torres and John Eagleson, eds., Theology in the Americas, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1976), p. 20.
 4. Cox, "Introduction", in Thomas Quigley, ed., Freedom and Unfreedom in the Americas: Towards a Theology of Liberation, (New York: IDOC, 1971), p. i.
 5. J.M. Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 46.
 6. Although all of these criteria may be too complex or intangible to be dealt with within a strictly empiricist framework, they have always been the touchstones of the political philosopher and the basic reference points for the critical discernment of value which lies between absolute proof and mere preference.
 7. The enormously high regard in which Dom Helder is held in progressive Christian circles is not exclusively an intramural phenomenon. When Time magazine, several years ago, drew up a short list of worldwide "makers and shakers" of the Christian faith, his name headed the list.
 8. The biblical reference is, of course, to the Book of Revelation. To which Marx made his famous response in "Toward the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right": "The task of history, therefore, once the world beyond the truth has disappeared, is to establish the truth of this world Thus the criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of the earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of right, and the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics." "Today", writes political theologian Jürgen Moltmann, "it is just the reverse": Religion, Revolution, and the Future, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), p. 133.
 9. Arend van Leeuwen, Development Through Revolution, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), p. 55.

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PART ONE

ON DEFINING THE DIMENSIONS OF THE QUESTION

Discerning the Grounds for a Theology for Radical Politics

Dom Helder Câmara is frequently referred to as a "prophet" of the Third World. As such he is admired by some as a charismatic defender of impoverished millions, scorned by many others as just another moralistic crusader. An age of science and technology has little patience with good intentions, the traditional stock-in-trade of prophets. We tell ourselves that purity of values, except perhaps in some "spiritual" realm, is not now, if it ever was, an attainable virtue anywhere else, -- or at least not a practical one. It is not just a question of 'good' and 'evil' being merely relative, emotive concepts, but of their actual or hoped-for obsolescence as guides to social action. For modern scientists of human behavior, even as the promised land of an "end to ideology" grows more elusive, it must, surely, still appear more plausible than so evidently utopian a notion as "revolution through peace". When even political philosophers are losing faith in political idealism, what could be more absurd than to try to combine it, in whatever manner, with an even more anachronistic religious idealism?

The question of an ideal such as "revolution through peace" is necessarily a corollary to the above. But, first, any truly serious attempt to evaluate what Dom Helder stands for, and to probe the innermost meanings of his message, requires a critical frame of reference within which to inter-

pret a political language of faith. (By "truly serious" I mean precisely analytical approaches which do not make 'a priori' assumptions about the cognitive status of faith and, inferentially, religious belief.) There are two contemporaneous movements in Christian theology without which it is impossible to understand the present context for such a language. They are 'political theology' originating in Germany, and its more intense Latin American counterpart, the 'theology of liberation'. Together they open up a radically new perspective on politico-religious messianism. Although Dom Helder is not a theologian, his ideas cannot be divorced from their seminal role within the evolution of a new idiom of liberation among Latin American Christians. Moreover, Dom Helder's prophetic presence, both in his own country and internationally, is an outstanding active symbol of the church-world contestation which is at the heart of any search for an authentically 'political' theology. To discern the grounds for a theology for radical politics is also in part to discern the grounds for Dom Helder's call to non-violent revolution -- the revolution of peace. It is to discern that the object of this new prophetism is not the vain imposition of a "Christianized" politics on society, but, on the contrary, the self-critical politicization of Christians in society: not conversion of the other, but conversion to the other. That has meant a movement away from old closed-in theologies of a politics as easily conservative as radical, toward the new politics -- liberating and authentically biblical -- of a radical theology. This is the broad

theoretical context within which a contemporary language of Christian political idealism must be explored.

CHAPTER ONE

THE POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION OF THEOLOGY: AN EXPLORATORY PERSPECTIVE

"The day will come on which we will again be called to speak the word of God in such a way that the world will be transformed and renewed by it. It will be a new language, perhaps quite unreligious, but liberating and redemptive, like the language of Christ, so that men will be terrified by it, and yet overcome by its strength, the language of a new justice in truth, the language that proclaims the peace of God towards men and the approach of his kingdom."¹

-- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Widerstand und Ergebung.

The "new language", prophesied by Bonhoeffer before his execution at the hands of the Nazis during the Second World War, has today a name, given it by another German theologian, Johannes Baptist Metz. He calls it simply "political theology". Although the connotations of such a phrase are anything but simplistic, they are, nonetheless certain to be greeted with cynicism in modern industrial societies. To the contemporary rationalist mind the prospect of mixing political and religious concerns is likely to evoke unwelcome images of feudal Christendom, holy wars, and civil religions, either of the classical, or worse, "totalitarian" Rousseauan variety. It might be thought that the civilizations of the Occident had had their fill of "political theologies". Separation of church and state has become an axiom of the modern political constitution, and secularization is virtually unchallenged among social scientists as a law of the progressive development of

human societies.²

Paradoxically, secularization is also a word which alerts one to the fundamental break between Metz's 'political theology' and all those religious idioms which might have been placed under such a rubric in the past. In his Theology of the World the essays on political theology are preceded by lengthy discussions on the future of faith in a secularized world, and it is in this same book that the above quotation from Bonhoeffer appears. Bonhoeffer, the political martyr, is also the theologian to whom the phrase "religionless Christianity" has been attributed, and who was eagerly sought out, with some justification, as a sort of intellectual father-figure by theologians of secularization such as Harvey Cox, and even the more radical "death of God" movement during the 1960s.³ Bonhoeffer's seminal insight was to perceive that the enduring essence of Christian faith lay not in a 'cultus' or a metaphysical system of belief, but in the radical humanizing challenge to secular man of a transcendent 'other'.

The immediate roots of Bonhoeffer's vision are in the controversy over the confessing church in Nazi Germany. But his courageous "No!" to the events then disfiguring his country was already foreshadowed by the so-called "theology of crisis" or dialectical theology associated with Karl Barth, a compatriot and one of the most influential Christian thinkers of his time. Although Barth, like Paul Tillich, had participated in the "religious socialism" movement in Germany earlier in the century, his revulsion

against the impotence of the conformist liberal Protestantism inherited from Ritschl and Schleiermacher, and the moralistic, evolutionary "social gospel" which it had spawned, made him loathe to draw out the political implications of his dialectics. They remained at the hermeneutical level, a transcendent judgement against the dehumanizing aspects of historical events. As a consequence, Barth's negative dialectic against the illusions of actual politics (where atrocities are so easily committed in the name of freedom or "the people") was incapable of nurturing a creative dialectic for which the fight against evil could be part of the humanizing impulse in which political activity remains as the horizon for human freedom. In short, Barth's transcendental negation would honor Bonhoeffer's individual act of martyrdom but deprive it of any political or historical significance. It is at this point that Metz's project of a political theology takes over.

Metz argues that with the breakdown of Christendom the unity of religious existence and social existence was shattered, making newly problematical the way in which the life of faith was to impinge upon man's life in society. But, under the pressure of rationalist attacks on religious belief, the theologian's response was a metaphysical evasion of the problem. Theology retreated into transcendentalist, existentialist, privatistic forms of expression which "did not pass through the Enlightenment but jumped over it and thought thus to be done with it."⁴ In the Kantian transcendentalist revolt against pure reason the 'practical-

critical' sphere of Kant's moral reason is detached from politico-historical reason. Similarly, Kierkegaard's existentialist revolt offers no basis for a political ethics or a historical understanding of the struggle against social evil. Metz concludes: "The deprivatizing of theology is the primary critical task of political theology."⁵

In order to pursue this critical task it is necessary to understand the sense in which the adjective 'political' applies to religious language. In a broad sense all language is "political" to the extent that it expresses a lived-in relation to the world. The application of historical criticism to the interpretation of biblical texts (e.g., Bultmann) has parallels with the process of "verstehen" and the problematic of the sociology of knowledge at the level of the social sciences.⁶ Both biblical fundamentalists and devotees of a "value-free" social science make the mistake of believing that their subject matter -- for the former the "facts" of divine revelation, and for the latter the "facts" of human behavior -- can be apprehended by what Abraham Kaplan in The Conduct of Inquiry refers to as "immaculate perception".⁷ In short, the language of faith, by virtue of its historical and human expression⁸, has a political content, and especially so when it pleads political neutrality since silence on political matters is almost invariably construed as support for the status quo. This is the stronger sense in which religious doctrine can be thought of as political. The strongest sense is when religious ideas or their derivatives are actively put at the service

of particular ideological positions. Christian political theology, therefore, is the recognition that a truly critical theology is impossible without a self-critical 'politicization' -- that is, a critical awareness of the political commitments and responsibilities entered into, rightly or wrongly, as a consequence of fidelity to the gospel.⁹ The critical function of theology with respect to political reality follows from its own internal political critique. In effect, political theology is a rejection of any simplistic combination of religion and politics or, as Metz puts it, of "politifications" of the Christian promises, -- not so as to persist in a myth of apoliticism (as a cloak for doing nothing or for legitimizing things as they are, but so as to "actualize the critical potential of faith in regard to society".¹⁰

Bearing this in mind, it is necessary to tackle certain misconceptions which would turn political theology into, or confuse it with, a theology of politics, or worse, a theological politics. The distinguishing feature of political theology is its employment of dialectical-critical method for the realization of an authentic politico-historical hermeneutic of the Christian gospel. In the words of Francis Fiorenza, "political theology is not a theology of politics, but a hermeneutical task that has its place in fundamental theology."¹¹ For this reason Joseph Petulla's statement in his book Christian Political Theology: A Marxian Guide that "the work of political theology is social change, and in the long run, radical social change"

is certainly wrong if it subordinates theology indiscriminately or uncritically to processes of radical change.¹² Specifically, the Christian element in social criticism or political engagement must certainly be more than, as Petulla seems to suggest, a sort of subliminal 'personal knowledge' -- a residue of religious socialization acting as a selectivity screen in one's outlook (or "onlook" as he prefers to call it) on the world.

Petulla errs most blatantly in describing political theology's "essential aspect" as simply "critical analysis of class and group relationships and an understanding of these relationships."¹³ This is manifestly the task of social science not hermeneutics! Political theology is categorically not a substitute for the former, but rather uses the human sciences in order to mediate historically the best understanding of social reality to the rich experience of faith in its social dimension. Political theology is, after all, still theology, and not only an ideology of radical change. In terms of engagement in revolution, a Christian political hermeneutic could never disregard, in favor, let us say, of the latest handbook on Marxist-Leninist strategy, such intrinsic values as the dignity of the individual person, the primacy of selfless, suffering love, and what Metz calls the "eschatological proviso" -- the metahistorical hope which stands in judgment against all secular absolutisms or self-justifying power configurations.

During the 1960s in England a group of radical

Catholics involved in the intellectual ferment of what is loosely termed the "New Left", made a concerted effort to incorporate Marxism into the working out of a more "relevant" language of faith. The group was known as "Slant", an appropriate reference to its unequivocal option for socialist revolution. This rather over-exuberant enterprise of Catholic Marxism attracted considerable attention but it contained a fatal flaw: its theology lost its own internal critical resources to the extent that revolution became the primary or even sole measure of Christian mission.¹⁴ It is vitally important, therefore, that political theology not be lumped in with this kind of theological politics or revolutionary updating of the Social Gospel.¹⁵ Alistair Kee in his preface to A Reader in Political Theology unfortunately confuses matters when he states flatly: "Political theology is biased because Jesus was biased."¹⁶ This can easily degenerate into a romanticized evocation of Jesus or the early Christians as revolutionary models or prototypical socialists.¹⁷

The root of Kee's confusion lies in his statement that -- "The phrase 'political theology' does not indicate a completely new departure for theology: it refers to a specific relationship of politics and theology."¹⁸ Of course, no revised language is ever "completely new", but political theology is nothing if not a fundamental rethinking of the entire theological enterprise and not simply a specific, direct or deductive attempt to mobilize theological support for a particular political option. Indeed, political

theology represents a radical departure from the decades-old debate between the proponents of a "social gospel" and its critics, and hopefully therefore from the sterile polemic between Christian "idealism" and Christian "realism".¹⁹

This central point is well-illustrated with reference to the work of the great American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr's early encounter with Marxism led him to reject the moral idealism of liberal theology, but his subsequent disillusionment with political idealism led him to embrace a Barthian "neo-orthodoxy" and, significantly, to adopt a conservative politics. This transition was possible because, as Charles West points out, Niebuhr's relationship to Marxism was more utilitarian than based on philosophical dialogue (e.g. Tillich). Niebuhr's principles of social analysis were derived "neither from the structure of Marxist philosophy nor from the revealed Word of God, but rather from the wellsprings of American social gospel liberalism deepened by an intense Christian consciousness of human sin."²⁰ In short, Niebuhr's empirical political judgements were conditioned by a prior theological base. His theological positions impinge upon his concern for pragmatic social change in a highly determinative way. This is confirmed by Paul Merkley's study in which a wealth of argument is produced to the effect that Niebuhr's political philosophy, which extols liberal-democratic pragmatism and defines politics primarily in terms of the equilibration of competing interests, can not be understood apart from his theological assumptions, particularly

regarding egoism and "sinful" human nature. Niebuhr's attack on the social gospel of his day is, in effect, an internal critique which can not ultimately transcend the traditional deductive categories of theologies of politics.²¹

The problem is this: Niebuhr's "neo-orthodoxy" appears as apolitical while his political prescriptions continue to carry a good deal of theological baggage. In other words, his theology is not 'political' (in the self-critical sense of coming to terms with the ideological content of its language), but his politics are theological. By contrast, political theology subjects theology itself to a thoroughgoing 'political' critique, thereby providing as well a critique of any theological assumptions implicit in political propositions. . . For example, Niebuhr's neo-Augustinian, so-called "realist" world view inclines him to accept the pluralist model of balance-of-power competition as normative for the achievement of a relative political justice, and accordingly to delimit the nature and purpose of politics. Niebuhr often judges political events harshly, yet strangely exempted from the application of these critical resources are his Christology and especially his rather traditional interpretation of the doctrine of original sin. Niebuhr's theology of the cross virtually ignores the messianic dimension of the salvific act.²² This can hardly be passed off as a concession to political reality. Rather, his discussion of sin and human egoism or 'hubris' seems to rest on a static concept of human nature, the result being a privatistic social ethics. --

i.e., there is no politics for Christians, only the individual Christian in politics. But the assumption that "you can't change human nature", long a cherished axiom of conservative ideology, may turn out to be as dubious on biblical grounds as it is on scientific grounds. Many scholars consider it to be a negation of the whole basic humanizing thrust of the Christian message.²³ In another context the Uruguayan Jesuit theologian, Juan Luis Segundo, makes a similar point against the traditional conception of natural law:

As it becomes advantageous and even necessary to replace "natural" possibilities with new artificial possibilities, and as new images of societal life show up on the horizon as possible replacements for those which have seemed to stem from nature itself, a law that supposedly was sanctioned by God ahead of time increasingly shows up in its true light: i.e., as an evasion of history. And like every evasion of history, it is magical.²⁴

Equally as questionable as the dehistoricization of nature is the foundation of political ethics on completely individualistic moral bases. Any such ethics would be sadly impotent in the face of large-scale social evil. Niebuhr's rather liberal and flexible perception of the problem in Moral Man and Immoral Society hardens throughout his later works such as The Nature and Destiny of Man, ending up in the gloom of The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness. "Realism" begins to sound suspiciously like abdication -- a sort of "make the best of a bad situation." But it is not at all clear that the Christian teaching on sin countenances only a makeshift, totally relativized social justice. The Pauline epistles have

generally been associated with Augustinianism and Protestant notions of "depraved human nature", yet biblical scholar José Miranda, in an exhaustive exegesis of Paul, finds that even here sin takes on its fundamental aspect as a supra-individual structural reality.²⁵ Miranda's thesis is controversial but it points unmistakably to the essential social horizon of salvation from sin. Before the concept of sin can adequately respond to the reality of social evil it must be liberated from the privatistic language in which it has been imprisoned, a language not without political consequences. Willi Gelmlüller, quoting T.W. Adorno, refers to "that abominable presumption of the dogma of original sin that the depravity of human-nature justifies the domination of men by other men, i.e., that radical evil justifies evil."²⁶ In any event, it obviously makes a difference whether the ever present question of evil (and, inferentially, human perfection) is perceived comprehensively as an ongoing political and historical challenge, or only moralistically, becoming, intentionally or otherwise, a justification (apology?) for a moribund liberal democracy.

The importance of this example is that it points to the crucial rupture between a political theology which attempts to frame an adequate biblical response to human reality, as our knowledge of that reality progresses, and a theology of politics which, in the name of realism or idealism, merely applies Christian principles to that version of "reality" allowed by its supposedly pure "orthodox" categories. The failure in Niebuhr to examine

critically the politico-ideological content of the traditional Christian language about sin undermines his whole programme for social action. Note that this does not mean that orthodoxy is irrelevant. Quite the contrary, for a critical living orthodoxy is the object of a political transformation of theology in which, for example, deprivatization might be identified as the currently most pressing task.

Political theology's approach to the question of truth is two-fold. At the theoretical level this entails a search for new forms of expression. As the Argentinian theologian José Miguez Bonino points out, the gradual freeing of theology from the tutelage of Greek metaphysics has involved a shift first toward anthropology and second toward history. Theological knowledge is beginning systematically to come to terms with the historical sciences of man. Jürgen Moltmann adds that the emancipation of theology from purely deductive ontologies brings it in dialogue with science to a new critical consciousness of the "what is", in which the "not yet" of eschatology can be seen as effectively and historically operative within the conscience of the present.²⁷ What does this ultimately mean? With respect to social theory, Fernand Dumont argues that both theology and sociology express in their own way the historical praxis of man. Therefore, as the classical epistemological problematic -- i.e., the "real" of essentialist metaphysics and abstract logic -- loses its paramountcy to the historical sciences of human praxis, so also must both

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disciplines lose any pretensions of aloof dominance over the facts.²⁸ (In Catholic theology, the controversy over "modernism" in the early part of this century, and what Gregory Baum refers to as the "Blondelian shift", indicate the gradual movement there has been toward an "incarnational" understanding of the revealed symbols of Christian truth as necessarily mediated not by pure disembodied reason but by empirical, historical events.²⁹) Not only is the myth of political neutrality -- "value-free" objectivity -- shattered, but politics -- the social praxis of freedom -- comes to be seen as the arena in which truth manifests itself historically. For political theology the link between theory and praxis is the fundamental basis for its relationship to a scientific understanding of political reality. As Dorothee Sölle puts it:

When combined with theology, "political" does not mean that theology should now exchange its content for that of political science.... Furthermore political theology is not an attempt to develop a concrete political program from faith, nor is it another type of Social Gospel in which praxis simply swallows up theory. There are no specifically Christian solutions to world problems for which a political theology would have to develop the theory. Political theology is rather a theological hermeneutic, which, in distinction from a theology that interprets reality from an ontological or existentialist point of view, holds open an horizon of interpretation in which politics is understood as the comprehensive and decisive sphere in which Christian truth should become praxis.³⁰ (emphasis added)

To use Metz's seminal concept, orthodoxy must be founded on "orthopraxis": that is, -- "The orthodoxy of a Christian's faith must constantly make itself true in the 'orthopraxy' of his actions oriented toward the final future,

because the promised truth is a truth which must be made.³¹ Of course, merely stating such a formula does not make it operational. Moreover, 'orthopraxis' can not "solve" abstractly the relation between religion and politics, for it is not a solution but a problematic which opens up for a political theology a whole new set of questions in the realm of concrete political practice. When Metz speaks of a "practical-critical hermeneutic" and of "the dangerous memory of the freedom of Jesus" it is clear that they are to act as a powerful solvent against the ideological captivities of religious language. Sölle argues further that this emancipating methodological renewal of theology leads to a categorical option for the struggle for human liberation.³² But to the extent that terms such as "freedom" and "liberation" remain abstractions it is not at all clear what, if any, is the practical content of this liberating intention of critical consciousness. In short, how precisely does intellectual commitment realize itself politically as a practical commitment?

To tackle this question is to probe what many skeptics believe to be the Achilles' heel of political theology. Andrew Greeley, for example, in an ebullient broadside, contends that the theologians who claim to have so recently discovered a liberating politics are in fact politically, not to say methodologically naive, and therefore not self-critical at all.³³ He is incredulous that Metz's rarefied concept of politics does not seem to have much place for such things as electoral machinations in the precincts of

Chicago. For Greeley, the relevant distinctions are between pragmatic realism and ivory tower pontificating -- the modesty of the positive behavioral sciences and the pretensions of dreamy-eyed intellectuals whose abstruseness in theory is only a mask for obtuseness in the ways of the "real world" of politics. Greeley's allusions to the humility of latter-day empiricism (or, more accurately, empirico-rationalism) might provoke an incredulous smile from those acquainted with the grand designs of systems theory. But, be that as it may, his objections are serious for they seem to imply that politics can not be about both liberation and elections. And to raise this whole vexed question of ends and means is to lead back to the assumptions about the nature of politics which must underlie any discussion of political praxis.

Fellow American theologian Herbert W. Richardson in an essay entitled "What Makes a Society Political?", defines politics, after the empiricist fashion, in the completely ahistorical and presumably contentless terms of brokerage of divergent interests.³⁴ Politics is seen as its own end in that the preservation of public mechanisms of compromise and conciliation is the only properly "political" value. So even if the form of "political" rule can be used to perpetuate the power of a dominant class, this would appear to be unobjectionable so long as this domination can be seen to exert itself through "political" channels. (Richardson, it is true, does refer to the necessity of the practical possibility of equal access to political means.

But he specifically ignores equality of participation and therefore also the infrastructural preconditions for an equalitarian politicization. Actual public participation becomes unimportant so long as the theoretical and practical possibility of it persists. This can only be regarded as a retrogression from Aristotle whom, however, most modern liberal followers of empiricism claim as their own. Aristotle at least displays no liberal squeamishness about the political and civilizing benefits of economic slavery, and further, he conceives of politics teleologically (though not historically) as integral to the full self-development (and 'eudaimonia') of man, the political animal. Politics for him is not a luxury consumer good in some utilitarian rational choice scale of values.) It would appear that, the prospect of a just society being utopian, man must perforce settle for the next best thing, the attainable 'summum bonum' of "political" society.

It is precisely at this point that we must inquire as to whether political theology's theoretical commitment to the liberation of society distinguishes itself in practice from political liberalism. It is not enough to say that politics is the public, institutional realization of human freedom. Does political theology understand politics as a "human action carrying out a humanizing project in a historical future"³⁵, or does it fall back into Bernard Crick's judgement that: "Politics are the public actions of free men. Freedom is the privacy of men from public actions."³⁶

It has already been noted that political theology

conceives its central task as the "secularization" or demystification of the ideological elements of religious language. But when, for example, Jürgen Moltmann argues that -- "The oppressed hold in their hand the key for the liberation of mankind from oppression" -- surely this must be predicated on an ideological programme. It would be absurd to imagine that by simply unmasking the pretensions of all theologies (except those which view politics as mere form without content?) any concrete liberation could be accomplished.³⁷ The danger is that the absolute primacy of criticism leads to criticism becoming the only absolute. This is especially serious if, as Richardson (in the course of commenting on essays by Metz and Moltmann) would have us believe, criticism is "the act of locating man in his world as a finite being and regarding his political endeavours not as 'building the kingdom of God here on earth', but as the creation of a tenuous finite good: a house to live in, a state that is at peace."³⁸ Hardly a rallying cry for a real movement of "liberation from oppression"!

In fact, Richardson holds that the question of revolution only arises with respect to the "totalitarian" state, and therefore only as a revolution against ideological politics, because as he states: "All ideological political programs lead to an augmentation of the power of the total state precisely because ideology presupposes that society is not composed of a plurality of separate and incommensurate interests, but is, rather, a single system." He adds in parenthesis: "It is worth noting, too, that contemporary

sociology -- to the extent that it presupposes society is a single functional system -- tends to reinforce the ideological tendency of modern political theory."³⁹ In all this he follows exactly Crick's warnings that: "Politics may be a messy, mundane, inconclusive, tangled business, far removed from the passion for certainty and the fascination for world-shaking quests which afflict the totalitarian intellectual; ...", and that "within a political community agreement about 'fundamentals' is never likely except by force or fraud; the only basic agreement in a political regime is to use political means. Politics is an activity and so cannot be reduced to a system of precise beliefs or to a set of fixed goals."⁴⁰ But to define politics only as technique, or pure undirected activity, makes the only function of politics its own self-preservation. In other words, man exists for politics, not politics for man -- a blatant functionalism if ever there was. There is, moreover, not a hint of recognition in the above that the empirico-rationalism of contemporary functionalism has its very own epistemological roots in the empiricist, pluralist, and pragmatist premises which underlie the liberal attack on ideology, and which, when constituted as their own "isms" are among the chief ideological supports of liberal democracy.⁴¹

Part of the problem may be that Richardson tries to marry a Marxist concept of ideology to an anti-Marxist concept of politics. Only by ignoring the material history of the state (that is, its actual function in history, not an assigned function in the "nature of things" or some political

scientist's latest "heuristic model") is it possible to maintain the liberal fiction of a politically neutral state or a "political society" predicated on an empiricist politics. Similarly, when Richardson sees ideology as the illegitimate rationalization of existing states of affairs which contain irrational elements or "contradictions", his overall perspective is naturalistic rather than historical. Here is where political theology is challenged to make a definitive break with all the social gospels of the past which sought not to change the human condition but only to make it more tolerable.⁴² The relation of ideology to history is that of the existence of contradictions to the creative act of overcoming them, and therefore the end of ideology must mean the end of history. There can be no permanent historical consciousness without the ideological mediation of political cognition (rational understanding of 'what is' and utopian imagination of the 'what is not yet') to the political action which gives birth to the future.⁴³

Transcendence, as Ernst Bloch has understood, is ultimately about the meaning of history. Therefore, political theology can not accept any perspective in which transcendence survives only as a disembodied metahistorical principle incidental to politics.⁴⁴ This brings us full circle to the problematic of theory and practice. If, as in the Barthian paradigm, God is so totally "other" that he relativizes all historical directions, secular man is condemned to existentialist despair. The charge facing the German theorists of political theology is how to link, in a critical yet creative

way, the eschatological promise of liberation to the actual revolutionary struggles of mankind in history.⁴⁵ Metz's response seems to be that "God is not 'above us' but 'before us'. His transcendence reveals itself as our 'absolute future'." He goes on to explain that where the --

... frontier experience of human domination of the world is not suppressed -- not even by the other extreme of total secular despair -- but accepted and lived through, there is opened to man the possibility of an authentic historical experience of faith. Acceptance of the uncontrollability of the future of the hominized world makes the mystery of its providential origin apparent. Man's experience is that in the precariousness of the hominized world -- which is ultimately the precariousness of his freedom in this world -- someone comes towards him from the future, the God who ordains and foresees everything, who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ as the inescapable and uncontrollable free future of man and of the world.⁴⁶

This is fine as far as it goes, which is, unfortunately, not nearly far enough. The danger in the polemic against ideological religion is that desacralization can become a new mystification by leading beyond self-critical awareness of ideology to the negation of ideology as such. An abstract futurism tends to simply circumvent the plane of present history -- the ideological history which is the only one through which faith (both as eschatological hope and utopian consciousness) can act upon a world ever in need of new creation.

Jürgen Moltmann, who pioneered a futuristic "theology of hope" in the mid 1960s, has since proposed a more cautious, qualified formula oriented toward the concrete politics of the present. "The synthesis of theology and political practice", he argues, "occurs in the sphere of political and

ethical reason. This sphere, at the institutional and ideological level, is a mixture of actualized freedoms and continuing oppressions."⁴⁷ In terms of his overall theological perspective Moltmann contends that the future-oriented creative dialectic of the theology of hope must be counterbalanced by the historically-present negative dialectic of a theology of the cross. But again the original problem of how eschatological hope becomes historical hope reappears. The two dialectics appear to operate on two different planes -- the former begins and ends with the absolutes of eschatology, the latter begins and ends with the relativities of history. Therefore the dialectic of negation, although it seeks salvation in history, does not necessarily lead to the salvation of history. The interrelationship, or rather intersection, of the principles of hope and negation in the mediating "sphere of political and ethical reason" can be at best a happy juxtaposition, and not the essential, integral synthesis which political theology was challenged to create.

For the interpreters of political theology in Latin America, salvation, if it demands a politics of liberation, cannot then remain ultimately extrinsic to it. Therefore, their theology of liberation rejects any separate level of political ethics as a mediation between faith and praxis. Faith, it is argued, can only be lived politically from within the praxis of liberation, and therefore the meaning of the gospel imperative as it affects political and ethical reason can only be discovered historically through this

praxis, not trans-temporally (i.e. futuristically) as some external standard to be imposed upon it.⁴⁸ The primacy of a transformative "revolutionary" praxis for the Latin Americans is clearly a reflection of the highly polarized social situation in which they are working. When it is perceived that there is no time to temporize, risks will be taken whatever the cost to intellectual purity. But their controversial solution to the problematic of 'orthopraxis' also reflects the basic intuition that even hope in an "absolute future" needs some tangible connection to concrete everyday human choices if it is ever to become operative at the level of politics.

Liberation theology, to the extent that it defines itself in relation to real historical events, represents a decisive stage in the transformation to a political theology. Its directness and sociological sophistication go a long way toward overcoming the objections of Fr. Greeley, and, more importantly, confront head-on the soft assumptions of a liberal empiricist approach to politics. There is no politics which is purely and simply its own end. Politics is an activity, but a directed not an absolutely-valued one. Politics is so important because it can become the primary sector of action in which men strive for their liberation. Politics is not ultimately about government or social control (for which it is quite unnecessary and often bothersome) or about private choices or "interests" (even when they supposedly pertain to the "common good"), but about the historical advancement of human living-together through

political means. The purpose of politics is to create a political society, but that means a process, not simply of implementing "natural" or "developed" forms of calculation and adjustment, but of constantly seeking new solutions to the historical problems of communal life, -- of working toward a political context of equal justice and equal participation; a process, therefore, which could conceivably culminate only with the end of history.

In summary, the present ongoing 'politicization' of Christian theology reveals a major departure from the many previous attempts to combine faith and politics. The new theology fully accepts the autonomy of the secular sphere, and respects the domain of the secular sciences. It does not pretend to supply a "religious" interpretation of culture or society. Nor does it present itself as only the latest recipe for Christian political action. Rather, political theology is, fundamentally, a new and radical way of doing theology, in which politics and history become the very medium of theological discourse. Theology does not impose an externally valid meaning on political history "from above"; on the contrary, it is through political praxis -- through the arena of secular action in which humanity struggles for freedom, justice, and peace -- that theology is able to discover its own meaning in a historically evolving way.

However, as we have seen, the political theology developed in Europe has remained largely academic - a theology of the universities. Its talk of radical politics has tended to remain abstract and futuristic. As such, it

can neither effectively confront its pragmatist critics, nor prevent itself from lapsing into a vague liberal utopianism. It is in Latin America that the new theology has been forced into the streets, and has become the immediate intellectual environment for leading Christian social activists such as Dom Helder Câmara. The result has been a "theology of liberation" which does not shy away from the exigencies of power and violence, or from the particular realities of such factors as class and nation in the political process. In liberation theology, to which we now turn in detail, radicalism and realism become complementary aspects of the same vocation.

NOTES

1. Cited in Johannes B. Metz, Theology of the World, (New York: Seabury, 1969), pp. 128-129.
2. Following the classical thesis of Weber, cultural "secularization" operates as a key concept in current North American paradigms of political development. See, for example, Gabriel Almond and G. Bingham Powell, Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach, (Boston: Little Brown, 1966). For a theological perspective on the sociology of religion parts of Gregory Baum, Religion and Alienation, (New York: Paulist Press, 1975) are particularly useful. The conventional wisdom on the decline of the influence of religion is challenged in Andrew Greeley, Unsecular Man, (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), and Greeley and Baum, eds., The Persistence of Religion, Concilium Vol. 81, (New York: Seabury, 1973).
3. I say only "some" justification because Bonhoeffer's embrace of radical secularity is a consequence of his belief in human responsibility and maturity and goes hand in hand with his rejection of the cultural captivity of the Christian message. It has nothing to do with sanctifying any model of secularization. This is not so clear in Cox's The Secular City, or especially among exponents of "Christian atheism" such as Thomas Altizer, who have tended to make a religion of secularization. Cox has refined his position considerably, however, and some thinkers associated with God-is-dead theology, notably Gabriel Vahanian, are in fact very close to Bonhoeffer. For further background cf. Daniel Callahan, ed., The Secular City Debate (New York: Macmillan, 1966); William Miller, ed., The New Christianity (New York: Dell, 1967); Thomas Ogletree, The Death of God Controversy, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966).
4. J.B. Metz, op.cit., p. 109.
5. Ibid., p. 110.
6. Bultmann does not in fact come to grips with the political ramifications of his critical principles, a weakness which Dorothee Sölle attempts to overcome in her Political Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974).
7. On the question of a value-free social science see Alan Ryan, ed., The Philosophy of Social Explanation (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), especially the essay by Charles Taylor, "Neutrality in Political Science".
8. This has been particularly well-established in the work of the noted American theologian H. Richard Niebuhr. As Raymond Dehainaut states: "Niebuhr was convinced that all men are historically conditioned thinkers who cannot

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describe the universal save from a relative point of view'. Therefore he could not disparage or abandon historical reason which is the only reason through which man has the possibility of receiving God's revelation." Faith and Ideology in Latin-American Perspective (Cuernavaca: CIDOC Sondeos no. 85, 1972), pt. 2, p. 26.

As Paul Blanquart points out the act of faith is also necessarily a political act since faith demands to be lived politically. ("L'acte de croire et l'action politique", Lumiere et Vie, 19:98, June-July 1970) Moreover it is in vain to attempt to interpret the gospel in terms which claim to be completely politically neutral. Cf. Jürgen Moltmann, Religion, Revolution and the Future (New York: Charles Scribner, 1969), esp. chp. V "Toward a Political Hermeneutic of the Gospel".

10. Metz, op.cit., p. 113.

11. Francis Fiorenza, "Political Theology and Liberation Theology", in Thomas McFadden, ed., Liberation, Revolution and Freedom, (New York: Seabury, 1975), p. 15.

12. Joseph Petulla, Christian Political Theology: A Marxian Guide, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1972), p. 31.

13. Ibid., p. 26.

14. American reaction seems to have been one of slightly bemused tolerance. (See the editorial "Approaching Wave of an 'In' Idea: Catholic Marxism", America, 114:867, June 25, 1966.) Among the main writings of the movement are: Adrian Cunningham et. al., 'Slant' Manifesto, Catholics and the Left, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1966); Terry Eagleton and Brian Wicker, eds., From Culture to Revolution, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1968); Neil Middleton, The Language of Christian Revolution, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1968); Brian Wicker, First the Political Kingdom, (Notre Dame University Press, 1968). Two publications of religious orders, New Blackfriars in England and the French Dominicans Frères du Monde, have also strongly advocated a left-wing Catholicism. In a particularly controversial article the editor of the former wrote: "Christianity is a movement of change within the world, a movement which seeks to transform the institutional relationships between men in order the better to express the relationships which constitute them as human; this movement is to be hated by the world, is to come in conflict with the power structure of the world, but is eventually to 'overcome the world'. 'This is the victory which overcomes the world, our faith'. It therefore seems not unreasonable to describe the church as a revolutionary movement within the world. The preaching of the gospel is a danger to the values of the world and to the economic and political structures which embody

these values." (Herbert McCabe, "Priesthood and Revolution", Commonweal, September 20, 1962, p. 622.)

15. The idea of a revolutionary social gospel is not new. See, for example, Gregory Vlastos and R.B. Scott et.al., Towards the Christian Revolution, (Chicago: Willett, Clark & Co., 1936), which includes an essay on "The Marxist Challenge". But whereas previously revolution tended to become the captive of Christianity, today the opposite is more likely to occur.
16. Alistair Kee, ed., A Reader in Political Theology, (London: SCM, 1974), p. xi.
17. This tendency is especially pronounced in Petulla, op.cit. For more sober, scholarly assessments of the political climate see Oscar Cullmann, Jesus and the Revolutionaries, (New York: Harper & Row, 1970); S.G.F. Brandon, Jesus and the Zealots, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967); The Political Christ, (London: SCM, 1973); Francis Murphy, Politics and the Early Christian, (New York: Desclee de Brouwer, 1967).
18. Kee, op.cit., p. x.
19. Cf. Ruurd Veldhuis, Realism versus Utopianism?, (Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1975). Unfortunately, the break between a social gospel and political theology has yet to be sufficiently appreciated. See, for example, "Reflections on Theologies of Social Change" in Theology and Change, (London: SCM, 1975).
20. Charles West, Communism and the Theologians, (New York: Macmillan, 1958), chp. 4, p. 118.
21. See Paul Merkley, Reinhold Niebuhr: A Political Account, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975), *passim*. Niebuhr confessed in 1960: "'When I find neo-orthodoxy turning into sterile orthodoxy or a new Scholasticism, I find I am a liberal at heart, and that many of my broadsides at liberalism were indiscriminate.'" Cited in Alec Vidler, The Church in an Age of Revolution, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 221.
22. See Rubem Alves, A Theology of Human Hope, (St. Meinrad: Abbey Press, 1974), p. 181, footnote no. 25.
23. This assumption is not to be confused with the perfectibility of human nature. For a brilliant, exhaustive biblical and psychosocial reinterpretation of the Christian doctrine of sin see Juan Luis Segundo, Evolution and Guilt, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1974). Dorothee Sölle points out in Political Theology that to perceive the present situation as the natural condition of sinful man is to preclude inquiry into the possibilities of alternate human behavior and to distort the rich meaning of forgiveness and resurrection.

24. Segundo, The Sacraments Today, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1974), p. 65.
25. José Miranda, Marx and the Bible, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1974), chp. 4 "Law and Civilization", esp. pp. 180-185. On the concept of "social sin" see also Patrick Kerans, Sinful Social Structures, (New York: Paulist Press, 1974).
26. Willi Oelmüller, "The Limitations of Social Theories", in Jürgen Moltmann et. al., Religion and Political Society, (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), p. 160. It needs to be added that the institutionalization of the fight against social evil is an argument neither for a contrived "end of ideology" nor (as Oelmüller points out on pages 164 to 165 of the above) for the necessity of western parliamentary democracy or, as Seymour Lipset would have it, "democratic class struggle".
27. José Miguez Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), esp. pp. 78-79; Moltmann, Hope and Planning, (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), chp. 8. The term 'historical' is crucial in that it is in opposition to both classical naturalistic science and the scientific rationalism which predominates in bourgeois culture. Later chapters will explore the further question of objectivism and historicism as it relates to scientific and dialectical reason.
28. Fernand Dumont, "The Sociology of Religion and the Renewal of Theology", in L.K. Shook, ed., Theology of Renewal, (Montreal: Palm, 1968). Who does not know Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it."? But is not the point really that the world is understood in the act of transforming it -- the meaning of history in the making of it?
29. For a brief overview of the modernist controversy see Vidler, op.cit., chp. 16. Baum makes much of the "Blondelian shift" in Man Becoming, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970). However Yves Congar's History of Theology (Garden City: Doubleday, 1968), which includes but one scant reference to the work of Maurice Blondel, shows a continuing heavy influence of scholasticism. The sciences are still seen only as "auxiliaries" or "servants" of theology, primarily for its "rational support" (Congar, p. 287). Catholic theology has much to overcome with its enormous legacy of Roman legalism and Greek "tele-naturalism". On the latter term see William Bluhm, Theories of the Political System, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965 and subsequent eds.)
30. Sölle, op.cit., p. 59.
31. Metz, op.cit., p. 95.

32. Metz, "Prophetic Authority", in Moltmann et.al., Religion and Political Society; also Sölle, op.cit., passim.
33. Andrew Greeley, "Theological Table-Talk. Politics and Political Theologians", Theology Today, vol. 30, 1974, pp. 391-397. See also Roger Shinn, "Political Theology in the Crossfire", Journal of Current Social Issues, vol. 102, Spring 1972, pp. 10-20.
34. This essay appears in Moltmann et.al., Religion and Political Society.
35. Bonino, op.cit., p. 77 (emphasis added); see also Alves, op.cit., passim. On this point both these authors, exemplify the Latin American challenge to a political theology which will be taken up in the next chapter.
36. Bernard Crick, In Defence of Politics, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1964), p. 18.
37. Moltmann, "The Cross and Civil Religion", in Religion and Political Society, p. 43. With respect to political philosophy and the criticism of ideology see Henry David Aiken, "The Revolt Against Ideology", and (with Daniel Bell) "Ideology -- A Debate" in Richard Cox, ed., Ideology, Politics and Political Theory, (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1969).
38. H.W. Richardson, "Introduction" to Religion and Political Society, p. 5.
39. Ibid., pp. 3-4.
40. Crick, op.cit., pp. 54-55.
41. For a radical critique of some of these premises see Robert Paul Wolff et. al., A Critique of Pure Tolerance, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).
42. All naturalisms, teleological or empiricist, are fundamentally antihistorical. This applies both to the neo-Thomism (see, for example, Jacques Maritain's Man and the State and Integral Humanism) so predominant in traditional Catholic social teaching, as well as to progressivist American theology with its close affinities to pragmatist philosophies such as that of John Dewey.
43. Even so intransigent a Marxist structuralist as Louis Althusser admits that ideology would survive in a communist society, but only in a mediating (i.e., as the "lived-in" relation to the world linking thought and action) not an historical sense. The wish, implicit in the Marxian dialectic, for an historical end to ideology tends to become itself an ideological rationalization of history. In the end rational certitude destroys historical hope.

44. Cf. Richardson, "What Makes a Society Political?", pp. 114-118.
45. Concrete, ongoing criticism is crucial to avoid an eschatological 'baptizing' of history. (This was a major problem with the rather indiscriminate fashion in which Harvey Cox in The Secular City celebrated the modern world as a revolutionary world of social change and secular progress.) But such criticism ought not simply to condemn "ersatz" or "political" religions, dubious terms at best, and often imprecise pejorative synonyms for all ideological struggles.
46. Metz, Theology of the World, pp. 88, 73.
47. Moltmann, "The Cross and Civil Religion", op.cit., p. 38.
48. For a brief comparison on this point see Fiorenza, op.cit. The danger, of course, is that of a "situation ethics" in which praxis goes beyond being the essential medium of truth to become its determinative criterion. All valued ends must be made effective, but not all effective means must be valued.

CHAPTER TWO

THE THEOLOGY OF POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION: TOWARD A THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION

For centuries the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America was considered to be largely bereft of theological imagination. The institution itself was insular, monolithic, and profoundly distrustful of innovation, and what scholarship it produced was at best imitative of intellectual currents originating in Europe. Furthermore, the Church could be, and was, counted on to provide staunch support for established power relationships and illiberal traditions of every sort, so that even the timid reformism of Catholic "social gospel" teaching found only half-hearted acceptance.¹ Such a repressive climate was stony soil indeed for the development of new responses to historical change. In an underdeveloped continent ripe for revolution the Church's meagre adaptive and interpretive resources were woefully inadequate. The momentous global renewal inspired by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) was therefore a particularly opportune event for Latin American Catholicism. It forced an official recognition, among the hierarchy, of modern society as increasingly secular and pluralistic. It liberated creative energies for new tasks and allowed theologians a base from which to pursue independent and provocative lines of inquiry. In the intensity of the post-conciliar ferment a school of thought known as the "theology of liberation" was conceived. Today it dominates Christian debate in Latin America and is making a significant impact

world-wide.

The emergence of a theology of liberation coincided with a period of extraordinarily rapid radicalization among many Catholic (and Protestant) intellectuals in Latin America. The initial conciliar directions of liberal reformism were rejected, or rather sharpened and superseded, almost as soon as they were assimilated. Within only a few years liberalization produced an ethic of liberation predicated on the need for radical social change. And whereas before, the urgency of economic development was seen above all moralistically in terms of a religiously-based imperative of "integral humanism", the new breed of theologians embraced modern secular science and, inspired by a revitalized indigenous Marxist sociology, began to attack the conventions of "developmentalism" directly, particularly the assumptions, implied in the latter's imported vocabulary, of the beneficence of foreign aid and quantitative capitalist growth. A few pioneers in this movement, such as the charismatic Colombian priest-sociologist Camilo Torres, even went so far as to join nationalist guerilla groups to prove the depth of their commitment to revolutionary change. Latin America was replacing Western Europe as the front line of progressive theology and Christian social activism.²

The new theology's polemic against outside "imperialistic" domination led its authors to search for roots in the particular realities of their own situation and to define their theology as distinctively Latin American.³ Undoubtedly the catalytic event in this process was the meeting,

the most important to date, of the continental organization of bishops (CELAM) at Medellín, Colombia in August and September of 1968. The purpose of this momentous gathering was to develop guidelines for the systematic application of the spirit and insights of Vatican II within the Latin American context. But, notwithstanding that the conference was officially opened by Paul VI (the first pope to set foot in South America) and otherwise cautiously orchestrated, its results went far beyond the mere repetition of conciliar themes.⁴ As Juan Luis Segundo points out: "When we compare the documents of Medellín with those of Vatican II, which came earlier, we note an obvious shift of attention from intramural ecclesiastical problems to those posed by the necessity of relating the essence of the Christian message with the task of liberating man. And this fact cannot help but have a profound effect on all the basic notions of our faith -- not for the sake of trading them in for others but for the sake of giving them the ring of truth that only commitment to history can give them."⁵

Medellín is so important because it marks the birth of an idiom of liberation within the Latin American church as a whole. The documents emphasize the social evils of economic neocolonialism and the violence of the status quo, and go on to declare that the option of the church must be always on the side of justice for the poor and the oppressed. There are weaknesses however. The analysis is largely descriptive and is extremely vague or ambiguous on questions such as the actual material basis for the overthrow of

oppressive structures. Solutions continue to be grounded in personal 'conscientization' and an idealistic philosophy of education. The bishops therefore affirm too unreservedly that -- "Education is actually the key instrument for liberating the masses from all servitude ...".⁶ Moreover, an undialectical dualism is retained in the sections on pastoral practice which accord separate treatment to "elites" and "masses". But all in all the considerably politicized language of the conference is remarkable when one considers that it had to reflect a compromise among the membership of a large and supposedly deeply conservative hierarchy. The official call to action of Medellín provided a tremendous momentum to the quest for a theology of liberation as the definitive form of a Latin American political theology.⁷

The dominant characteristic of liberation theology is that it provides an all-embracing theological perspective which can respond directly to the struggles for economic justice and national dignity that are so basic to every aspect of social and political life in what has come to be known as the Third World. Liberation theology is therefore not reducible to any of its narrower European or North American antecedents: it is not a theology of development, or revolution, or secularization, although important elements of these have contributed to its self-understanding. The theology of development, for example, defined the notion of progress as the linking of the spiritual and the material in a qualitative humanization. For Christians, development was to be seen as "a God-given possibility to man for making

him a collaborator towards the completion of God's creation, through man's link with God in Christ." Christians were also called upon to strive for "a balance between the extremes of easy optimistic cosmic visions of a 'secular' Christianity and of the welfare policies of affluent societies, and the pessimistic theologies of the sin of man, of his condemnation, of the vanity of history and the tragedy of the human condition." However, the theology of development was burdened by the paternalist overtones of conventional development language and its search for balance did not break with traditional naturalistic teleological categories.⁸ As for the theology of revolution, it was too dependent on the short-lived enthusiasm generated by New Left radicalism, and seemed to be interested in discussing revolution only as an abstract entity, as though Christianity were a sort of revolutionary theory 'par excellence'.⁹ Such intellectual indulgences could be little more than an ornament in the 'real-politik' of actual revolutionary situations. Similar considerations apply to the faith in secularization (which frequently tried to outdo modern atheism in claiming secularity as its offspring) so fashionable among theological liberals in the 1960s. And as José Miguez Bonino points out: "The fundamental proposition [of liberal theology] is always the same: there is an essence of God which we can know through philosophical speculation, moral conscience or mystical contemplation, before meeting the specific manifestations and concrete demands in which God comes -- and has come -- to us. It is only natural that, when these

philosophies prove untenable, and the 'essence' of God vanishes, we shall have a theology 'of the death of God', the Christian faith will be reduced to some form of philanthropic activity and Jesus left hanging in the air as an example."¹⁰

Liberation theology consciously rejects a theological liberalism which is not tied to a historical praxis. It requires of theology that it ground its reflections in an indigenous social and historical matrix.¹¹ The Latin American founders of a theology of liberation have always been concerned to create an ongoing political theology of praxis, not a triumphalist universal theory of liberation. In fact, their major complaint against the German originators of political theology is the latter's retreat from concrete history into a set of universalistic categories. When Moltmann describes what he means by political liberation he tends to resort to metaphysical language such as "liberations" from the alienations of "vicious circles of death".¹² (Metz, too, remains abstract when he states that the Christian community must more than ever "become the advocate of the poor and oppressed; who are "poor" precisely because they cannot be defined by the value of their position in the so-called progress of mankind."¹³ The poverty of millions of Latin Americans is a good deal more immediate and specific than that.)

The Europeans correctly perceive that politics is fundamental to the struggle for human freedom, but they seem to ignore the fact that: "In common Christian usage, the

introduction of the term 'liberation' implies a dislocation of the semantic axis of the word 'liberty'."¹⁴ As Hugo Assmann explains, liberation is a dialectical historical process, not the critical annunciation of certain idealized natural rights. To the extent that political theology's utopian promise of liberation lacks any concrete focus in history and ideology, it becomes practically irrelevant, or, more often than not, invites an optimistic faith in a vague social-democratic pluralism.¹⁵ In other words, the politics of political theology can be so "secularized" (i.e., opposed to radical ideology by misconceiving it as "political religion") by its critical theory that it is in effect neutralized when it comes to the struggle to realize new possibilities within the conditions of the present. As the previous chapter concluded, the negative dialectic of eschatological judgement must be adequately integrated into the creative ~~dialectic~~ of a historical process of liberation. "The Latin American theologians," Gregory Baum notes perceptively, "are well aware of the critical function which Christian eschatology must play within a secular political utopia. But this critical function cannot be exercised except from a position of solidarity with this movement. The Latin American theologians oppose German political theology not because it demands a critique of the secular utopia, but only because the German thinkers seem to think that such a critique can be offered apart from a political identification with it."¹⁶

The ~~theology~~ of liberation is emerging in Latin

America as the definitive form of a practical political theology. By "practical" I mean that as theology it proceeds from praxis, -- as reflection that assumes a prior political commitment and total existential response to the demands of social justice. Although engagement in political struggles has become a major fact of life in the Latin American church, this activism is not an attempt by theologians "to boost their 'rating' in a revolutionary world", but a most fundamental question of methodology.¹⁷ Marcel Xhaufflaire, in a critical assessment of Metz's political theology cites the objection that: "The whole error of political theology is in being theology and not a political effort to mobilize Christians around a political strategy by means of reasonable motivations'."¹⁸ The liberation theologians, however, insist that there can and must be a fundamental unity between questions of theological doctrine and the 'orthopraxis' of political action.¹⁹ The role of theology is not to make politics conform to theological abstractions but to make Christians critically aware of the changing imperatives of faith in the socio-political realm. As J.L. Segundo points out in The Liberation of Theology, methodological considerations are of paramount importance in this task since any religious language, even one of liberation, can be easily distorted and weakened by improper or indiscriminate use.

For the liberation theologians theology is above all an interpretive process not a religious ideology of liberation. Gustavo Gutierrez, in his seminal work, A Theology of Liberation, has given the movement its basic definition

of theology as "critical reflection on praxis". Gutierrez explains that "the theology of liberation offers us not so much a new theme for reflection as a new way to do theology. Theology as critical reflection on historical praxis is a liberating theology, a theology of the liberating transformation of the history of mankind This is a theology which does not stop with reflecting on the world, but rather tries to be part of the process through which the world is transformed."²⁰ The primary critical resource of liberation theology is therefore not an essentialist ethics or metaphysics, or a dogmatic orthodoxy, but a living 'orthopraxy' in constant contact with the progress of the historical sciences of man. What is involved is more than simply devoting more attention to the facts of empirical experience.²¹ An "epistemological break" is required to refound the relationship between theological and scientific praxis. As Lawrence Egan notes: "Instead of starting from eternal truths, which are then applied to the 'world-life situation', the Liberation theologians start with the reality or environment in which the people are. This initial point illustrates the need for collaboration between the theologian and the social scientist."²² The point is further illustrated by Assmann when he argues that: "Critical reflection on human history becomes theological to the degree that it looks for the presence of the Christian faith in historical experience ... The theology of liberation takes a decisive step in the direction of the secular sciences

by admitting that the fact of human experience, on which secular sciences have the first word to say, is ~~its~~ basic point of reference, its contextual starting-point."²³ In sum, as Raul Vidales puts it; the theology of liberation "supposes the voice of the human sciences and especially the social sciences, as a first word of theology."²⁴ Since only an evolving scientific understanding of reality is capable of formulating in a reasonably objective and concrete manner the questions to which theology must respond as it confronts the world, it follows that the purpose of this knowledge is not to justify theological positions as such, but to exercise a critical function in regard to their historical development. What is at stake is "not only a question of revealing the social and political implications of the Gospel in regard to this or that actual situation, but of making effective participation in the process of liberation the occasion for verifying theological discourse."²⁵ Theology as critical reflection on praxis "should contribute in one way or another to a more evangelical, more authentic, more concrete, and more efficacious commitment to liberation."²⁶

The input from social science as outlined above remains independent of theological truth (that is, empirical knowledge is in no way made to conform to theological pre-suppositions) while at the same time extending to every aspect of the theological enterprise including that of the determination of truth. This is nowhere better illustrated than in Segundo's discussion of the "hermeneutic circle".²⁷ Briefly, he argues that the quest for an authentic Christian

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faith must proceed through well-defined stages beginning with concrete experience and the application of the tools of social inquiry to this experience. In the context of an active commitment to liberation the knowledge gained thereby provides the theologian with a basis for "ideological suspicion". In other words, a historically engaged scientific process allows one to discover the irrationalities and contradictions within existing situations and subsequently to critically evaluate established ideology in the light of this new knowledge. Ideological suspicion, as the opening for a thoroughgoing critique of present superstructural formations, leads necessarily to the critique of theological language, for even the revealed symbols of faith can only be explicated through historically-conditioned forms of expression. This theological critique leads in turn to "exegetical suspicion" and so to a renewed liberative hermeneutic. In short, the correct apprehension and practice of the Christian message is predicated not on blind obedience, but on a critical, liberating consciousness of the worldly situation of man. Although theological suspicions cannot be verified in any strictly quantitative sense, they can form a rational and dialectical process in which the language of faith is constantly judged and re-evaluated from within its historical context.²⁸

The exercise of historical reason in liberation theology is most clearly evident in its central theme of dependency. In contrast to European and North American theologians (who possessed a rich academic tradition and

were already familiar with such innovations as worker priests and Christian-Marxist dialogue) the Latin Americans were just beginning their creative project at the time when the concept of a "Third World" was gaining currency. By 1960, studies such as those under Raul Prebisch at the United Nations' Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) were pressing the challenge of self-sustaining independent development for the industrializing nations. In Latin America events such as the Cuban revolution and the spectacular failure of the Alliance for Progress led many to doubt whether such national goals could ever be met within the framework of international capitalism. The great uncertainties of the early 1960s called for new approaches from social scientists beyond the paternalistic developmental models of the West or the recycled slogans of an orthodox Marxist scholasticism. Following the earlier leads of such seminal works as Paul Baran's The Political Economy of Growth a new school of Latin Americans sought to evolve a "theory of dependence" which would apply a neo-Marxist analysis to the contemporary struggles of under-developed countries.²⁹ This effort at an indigenous radical political economy was immediately welcomed by the theologians as a logical starting-point in the determination of a new critical language of faith. The dependency paradigm provided an engaged, holistic context in which to work out the real material and structural meanings of liberation. Moreover, the birth of a dependency critique paralleled the process of theological renewal. In the words of Hugo Assmann,

Rooted as it is in the present historical context of Latin America, the theological and political theme of liberation is the obvious correlative of the sociological theme of 'dependence'. Just as the latter marks the beginning of a new line in social science in Latin America, breaking away from the scientific methodology and 'theoretical models' imported from North American and European schools, which were incapable of facing up to the complexity and political connotation of the problem in this form, so the theological and political theme of liberation ushers in a new context and a new methodology of Christian reflection on faith as a definite historical event.³⁰

For Latin American theologians the methodology of liberation finds its most concrete focus in the dominant experience of exploitation in the Third World, namely, dependence. Many recent documents therefore include arguments along the lines that in "large measure the underdevelopment of Latin America is a byproduct of capitalist development in the West." Terms such as "neocolonialism" or "proletarian nations" are also commonplace.³¹ Ruben Alves even speaks of a "world proletarian consciousness" and Enrique Dussel suggests that European categories of class analysis must be revised and expanded to deal adequately with marginalized minorities, regions, and the oppression of entire peoples.³² The choice of vocabulary reflects a growing conviction that for the great mass of Latin Americans, reformist or "mixed economy" paths to development have demonstrated themselves to be impotent, or disingenuous, or both. In short, supposedly "moderate" imported solutions are rejected because, as a Mexican priests' group puts it: "The analysis of the mechanisms of capitalist appropriation and accumulation, which at the same time constitute mechanisms of marginalization and oppression operating at the national

as well as the international level, allows us to discard as illusory all alternatives of 'development' or of 'liberation' which situate themselves inside this same system, leaving intact its essential structure, a structure which, as is well known, bases itself on the organization of social labor starting from the private appropriation of the means of production and the mercantilization of human laboring power."³³

Among the liberation theologians Gustavo Gutierrez is the best interpreter of dependence as a basic indigenous concept which, however, is by no means self-sufficient.³⁴ The futility of social-democratic or Christian-democratic options does not mean that more far-reaching socialist alternatives are unproblematical. Throughout his analysis Gutierrez is concerned to demonstrate that -- "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 would allow for the change to a new society, a socialist society -- or at least allow that such a society might be possible."³⁵ Any Latin American road to socialism, even in purely economic and political terms, would have to face and defeat immense obstacles. Yet, as Gutierrez argues further: "Achieving the liberation of the continent means more than just overcoming economic, social, and political dependence. It also means seeing that humanity is marching toward a society in which man will be free of every servitude and master of his own destiny."³⁶

Dependency must always be considered within the parameters of the question of development as it relates to liberation. These concepts are all interrelated in that underlying liberation theology is "the historical experience of the actual nature of under-development, as a form of dependence. The notion of 'liberation' is correlative to that of 'development'."³⁷ 'Liberation' has been chosen as the overarching symbol because it allows the theologian to integrate in a totalistic way the history of the spiritual and material development of mankind with the history of the saving action of freedom from sin and material bondage.³⁸

As a former president of CELAM affirms: "It [liberation] is the fulfillment in time of the integral salvation of the totality of man and his history, in permanent tension toward an eschatological end."³⁹ The Christian perspective of liberation is one which is simultaneously immanent and transcendent: an identification with historical progress and a critical judgement on it. Ignacio Ellacuría notes that not all liberation "is Christian in its inspiration, thrust, objectives, and means." But at the same time he contends that: "All complete liberation is political, and all authentic liberation is Christian." "Christian liberation," he explains, "is not set off as an alternative to other forms of liberation. As a Christian option, its purpose is not to replace other forms of liberation but to work with them as a transforming leaven."⁴⁰ It is this transformative dialectic, not extrinsic, but intrinsic to the movement of secular history, which is perceived as the

distinctively Christian contribution to it.

It follows from the above that the appropriation of the term 'liberation' by Latin American political theology is a protest against existing concepts of development which rest on assumptions derived from naturalistic ontology and incrementalist or empiricist theories of change. Development in this conventional sense is limited to the unfolding (i.e., "natural" growth and differentiation) of pre-existent functional specificities and potencies. The social experience of alienation and exploitation -- in theological terms, the problematic of structural evil -- has no place in this process whether it be organic or mechanistic. By contrast, a concept of liberation from evil or "sin" which has meaning for material history, presupposes within that history a dialectical interplay of negation and rebirth, death and new creation. Sin and resurrection take on a historical dimension which is therefore also social and political.⁴¹ 'Development' here is subsumed under the category of 'liberation', because it is linked not to accretionary change but to change that is dialectical and qualitative in nature.

The adoption of a language of liberation, it must be emphasized, is not an arbitrary or merely theoretical decision on the part of the theologians. Rather, the basic shift in perspective which it involves must be rooted in social praxis. The vantage point of liberation theology can never be that of the elites who currently control the world's technological and capital assets and who wield enormous political power. The reason, argues Gutierrez, is that --

"What is really at stake is not a greater rationalization of economic and political power or a better social organization, but through them the whole question of justice and love."⁴²

The resurrection of these very classical themes, he insists, is the necessary consequence of re-reading the gospel from a standpoint in which the major challenge to faith comes not from the unbeliever, but from the marginalized man who has been dehumanized by so-called "development", or left by the wayside by the so-called progress of industrial modernity.⁴³

Joseph Comblin concurs that the raw biblical language gives back a voice to that man as against the "natural laws" of a purely scientific and technical rationality.⁴⁴ There is a choice between the realism of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor, for whom it is so evident that the masses crave only bread and security, and the foolish, subversive delusion of his victim that freedom is the true vocation of mankind. There is also a choice between the "kingdom of freedom" which lies in some imaginary Walden Two or proletarian paradise, and that which more modestly (but less inclined to eventual nihilistic despair) makes itself present through the permanent struggle for new modes of communal life.⁴⁵

For the liberation theologians there is a fundamental dishonesty about models of development, or of social revolution for that matter, which pretend indifference to the classical questions concerning human freedom. But their response is based less on traditional humanistic criteria (e.g., the natural rights of individuals) than on a post-Enlightenment consciousness of history. For Rubem Alves, in

particular, man is pre-eminently a historical being. The language of faith too must be radically historical, for it is the expression of a community which "speaks with the voice of men and not from a meta-historical point of reference."⁴⁶ Christian reflection on liberation extends beyond the material facts of oppression to the subject's consciousness "of being dominated by a power which does not allow it to create its own history."⁴⁷ This theme is also at the heart of Gutierrez's statement that -- "To characterize the situation of the poor countries as dominated and oppressed leads one to speak of economic, social, and political liberation. But we are dealing here with a much more integral and profound understanding of human existence and its historical future."⁴⁸ This is not to say that factors such as the ~~political struggle are secondary, but rather, that they~~ only take on their full meaning within the historical quest of man to be "master of his own destiny". Gutierrez goes so far as to argue that political liberation is the self-creation of man in history.⁴⁹ The sin of oppression is therefore as much a sin against the future of the human race as it is a simple denial of justice. It is in the very nature of liberation that its negation of the present cannot prescind from an act of historical will.⁵⁰ It is through the dialectic of self-determination that man's personal and collective existence is integrated and assumes its global significance:

To conceive of history as a process of the liberation of man is to consider freedom as a historical conquest; it is to understand that the step

from an abstract to a real freedom is not taken without a struggle full of pitfalls, detours, and temptations to run away. The goal is not only better living conditions, a radical change of structures, a social revolution, it is much more: the continuous creation, never ending, of a new way to be a man, a permanent cultural revolution.

... History, contrary to essentialist and static thinking, is not the development of potentialities preexistent in man; it is rather the conquest of new, qualitatively different ways of being a man in order to achieve an ever more total and complete fulfillment of the individual in solidarity with all mankind.⁵¹

The "historical conquest" of freedom is above all a political struggle, which is, moreover, the shared vocation of every man. In Freedom to be Free Arturo Paoli writes that only "by entering into the problematic of politics and by doing so as a sign of contestation, with a demand for liberation, can I discover the deception that concretely alienates man and prevents him from being a person."⁵² The overcoming of the "oppressed consciousness" demands a political humanism which is both dialectical and messianic.⁵³ It follows that notions of 'development' or 'progress' which are unilinear and/or one-dimensional and technocratic, must also be anti-political and antihuman. Participation in politics, in other words, is fundamental to that which constitutes man as human, in complete contradistinction to those definitions of it which would reduce it to a 'take-it-or-leave-it' proposition or a purely technical or professional activity.⁵⁴ Men, asserts Segundo, live in a world of political options, and that fact gives a primacy to their political commitments -- that is to say, to ideology: to commitment to ends not only to means.⁵⁵ This means going far beyond the politics as public 'areté' of the ancient Greeks (Aristotle's "man is a

political animal"), or even the interdependent relation of politics to 'socialization' in the official documents of the church of Vatican II (the Thomistic "man is a social and political animal").⁵⁶ Gutierrez argues that, through the addition of historical consciousness, socialization must be conceived of as at the same time the politicization of human life.⁵⁷ In its most unqualified form this leads logically to Hugo Assmann's contention that: "Politicizing private life doesn't mean threatening its precious inner core of personal intensity, but making it conscious of its true historical character."⁵⁸ It would be wrong to infer that such a totalistic position is an accepted premise of all liberation theologians.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, there is a broad consensus about the "universality of the political sphere", which Gutierrez unhesitatingly explains as meaning that:

Human reason has become political reason. For the contemporary historical consciousness, things political are not only those which one attends to during the free time afforded by his private life; nor are they even a well-defined area of human existence. The construction -- from its economic bases -- of the "polis", of a society in which people can live in solidarity, is a dimension which encompasses and severely conditions all of man's activity. It is the sphere for the exercise of a critical freedom which is won down through history. It is the universal determinant and the collective arena for human fulfillment. Only within this broad meaning of the political sphere can we situate the more precise notion of "politics", as an orientation to power. For Max Weber this orientation constitutes the typical characteristics of political activity. The concrete forms taken on by this quest for an exercise of political power are varied. But they are all based on the profound aspiration of man, who wants to take hold of the reins of his own life and be the artisan of his own destiny. Nothing lies outside the political sphere understood in this way.⁶⁰

If any conclusion can be drawn from the above it is that a theology of liberation could never be a merely updated social gospel, whether Catholic or Protestant. Notions such as the "natural" division of society into classes (the theory of division of labour and irreducibility of economic interests which underlies not only conservatism but, as well, non-Marxist prescriptions for a 'class politics') or the functional "essence" of the state are fundamentally incompatible with a view of the political sphere in which the tensions within that sphere appear principally as an incompleteness for which history is necessary, although not sufficient, to overcome. Politics is neither swallowed up by salvation, nor does politics replace it; rather politics is the pervasive conflictual reality through which the eschatological absolute reveals itself as a historical dialectics of freedom. There is, in other words, a salvation-history which is much more than the simple, and often only moralistic, application of Christian principles to discrete temporal realities.⁶¹

In Latin America the processes of conflict which mediate transcendence are increasingly perceived in the form of a dependence-liberation axis. It is here finally that the theoretical discussions of development, history, and politics are integrated with the attempt to found a practical political theology. It is here too that the major sources of controversy over liberation theology are encountered. Practically speaking, the adoption of a religious language of liberation has meant an ideological commitment almost invariably to a socialist society and frequently to the

superiority of Marxist analysis. Church hierarchies, therefore, remain extremely circumspect in their use of a liberation idiom, and are often aloof from, if not opposed to, its more radical implications. But it is not unusual to find groups of bishops issuing statements such as that "Christians ought to opt for socialism", accompanied by the typical caveat that -- "We do not mean a bureaucratic, totalitarian, or atheistic socialism; we mean a socialism that is both humanistic and Christian."⁶² Most of the theologians are much bolder. They are suspicious of the affinities between the idea of a "Christian socialism" and imported models of pluralist social democracy.⁶³ More importantly, they do not want to rely on moralistic judgments, but rather on the methodology of 'orthopraxis' in which a committed historical science constitutes the "first word" of hermeneutical reflection, and entails a posture of man "objectively" transforming his word in the light of faith. It is in this way that the specific acceptance of dependency theory by the Latin American theologians has produced widespread agreement among them that "genuine development, far from being an integration of the marginal people into the capitalist system of the consumer society, must be a liberation from that system", and that "Man will only be free in a Socialist society, to be built up according to the specific characteristics of each nation."⁶⁴ Similarly, the turn to Marxist analysis derives from a dependency critique of mainstream western empirical theory. As J. M. Bonino explains:

Far from being objective and nonpartisan, it /structuralism-functionalism in all its guises / was reactionary, an "underdeveloping sociology" as someone called it. It became clear also that such a neutral science of society does not exist. Marxism, on the other hand, offered a framework of study open to the dynamism of history and to a projective view of human activity. Its conflictive understanding of reality was truer to our situation. In this sense it is more objective than a supposedly neutral science which is in fact unavowedly committed to the preservation of the status quo.⁶⁵

Needless to say, the precise relationship between Christian values and Marxist science is highly problematical, even among advocates of a theology of liberation. At this stage, however, the principal interpretive question is whether the active ideological involvements of the Latin Americans defeat the claims of a political language of faith which defines itself fundamentally as critical reflection. Liberation theology is in a sense a test case for the cogency of objections that the 'new political theology' is in practice only a new disguise for religious politics. The identification with socialist revolution is seen, especially among North American skeptics, as simply a Latin American version of the "soft", utopian political moralism repudiated decades ago by converts to "realism" such as Reinhold Niebuhr.⁶⁶ But, referring back to the leads at the end of chapter one, it becomes apparent that although these critics are very good accusers they tend to be rather poor listeners.

To begin with, liberation theology, in coming to grips with the problematic of the sociology of knowledge, attacks the myth that ideology is necessarily evil⁶⁷ or ultimately dispensable, and that "realistic" or "orthodox"

religious language is thereby somehow miraculously non-ideological. Particularly with respect to political action there can be no escape from the ideological mediation of even the purest experience of faith. It is only an evasion to interpose a separate political ethics between faith and action as though the language of ethics could be free of ideological taint (sic) even if the language of politics were not.⁶⁸ (Much worse are the highly suspect claims of the "realists" to have renounced a "Christian politics" in the name of the individual actions of Christians in politics. The logical conclusion would be that faith can be "legitimately" (i.e., according to private conscience) combined with any political ideology of one's choice! Yet, in their attacks on liberation theology, apologists for "realism" such as Thomas Sanders, constantly attempt to pass off as biblical truths statements to the effect that, since every government or social system is imperfect and will continue to be so: "Achievements of justice and freedom do not flow smoothly from the good will of individuals but from a precarious balance of power in a given social context."⁶⁹ Why? Precisely so as to impose on terms like 'justice' and 'freedom' contextually-implied meanings which are compatible only with the assumptions of American liberal pragmatism. In short, the real purpose is not the safeguarding of hermeneutical purity, but the reassurance that the optimal conditions under which Christians can act in politics still lie within the blessed "post-ideological" pluralism of western-style democracy.⁷⁰) What the liberation theologians

have recognized is that the real question is not "Is there a Christian politics or only a Christian ethics?", but "What, in the light of critical reflection on the praxis of faith, is the correct political interpretation of the ethical imperatives of the gospel in this or that particular socio-historical circumstance?".

Applying this to the present situation in Latin America we must agree with Segundo that "if the conclusion were reached that the gospel has nothing to say on a human problem so decisive as the alternative between capitalism and socialism, it is clear that it can only have an absolute, not a functional value, that is to say, no value at all."⁷¹ The virtue of pragmatism is not that it precludes or prohibits questions about ends but that it relates, in a cautionary and critical way, the ends inspired by faith to the means governed by current political realities.⁷² To opt for socialism then is to act on the courage of one's beliefs, not to "eschatologize" socialist revolution. There is no substitute for the risks of such practical historical judgements about the demands of faith. Yet when, for example, Gutierrez asserts that: "'The scope and gravity of the process of liberation is such that to ponder its significance is really to examine the meaning of Christianity itself and the mission of the Church in the world'"⁷³, the critics claim that "he finally equates the Church's mission with the revolutionary struggle", and that a book like A Theology of Liberation "comes very close to being an indiscriminate apotheosis of diverse revolutionary struggles,

at least in Latin America."⁷⁴ In fact, what Gutierrez himself repeatedly says he means is that: "Christ's liberation cannot be reduced to political liberation, but it is given through liberating historical facts. It is not possible to skip over these mediations. On the other hand, political liberation is not a religious messianism. It has its autonomy and its own laws. It supposes a need for social analyses and well-determined political options; but it sees human history as a history in which Christ's liberation is active, enlarging the perspective, and giving to what is at stake in political engagement its full depth and true significance."⁷⁵

In sum, a theology of liberation is not, nor could it ever be, an ideology or theory of liberation. But the latter are indispensable if the imperatives of faith are to be historically operative as concrete levels of ethical-political commitment.⁷⁶ Since all political action involves prior cognition and ideological motivation⁷⁷, and since the language of Christian belief necessarily has a politico-historical dimension, the critical resources of faith (i.e., theological reflection) with respect to these commitments can only be effectively exercised through a liberating historical praxis. Liberation theology therefore "not only reflects in the light of the Word about the praxis of liberation, but from within this praxis reinterprets the riches of faith, which itself is a praxis."⁷⁸ Liberation theology posits a dialectical relationship between faith and political reality -- in other words, the 'real' is historically

comprehended and eschatologically relativized through the act of transforming and transcending it. Theology is the hermeneutical "science", ideology the politico-historical "science", which correspond to this liberation praxis.

What is involved, finally, has nothing to do with reducing religion to politics or politics to religion. Rather, there has been, to use Gutierrez's phrase, an "epistemological rupture" which, in denying that a critical consciousness of the 'what is' of the present is possible from a static or external "value-free" standpoint, concludes that even the transcendent critique of faith can only be encountered from within a movement of liberation toward the 'not yet' of the future. The title of this chapter is therefore somewhat of a misnomer. The theology of liberation is only partially a theology of political transformation, and not one at all if such an expression were taken to imply (or be co-extensive with) either a theory of the mechanics of political change or an absolute ideological commitment to one particular form of it. What a theology of liberation is, quintessentially, is a theology for political transformation, a theology, therefore, for the challenge of a permanent revolution through peace. Because only a self-critically political language of faith can, in a prophetic yet practical way, take up such a challenge today.

NOTES

1. Historically in Latin America the Church has been either closely tied to the state, or arch-conservative, and most frequently both. By the "social gospel" I mean the great social encyclicals of modern pre-conciliar Catholicism -- Pope Leo XIII's seminal Rerum Novarum (1891) and Pius XI's Quadragesimo Anno (1931) -- and the neo-Thomistic scholasticism which provided the theoretical basis for all the various forms of "Catholic action" ranging from Catholic trade unions and youth groups to local church auxiliaries.
2. For an appreciation of the dramatic influence of Camilo Torres, who was killed in action in 1966, see particularly John Gerassi, ed., Revolutionary Priest: The complete writings and messages of Camilo Torres, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973); Walter Broderick, Camilo Torres: A biography of the priest-guerilla, (New York: Doubleday, 1975); Alejandro Del Corro, ed., Camilo Torres, un símbolo controvertido, 1962-67, (Cuernavaca: CIDOC Dossier no. 12, 1967). Catholic reformism and Catholic radicalism are not, of course, completely discontinuous. An interesting transitional work is a 1962 Ph.D. thesis by the Chilean Jesuit Mario Zañartu, published as Desarrollo Económico y Moral Católica, (Cuernavaca: CIDOC Sondeos no. 26, 1969). Moreover, reformist critiques of both capitalist development and secular socialist alternatives are still common -- for example, the massive treatise by P.E. Charbonneau, Cristianismo, Sociedad y Revolución, (Salamanca, Spain: Sígueme, 1969).
3. See Enrique Dussel, History and the Theology of Liberation, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1976), esp. chp. 3.
4. CELAM was to have convened its historic meeting in 1965 on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of its foundation, but the Vatican succeeded in delaying it until after the publication of Pope Paul's landmark encyclical "Populorum Progressio" (On the Development of Peoples). For the official conference documents in English see The Medellín Conclusions, The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council, (Washington: Division for Latin America - USCC, 1973). Useful background material is in Alain Gheerbrant, The Rebel Church in Latin America, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974).
5. Juan Luis Segundo, The Sacraments Today, p. 116.
6. The Medellín Conclusions, p. 82.
7. See Hugo Assmann, Theology for a Nomad Church, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1976), pp. 37-38. It should be noted that this renewal in the Catholic Church has also stimulated a broad ecumenism among theologians. Protestant groups,

notably ISAL (Iglesia y Sociedad en la América Latina), have made major contributions to the development of a theology of liberation.

8. Nikos Nissotis, "Introduction to a Christological Phenomenology of Development", in Alistair Kee, ed., A Reader in Political Theology, p. 82; p. 85. For a comprehensive statement of the theology of development see In Search of a Theology Development, (Geneva: SODEPAX (World Council of Churches, 1969)). The dilemma posed by Nissotis's dichotomy between the optimism of a Teilhard de Chardin and the pessimism of a Reinhold Niebuhr reveals a major limitation of development language in that, although the standpoints are widely divergent, they still rest on philosophies of nature, not of history.
9. See Richard Schull, "Revolutionary Change in Theological Perspective", in John C. Bennet, ed., Christian Social Ethics in a Changing World, (New York: Association Press, 1966). Among the most important European contributions are Joseph Comblin, Théologie de la Révolution, (Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1970) and Jürgen Moltmann, et.al., Discussion sur "La Théologie de la Révolution", (Paris: Cerf-Mame, 1972). Brazilian Hugo Assmann argues that a theology "that keeps pace with the revolutionary commitment of Christians and defines itself as critical reflection on their actions, has to concern itself with revolution" and to "make an effective contribution to the permanent presence of a critical consciousness at the heart of the revolutionary process, ...". But as a liberation theologian he warns against "theologies of revolution" which attempt to: "(a) define the revolution to come, what it will be and should be, on the basis of theological categories; (b) seek theoretical permission, a divine licence, a legitimating and sacralizing cloak for being revolutionaries; (c) use the theoretical instrument of theology to provide the concrete constituent elements of a revolutionary ideology; (d) further use the theology to provide the basis for a revolutionary strategy and the tactical steps composing it; ...". (Theology for a Nomad Church, pp. 90-91.)
10. J.M. Bonino, Christians and Marxists, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), p. 39. See also the critical remarks in Frederick Herzog, Liberation Theology, (New York: Seabury, 1972).
11. On the dangers of an imported liberationism see Herzog's preface in Assmann, op.cit. Ironically, some liberal critics of Latin American liberation theology, particularly in the United States, tend to see the liberal abuses of a liberation idiom as its fundamental aspect. Liberation theology is certainly not immune from becoming the latest fad of theological liberals in the West. But it has been applied with some success to the feminist and black power movements. See Rosemary Ruether, Liberation

Theology, (New York: Paulist Press, 1972) and James H. Cone, A Black Theology of Liberation, (New York: J.J. Lippincott, 1970).

12. J. Moltmann, The Crucified God, (London: SCM, 1974), chp. 8 "Ways Toward the Political Liberation of Man".
13. J.B. Metz, Theology of the World, p. 154.
14. Assmann, op.cit., p. 47, (emphasis in original). The semantics of "liberation" are extremely important since, for most European and North American theologians, the value of human freedom has defined itself within the traditions of social pluralism and the liberal constitution. See John Courtney Murray, ed., Freedom and Man, (New York: P.J. Kennedy, 1965).
15. A secular politics is not thereby a neutral politics. Argues J.M. Bonino: "When they / the Germans / conceive critical freedom as the form in which God's eschatological kingdom impinges on the political realm, they are simply opting for one particular ideology, that of liberalism." Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, p. 149.
16. Gregory Baum, Religion and Alienation, p. 289.
17. Bonino, op.cit., p. 42. It is here that North American observers of the Latin American scene so frequently err. Thomas Sanders, for example, jumps to the simplistic and dubious conclusion that "a new approach to social and political phenomena is merely part of a modernized Catholic Church in Latin America." / "The New Latin American Catholicism", in Donald Smith, ed., Religion and Political Modernization, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 283.
18. R. Spaemann cited in Xhaufflaire, La Théologie Politique, (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1972). / All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.
19. A particularly outstanding example of this conviction is Juan Luis Segundo's collaborative work, A Theology for Artisans of a New Humanity, 5 volumes, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973-74).
20. Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973), p. 15 (emphasis in original).
21. The example of Reinhold Niebuhr is again instructive. A former follower of the "realist" school has argued that "Niebuhr's thought was based upon a broad empiricism rather than on theological dogmatism though he found important clues in the biblical and theological tradition." / John C. Bennett, "Christian Responsibility in a Time that Calls for Revolutionary Change", in John Raines and Thomas Dean, eds., Marxism and Radical Religion,

- (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1970), p. 537. However, this only tends to disguise the fact that Niebuhr never interpreted his "neo-orthodoxy" from within a systematic relationship of theology, empirical science, and historical praxis. Cf. also Bennet, The Radical Imperative, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), chp. V "Theologies of Liberation".
22. Lawrence Egan, "Foreword" to Ignacio Ellacuría, Freedom Made Flesh, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1976), p. vii. Compare this to the superficial viewpoint of American liberalism: "Catholic radicalism represents a reassertion of the central importance of religious values in political life, a denial that religion and politics can be separated in any real sense; in fact an assertion of the absolute nature of religious truths, which gives them a clear priority over all political considerations." (J. Hitchcock, "Evolution of the American Catholic Left", American Scholar, vol. 43, Winter 1973, p. 68.) Hitchcock's remarks are meant to apply more to the quasi-anarchist, symbolic "politics" of such crusaders as the Berrigan brothers in the United States, but he fails typically to differentiate in any critical way among current forms of religious social activism.
 23. Assmann, op.cit., pp. 62-63.
 24. Raul Vidales, "Consonâncias Metodológicas da Teologia Latino-Americana com a Teologia Global", suplemento no. 10 "Libertação", p. 7 (Brazil, December 1974).
 25. Claude Geffre, "editorial" to Geffre and Gustavo Gutierrez, eds., The Mystical and Political Dimension of the Christian Faith, Concilium vol. 82, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1974), p. 11.
 26. Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, p. 145.
 27. Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, pp. 9ff.
 28. Ibid., chp. 2. Western social scientists consistently appear to be blissfully unaware that such processes do, or even could exist. For example, Ivan Vallier speaks of "symbolic freedom" to construct among other things "theories of legitimation that do not have to stand the test of empirical verification." / Catholicism, Social Control and Modernization in Latin America, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 44. / Vallier's generic postulations about religion, which make it appear a fickle thing, as easily reactionary as revolutionary, evince no understanding at all on his part of liberation theology's insistence on the hermeneutical and historical verification of Christian praxis. Moreover, the very starting-point from which structural-functionalists such as Vallier approach the question of "legitimacy" involves an extremely prejudicial value-judgement. Cf. Alasdair

of its interior theoretical discipline to an examination and appreciation of the cultural context and personal witness which has been the soil for its radical conclusions. Such is therefore the intent of the succeeding three chapters.

It would be impossible in a short space to give a comprehensive picture of the complex Latin American reality which underlies new Christian approaches to politics and society on the continent. Each country would have to be considered separately, both as regards the events surrounding contemporary manifestations of religious radicalism, and from a historical perspective. A sociological profile of this magnitude is not, however, required for an understanding of the kinds of circumstances which have given rise to the search for the politico-religious ideal which is the subject of this study. By analysing in depth a specific Christian praxis it is possible to discover the basic elements of conflict and change which have contributed to the birth of a revolutionary new language within the Latin American church. This praxis finds its concrete dimension above all in the historical and institutional transformation of Catholicism, and its personal dimension above all in the prophetic actions of great men who are able to embody through their public presence, or "charismatic" leadership as Weber might have put it, the hopes of large and often heterogeneous movements. Dom Helder Camra is such a man. In response to the rhetorical question which heads this section it would be fair to say that Helder's very uniqueness is an asset. This is not to follow a Carlylean line of

38. As a group of Argentinian Christians notes: "Sacred Scripture vigorously emphasizes that material liberation is a prior condition for spiritual liberation from sin and its consequences." / Cited in Segundo, Our Idea of God (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1974), p. 135. See also G. Casalis and G. Matagrín, "Le Chrétien devant l'engagement politique", Preuves, vol. 10, p. 106.
39. Bishop Eduardo Pironio, quoted in Gustavo Perez-Ramirez, "Liberation: A Recurring Prophetic Cry in the Americas", in Thomas Quigley, ed., Freedom and Unfreedom in the Americas, (New York: IDOC, 1971), p. 30. For an excellent critical overview of the increasingly popular use of the term 'liberation' see José Comblin, "El tema de la 'liberación' en el pensamiento cristiano latinoamericano", Perspectivas del Diálogo, vol. vii, 1972, pp. 105-114; (also in La Revue Nouvelle, 1972, pp. 560-574).
40. Ellacuría, op.cit., p. 98; 149.
41. Sin is to fail to participate in the work of liberation. Writes José de Luca: "Not to fulfill this task is directly to disobey, to be in rebellion against God." / Situación Social y Liberación, (Cuernavaca: CIDOC Sondeos no. 49, 1969), p. 131. The American liberation theologian Frederick Herzog adds that: "Resurrection takes place now as freedom from oppression or it will never take place." (Liberation Theology, p. 156) The advent of a liberated, fraternal society is a dying to sin: 'We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the Brethren.' (I John 3:14)
42. Gutierrez, "Liberation Theology and Proclamation", in Geffre and Gutierrez, op.cit., p. 63.
43. The solidarity with the oppressed which entails such a re-reading of the gospel uncovers in turn fresh insights for political praxis. The Mexican "Priests for the People" use the example of the parable of the Good Samaritan to show that it is not only about neighborliness but also about robbery, exploitation, and necessity, and to assert that it is consistent with the conclusion that "one loves the oppressed by defending him and liberating him; and one loves the oppressor by accusing him and combatting him." (See CIDOC Cuaderno no. 85, op.cit., p. 5)
44. Joseph Comblin, "Freedom and Liberation as Theological Concepts", in Geffre and Gutierrez, op.cit. Segundo would add that bourgeois developmentalism can be a form of "secularized sacramentalism" in which technocrats, like priests, preside over ahistorical, apolitical rites, dispensing consumer rather than liturgical opium to the masses. (See The Sacraments Today, chp. 2 and "Clarifications".)

45. Comblin, ibid. The courage with which the Christian must act on his beliefs witnesses to his enduring faith in the future, unlike the fragile confidence in history which demands utopias built on impersonal, rationalist certainties.
46. Rubem Alves, op.cit., p. 70.
47. Ibid., p. 10.
48. Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, p. 27.
49. Ibid., chp. 9 "Liberation and Salvation", esp. p. 155f.
50. "The new tomorrow," writes Alves, "is not to be mediated by the logic immanent in the given facts of the present state of affairs. Indeed, it is this same logic which is being negated by the new subject. What he wants is to introduce into history a logic not derived from the given, but from the humanizing creation of freedom. It negates the divinity and finality of the logic of facts. The human, thus understood, does not emerge from the facts now creating the inhuman. The human is the creation of a human subject whose consciousness is set against the contradiction of the facts." (A Theology of Human Hope, p. 14) See also Alves, Tomorrow's Child, (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).
51. Gutierrez, op.cit., pp. 32-33 (emphasis in original).
52. Arturo Paoli, Freedom to be Free, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973), p. 24.
53. See Alves, A Theology of Human Hope, *passim*. The predominance of Marcusean themes in Alves, which reflects his North American academic background, should be seen as a complement to the perspectives on dependence drawn from political economy. The Latin Americans tend to have as much respect for Freud as they do for Marx.
54. For an especially restrictive definition of political life see Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, The Civic Culture, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1965), esp. chp. xiii. In diametrical opposition, the liberation theologians insist on the necessity of a humanistic and messianic politics. This is no straw man of simple-minded Christian "millenarianism", but it certainly is fundamentally subversive of any liberal bourgeois concept of 'civility'. (Cf. Edward Shils, "Ideology and Civility", in Richard Cox, ed., Ideology, Politics, and Political Theory, chp. 7.)
55. Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, esp. chp. 3.
56. It is much more than a question of semantics when Segundo points to the Latin 'societas' as a direct translation

of the Greek 'polis' (*ibid.*). Because 'socialization' in recent Catholic teaching retains the teleological distinction between political and social life which is crucial to the liberal pluralist view of the state as in its essence a functionally separate and neutral structure vis-a-vis the whole of society. / See especially the encyclical "Mater et Magistra" (1961) and the major Vatican Council document "Gaudium et Spes" (1965) in Joseph Gremillion, ed., The Gospel of Peace and Justice, Catholic social teaching since Pope John, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1976). / But for the liberation theologians the evolution of a political society is viewed historically as the politicization of society. The directions of the "political development of society" and the "political liberation of society" are radically divergent. / Cf. also the question of the "boundary" between 'society' and 'polity' in Gabriel Almond's seminal "Introduction" to Almond and Coleman, eds., The Politics of the Developing Areas, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960). /

57. Gutierrez, op.cit., chp. 3 "The Problem".
58. Assmann, op.cit., p. 32. Assmann also fears that: "Once it accepts an established order, a political theology will necessarily revert to the legitimizing function of political theology in the classical sense." (p. 33.) This can lead to the position that "true" politics has virtually nothing to do with "law and order", but everything to do with historical change. Politics either becomes, as for Assmann, a seemingly supremely efficacious counter-power, or, as for most North American liberationists (and to some extent North American trained Latin Americans such as Rubem Alves), a supremely negative anti-power. For the former the idea of a "dictatorship of the proletariat" is historically acceptable. For the latter, the conservative distrust of the exercise of political power has been replaced by an anarchistic iconoclasm which, however, ultimately disbelieves, as do the conservatives, in the possibilities of self-liberation through politics. (See, for example, Herzog, Liberation Theology, Part V "Liberated Manhood".)
59. There are many diverse nuances and points of debate in liberation theology which are beyond the scope of this study. Assmann's rather rigid stands should be evaluated in the context of his discussion (in Theology for a Nomad Church, pp. 64-71) of the "common themes" of a theology of liberation. For a broad cross section of views see Javier Hernandez et.al., Aportes para la Liberación, (Bogotá: Presencia, 1970) and J. Alvarez Bolado, ed., Fe Cristiana y Cambio Social en América Latina, (Salamanca: Sígueme, 1973). In English see the papers of the "Detroit Conference" edited by Sergio Torres and John Eagleson, Theology in the Americas, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1976). Useful as a general

critical overview is Van Nieuwenhove, "Les 'Théologies de la Libération' Latino-Américaines", Le Point Théologique, (Paris: Beauchesne, 1974), pp. 67-104.

60. Gutierrez, op.cit., p. 47.
61. Social gospel Catholic teaching, on the other hand, has tended to stop with Etienne Gilson's admission that "'St. Thomas's indifference to history was prodigious.'" The quotation is from an excellent series of articles in the Chilean Jesuit monthly Mensaje on the incompatibility of Marxism and social Catholicism; reprinted in "Latin Americans Discuss Marxism-Socialism", (Washington: LADOC 'Keyhole' Series no. 13, 1975) p. 39.
62. Message of the 1971 Synod of Peruvian bishops, cited in Dussel, History and the Theology of Liberation, p. 134.
63. The liberation theologians not only reject any idea of a religious political party but their support for a policy of "social ownership" differs greatly from previous ideals of a 'socialismo comunitario' (such as that of the Christian Democrats in Chile) which borrowed their principles of 'subsidiarity' and pluralist participation from Europe and North America respectively. (On the latter see A.E. Von Niekerk, "Linkse Christensen en politieke ontwikkeling in Latijns Amerika", Acta Politica, 4:4 July 1969, pp. 449-459.)
64. Gustavo Perez-Ramirez, op.cit., pp. 28-29.
65. J.M. Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, pp. 34-35. Bonino refers to Gunder Frank's essay, "Sociology of Development and Underdevelopment of Sociology", which appears in Latin America: Underdevelopment or Revolution.
66. See the debates on liberation theology in the Sept. 17, Oct. 15, and Nov. 26, 1973 issues of the noted American journal Christianity and Crisis (which, incidentally, was founded by Reinhold Niebuhr), and William Lazareth's "Foreword" to Bonino, op.cit.
67. Even sympathizers of a theology of liberation, especially those in the West, tend to accept uncritically the view of ideology as inherently malevolent. See, for example, R.T. Osborn, "Jesus and Liberation Theology", Christian Century, vol. 93, March 10, 1976, pp. 225-227.
68. The point is that ethical commitments never take place in a vacuum. One cannot fight against injustice without some concept of what actual justice is or might be. The immediacy of the political demands faced by liberation theology has meant a neglect of "after the revolution" questions of ethical and political philosophy such as potential asymmetries in common values (e.g., 'equality')

and 'freedom'), or the difficulties of reconciling individual interests and forging a solidarity of purpose within the often impersonal institutions of modern mass society. In this respect the German thinkers are more advanced. (See in particular the essay of Willi Oelmlüller, "Ethics and Politics Today" in J.B. Metz, ed., Faith and the World of Politics, Concilium vol. 36, (New York: Paulist Press, 1968.) However, these problems in no way disqualify the basic argument for an engaged theology of liberation.

69. Thomas Sanders, quoted in Bonino, op.cit., p. xiii.
70. Even progressive theologians in the United States are, like their 'realist' counterparts, still commonly inclined to such supposedly disinterested warnings as that "Christian salvation is not liberation", and that the "gospel does not promise liberation, if liberation means social-political-economic justice on this planet." (Michael Novak, "Liberation versus Salvation", New Catholic World, vol. 216, July-August 1973, p. 54, 55.) The theological liberals are as inconsistent as the conservatives. Novak, in his Theology for Radical Politics, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), dabbles in radical liberal New Leftism as though it were the new natural religion -- certainly beyond Marx, and perhaps even a little beyond Jesus. (One of the book's subtitles is "Jesus is not enough". See also his essay "Death of Marx" in the May-June 1977 issue of New Catholic World in which he berates the Latin Americans for their narrow, biased (sic) frame of reference.) To be fair, Novak's position of faith in American liberal democracy is vastly superior to that of Jean-François Revel, Without Marx or Jesus, (New York: Doubleday, 1971).
71. J.L. Segundo, "Capitalism-Socialism: A Theological Crux", in Geffre and Gutierrez, op.cit., p. 110.
72. See Michael Harrington, "Religion and Revolution", Commonweal, vol. 91, Nov. 14, 1969, pp. 203-204.
73. Cited in Richard Neuhaus, "Liberation Theology and the Captivities of Jesus", Worldview, 16:6, June 1973, p. 45.
74. Ibid., pp. 45, 47.
75. Gutierrez, "Evangelho e Praxis de Libertação", in Cei, suplemento no. 10, Brazil, December 1974, p. 28. See, in particular, also his essay "Liberation Movements and Theology", in Edward Schillebeeckx and Bas van Iersel, eds., Jesus Christ and Human Freedom, Concilium vol. 93, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1974).
76. Juan Carlos Scannone, "The Theology of Liberation -- Evangelical or Ideological?", in Schillebeeckx and van Iersel, above. Scannone identifies three levels of

ethical-political commitment: (1) the commitment -- involved in the apprehension of reality -- to a method which is not value-free, (2) the commitment to a historical project which cannot be deduced from methodological praxis itself but involves an "ethical plus", and (3) the commitment to the means required for the implementation of desired ends. (See pp.151-156.)

77. Cf. William T. Bluhm, Ideologies and Attitudes, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1974), esp. chps. 1 and 10; Also Douglas Ashford, Ideology and Participation, (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1972).

78. Scannone, op.cit., p. 148.

PART TWO

ONE BRAZILIAN ARCHBISHOP?

Assessing the Contribution of the Personal and the Concrete

In Part one I focussed principally on the emergence of a new political language of liberation among Latin American Christians in the light of the evolution of a new theological idiom which, in generic terms, was placed under the rubric of 'political theology'. The argument, in that it was concerned with the internal structure of these systems of thought, proceeded more on methodological than on thematic grounds. With respect to the latter, it can easily be pointed out that the cry of "liberation from oppression" is a very ancient one within the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and that, moreover, the addition of a Third World dependency perspective is unexceptional in itself, even though it is the basic socio-historical factor, and therefore an important determinant, in the development of a new theological language in Latin America. By contrast, what is radically new about a political theology of liberation is the centrality of the two interdependent concepts of 'orthopraxis' and what Segundo refers to as the 'hermeneutic circle'. Theology as an engaged hermeneutical "science" is both Christian reflection on the historical praxis of liberation and critical, liberating reflection on the historical praxis of Christianity. This theology, to the extent that it constitutes itself as a theology of praxis, necessarily leads the analyst beyond the discussion

of its interior theoretical discipline to an examination and appreciation of the cultural context and personal witness which has been the soil for its radical conclusions. Such is therefore the intent of the succeeding three chapters.

It would be impossible in a short space to give a comprehensive picture of the complex Latin American reality which underlies new Christian approaches to politics and society on the continent. Each country would have to be considered separately, both as regards the events surrounding contemporary manifestations of religious radicalism, and from a historical perspective. A sociological profile of this magnitude is not, however, required for an understanding of the kinds of circumstances which have given rise to the search for the politico-religious ideal which is the subject of this study. By analysing in depth a specific Christian praxis it is possible to discover the basic elements of conflict and change which have contributed to the birth of a revolutionary new language within the Latin American church. This praxis finds its concrete dimension above all in the historical and institutional transformation of Catholicism, and its personal dimension above all in the prophetic actions of great men who are able to embody through their public presence, or "charismatic" leadership as Weber might have put it, the hopes of large and often heterogeneous movements. Dom Helder Camra is such a man. In response to the rhetorical question which heads this section it would be fair to say that Helder's very uniqueness is an asset. This is not to follow a Carlylean line of

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reasoning. Rather it is to affirm that his special qualities make him, in Brady Tyson's words, a truly "symbolic man", a sign of contradiction within both his church and his society. He is not simply a lone archbishop from the Northeast of Brazil on a quixotic one-man crusade. I have already outlined in the preface my reasons for choosing as a focal point the perspective of Dom Helder, so there is no need for further recapitulation here. The next chapter delves into the concrete underpinnings of Christian radicalism in a social situation of underdevelopment, and sets the stage for the remaining two chapters in that it deals with some of the formative processes in the Brazilian Catholic experience, of which Dom Helder's example is the most illustrious product.

SECTION 2.1 SOME PRELIMINARY NOTES ON CONTEXT

CHAPTER THREE

INVESTIGATING THE SOCIAL ROOTS OF RADICAL RELIGION: A BRAZILIAN EXAMPLE

Since approximately the time of the Cuban revolution forces for change within the Latin American church have proceeded at a furious pace. The extent of this upheaval is astounding when one considers the centuries-old entrenchment throughout the continent of a "tradition of Order" based largely on the architectonic world-view of medieval Catholicism.¹ Defence of occidental "Christian" civilization has generally been an integral element of the ideology of the ruling classes, especially the most conservative sectors. Within this overall Christendom perspective no more progressive activity could be expected than a gradual modernization of doctrine and a neo-Thomistic revision of the church's social teaching to bring it more in line with current European and North American norms of the industrial economy and the liberal democratic state, without however abandoning its paternalistic foundations. As was pointed out in the previous chapter, there was virtually no indigenous theology capable of responding to the specific situation of Latin America as an underdeveloped periphery of the world capitalist system. Yet by the mid 1960s the face of Catholicism on the continent was in many respects unrecognizable from what it had been a decade earlier. The precipitous decline of the old order was signalled by, more

than any other single event, the death of Fr. Camilo Torres, a Colombian university professor and scion of an aristocratic family, who forsook everything to join a communist liberation front. He had proclaimed:

I took off my cassock to be more truly a priest.... The duty of every Catholic is to be a revolutionary.... The duty of every revolutionary is to make the revolution.... The Catholic who is not a revolutionary is living in mortal sin.²

When Torres was killed by government security forces in 1966 he became an instant martyr to Christian progressives all over South America and an inspiration for others to follow in his footsteps. It was not long before incidents of confrontation between religious individuals or groups and the authorities had become commonplace.³ To take only one example, during the late 1960s in Brazil a group of Dominicans was arrested and tortured for their alleged complicity in the activities of the notorious urban guerilla Carlos Marighela before he was assassinated by police. Richard Gott, in his introduction to a posthumous collection of Marighela's writings in English, commented that: "not least of the remarkable aspects of the present revolutionary agitation in Brazil has been the support for the revolutionary cause of innumerable priests."⁴ Even Fidel Castro, with more reason than any other continental head of state to be hostile to anything connected with the Church, was moved to remark publicly that: "The United States shouldn't worry about the Soviets in Latin America, because they are not revolutionaries anymore. But they should worry about the Catholic revolutionaries, who are."⁵

As is evident from such documents as The Rockefeller Report, United States policy makers are concerned by the disturbing reality behind Castro's warning.⁶ They, in common with other surprised observers of the Latin American scene, are asking what might account for such a seemingly sudden eruption of religious radicalism. To contribute to a fuller understanding of the question, through special reference to the Brazilian experience, is also the aim of this chapter. Without a concrete framework for analysis it would be impossible to relate the theory of a revolutionary Christianity to its particular manifestations in current events. Vittoria Lanternari points out in The Religions of the Oppressed that: "A religious phenomenon may be explained only insofar as it is possible to trace its historical origin and development and to analyze it systematically in relation to concrete secular conditions. These conditions may be described as the 'existential experiences' to which human society is bound at any given historical moment, and which in turn give rise to cultural 'exigencies' which apply likewise to that particular moment. These 'experiences' and 'exigencies' are to be found at the root of every religious manifestation."⁷

Lanternari also notes that, historically, prophetic indictments of Western civilization have come from the "periphery". An examination of the sources of Latin American Christian radicalism might be expected, therefore, to yield more general insights into the possible roles of religious phenomena in "less-developed" societies or

regions. However, up till this point, the body of theoretical propositions from which to draw on is rather meagre. Despite the fact that much of the new theology is Marxist-oriented, there are no Marxist analyses of recent developments in the church to speak of.⁸ Social scientists following more conventional approaches have expressed increasing interest in the subject, but the quality of recent studies is uneven, and the best work has tended to be in the form of rather narrowly-defined case studies. At the broad interpretive, as opposed to descriptive, level, many of the researchers are unconscious victims of prior value judgements and the limitations of their theoretical frameworks. For example, the functionalist Ivan Vallier, in his main book Catholicism, Social Control and Modernization in Latin America, makes no secret of his hostility toward the idea of revolutionary priests 'per se'.⁹ Accordingly, he dismisses them as harbingers of clericalism in a new guise, and their ideologies as just another sorry case of "Catholics-have-all-the-answers"¹⁰ but without the slightest inquiry into the stated intentions of the theological movements to which the radicals belong (or would have belonged if they were still alive today).

There is a disconcertingly patronizing tone throughout other similar analyses. With further respect to the Christian language of liberation being evolved in Latin America, Thomas Sanders concludes that: "If Catholics now use such catchwords as 'imperialism' and 'colonialism' with reference to the United States and 'class struggle' to

describe their social structure, it is because Marx, who is a respected sociologist in many parts of the underdeveloped world, offers a set of categories that make sense to them."¹¹ This is undeniably true, but what of the implication that Marxism has nothing similar to offer to the advanced and enlightened cultures of the "developed" West, or, more particularly, to the thoroughly secularized "scientists" who inhabit these cultures? North American liberals, for whom Catholicism has represented in the past the epitome of reactionary politics, react extremely peevishly when they find themselves and their "bourgeois" methodologies on the receiving end of similar accusations from the Catholic Left. In Catholicism and Political Development in Latin America Frederick Turner begins by announcing his efforts toward "minimizing subjectivity", yet through all the remaining pages he manages to communicate an extreme displeasure at any anti-capitalist/anti-American sentiments encountered in the course of his investigation. In fact his stance reveals an implicit conservative Protestant theology which is no less evident for being unacknowledged.¹²

On the specific question of the role of religious ideas in economic development there is a great deal of confusion in the recent literature. This confusion is not even original, rooted as it is in variations on the classic theses of Weber and Tawney.¹³ Vallier, in his "Conclusions" to the book cited above, delivers himself of the opinion that "Catholicism, even in its modern dress is not, nor can it ever be, a second Calvinism."¹⁴ For Vallier, of

course, "development" means the capitalist development of "feudal" Latin America. He quotes approvingly the Chilean Jesuit sociologist Roger Vekemans on the supposed lack of "Anglo-Saxon pragmatism" (or to use more fashionable jargon, 'n achievement') in Latin American culture. For Vallier, Vekemans is one of the leading "progressives" shaping the wave of the future; for the liberation theologians, of whom Vekemans has been an outspoken opponent, he is an out-of-touch reactionary. This sort of incomprehension and contradiction extends as well to the question of political development. Donald Smith, in Religion and Political Development (part of the Little-Brown series on comparative politics), acknowledges that religion is playing many different, even revolutionary, roles within "developing" societies, but only in the myopic sense of "development" as a form of modernization from which the West is blessedly exempt.¹⁵ As with the reductionist sociology of the structuralist-functionalist school, such an analysis is not dependent on any concrete inquiry as to why a revolutionary theology has emerged at this historical juncture in the political and economic evolution of Latin American society.

Before proceeding further, a short digression is in order to clarify the meaning and different connotations of "religion" in the Latin American, particularly Brazilian, context. It is a fallacy to consider Latin America a Catholic continent simply because the great majority of the population claim nominal membership in the Roman Catholic Church. For example, over ninety per cent of Brazilians

could be formally listed as Catholics, yet the northeast of Brazil is the world centre of spiritism and fundamentalist evangelical Protestantism is making big inroads throughout the country. The church in Brazil has always been more "underdeveloped" than powerful, and has as yet to successfully come to grips with such pervasive problems as cultic syncretism, centuries of fatalism and sterile traditionalism, and vast regional and class cleavages.¹⁶

In the industrial heartland and rich agricultural areas of southern Brazil, which have received a massive immigration from Western Europe during the last century, the question of religious radicalism necessarily takes on a different complexion than in the poverty-stricken northeastern homeland of Archbishop Helder Câmara, with its colonial heritage of a one-crop slave culture. Any reference to religion as a catalyst of social change must face unpleasant realities such as that: "Again and again a feeling of total impotence and worthlessness has possessed the soul of the Northeasterner. From this has come his attitude of absolute humility and resignation in the face of what he too frequently sees as an ineluctable conspiracy of natural and social forces that combine to crush even a pretense of bettering his living conditions."¹⁷

There is a long history in the Brazilian Northeast of a volatile mixture of political and religious mysticism. This unforgiving land of alternating floods and drought carries with it the memory of slave revolts and charismatic backlands preachers. It is not surprising that in the

Pernambuco revolution of 1817. "local priests were the revolutionary leaders and champions of social reform."¹⁸

Even today such nineteenth century miracle-workers and defenders of the common people as Padre Cicero are revered as folk-heroes by millions of ordinary Catholics. (On my first visit to a rural parish in the Northeast, during the local religious festival or 'festa', the first thing to which my attention was directed by the pastor was an enormous statue of Padre Cicero near the church.) Yet it is not to this curious legacy of popular advocacy that one can ultimately ascribe the term "radical religion" in Brazilian, or for that matter hispano-american, culture. The following passages from Josué de Castro are instructive:

In some respects the physical appearance of the sugar country of the Northeast has changed with time. Great modern extraction plants have replaced the old-fashioned sugar mills powered by steam or water, which in turn had replaced oxen. Today the "big house" of other years with its slave quarters attached has been replaced by a splendid villa. But the human landscape remains virtually the same. The former slaves, who once lived in the 'senzala' /black settlement/ near the big house, are now scattered in huts and shacks, lost in the fields or huddled in villages, or rotting in city slums. These are the new slave pens, and they are hardly better than the old. The latifundian system remains in effect unbroken.

Indeed, thus far the violence has served no useful purpose. Neither the bullets of the 'cangaceiros', as the bandit gangs of the Northeast backlands were known, nor the zeal of the mystics has been able to put an end to the peasants' dumb suffering and servitude. Nothing was accomplished by Antônio Silvino or Lampião, bandit heroes of folklore. Father Cicero of Joazeiro and his mystic cult did not in any way release the people from their fate. Like the cane carts, the people's destiny has been mired for centuries in the soft clay of the cane-field roads, stuck fast in the yielding and viscous 'massapé', the famous and endlessly fecund black soil of the Northeast

coastal strip. The harder they have tugged and strained to free themselves, the more the great cart of fate has stuck fast, as if the devil himself had it by the wheels.¹⁹

It is clear from de Castro's description that any religious or quasi-religious cult of the masses can be no more than an opium within the objective conditions of social underdevelopment. In The Religions of the Oppressed Lanternari asserts that common to great religious movements such as Christianity and the messianic cults of marginalized groups is "the fact that the striving for religious renewal and liberation arises from the rebellion of the masses against the existing official cults imposed by a ruling caste."²⁰ This may be substantially correct at a high level of generalization, and for the messianic movements of colonial Africa and North America which are the principal focus of Lanternari's study. However, with respect to Latin American culture one must beware of a too easy identification of its traditional church-state relationships and socio-economic bases with those which existed under European Christendom during the Middle Ages, and therefore of the misleading assumption that the millenarianism of various anarchistic European sects might be a prototype for manifestations of religious radicalism in Latin America.²¹ In fact, it is only within the institutional church that a truly radical Latin American religious ideology has finally been conceived, -- that is to say, one which is intrinsically linked to a coherent philosophy of social transformation. In spite of grave weaknesses both past and present the Catholic Church has been the primary source of the concrete

Christian praxis to which I referred in the introduction to Part Two. Consequently, when I speak of "radical religion" in Latin America I mean ideas and activities which are officially connected to the evolution of an organized church.

The fact that the evolution of a radical politico-religious language has taken place within an established institution raises several initial methodological difficulties. Thomas Bruneau, in an incisive article on church-state tensions in Latin America and particularly Brazil, points out that, in terms of the "success" of strategies for change, it would be highly suspect to evaluate a religious body solely on the basis of secular, organizational criteria: "Any approach which does not conceptualize the church's special goal is bound to be misguided. While it is true that this goal might, as interpreted, demand a structural change in society, primacy must always be paid to the ultimate goal, salvation."²² Nonetheless Bruneau still concludes that: "We are no longer dealing only with a religious institution which has meaning for man's salvation but also with a prominent political and social body which may well assist in the transformation of these societies."²³ If there is a problem with Bruneau's frame of reference it is that it restricts its political analysis to the workings of the institution, and therefore overlooks the debates over a 'political theology' and the changing concept of salvation in relation to secular change. In other words, Bruneau does not allow for the possibility

that the church's goal of salvation may itself have a temporal and political dimension with an importance in its own right.

The inevitable limitation of a narrowly-defined sociological approach is that it deals with the institutional viability of the church's "prophetic mission" in isolation from the theological, or more broadly theoretical, viability of that mission. On the other hand, the great merit of a "middle range" empirical analysis is that its parameters are modest and concrete, as those of functionalism so often are not. The excellent studies of Bruneau and Emmanuel de Kadt on Brazilian Catholicism, and David Mutchler on the church in Colombia and Chile, show the specific value of an examination of the church's bureaucracy and organizational activities, its traditional and current relationships with other institutional elites, and its ways of expressing its political interests and of mobilizing public support for them.²⁴ This type of investigation allows one to place the emergence of radical ideas within a historical and structural dynamic. By contrast, little is to be gained in this regard from attitudinal profiles of church memberships, or idiosyncratic typologies and "Weberian ideal-types" of the religious ethos, which do more to explain away than to explain the nature of contemporary Christian radicalism in Latin America. What follows therefore is an inquiry into some of the concrete social and ideological forces in the history of Brazilian Catholicism which might help to account for the evolution of an ideal of cultural

and political "revolution through peace" as the ideal, not of a utopian ideologue or demagogic millenarian, but of a respected man of the church.

The Roman Catholic Church was never a dominant force in the life of the Brazilian people, and it has been from a position of weakness that the institution has had to accommodate itself to the secular authority. During the colonial period the church was simply a handmaid of the rural-based oligarchy.²⁵ As Gilberto Freyre portrayed so vividly in his classic study The Masters and the Slaves, the clergy bestowed its blessings on the patriarchal system -- on the households of the 'patrões' or "big bosses" who ruled the countryside. A few religious orders, notably the Jesuits, retained a high degree of independence and internal discipline, and even engaged in courageous educational work among the enslaved African and Amerindian populations. The Jesuits were considered such a threat that they were expelled in 1759. As elsewhere in Latin America they were the exception which proves the rule. In general the Brazilian church was consistently subservient to the ruling classes, to the point that it never suffered from the outbreaks of virulent anticlericalism which accompanied the spread of liberal ideas in countries such as Mexico. Secular priests in Brazil continued to be paid by the state up until the late nineteenth century.²⁶

Nonetheless the relationship between church and state in Brazil has never remained completely comfortable for very long. The seeds of rivalry between the two

institutions can be traced back to the mid eighteenth century when the Marquis of Pombal, minister of King Joseph I of Portugal from 1750 to 1777, began a campaign to eliminate any independent power of the church and to "modernize" religious doctrine. With the suppression of the Jesuits and the attack on Rome the fledgling colonial church in Brazil virtually disintegrated, and hereafter functioned only at the behest of the state. By 1800 the church was in a barely tenable position, as reflected by its "nationalized" doctrinal base:

Regalism ensured state control over the Church with subordination of the latter's interests; Jansenism denied the supremacy of the Pope even in Church affairs; and now Liberalism was included (following the Revolution in France in 1789), which in the Portuguese context meant anticlericalism and confiscation of Church property. Judging from comments by some observers at the time, these doctrines were accepted by a majority of Church members.²⁷

The achievement of national independence in 1822 did nothing to alter the political impotence of the church. On the contrary, regalism was strengthened and the church's uniquely Brazilian, which meant its subservient, character was vigorously reaffirmed. As a contemporary statesman explained: "'For this the legislator constituted the Emperor as the first ecclesiastical authority of the country in the sense that to him belonged not only the choice of personnel --- the formation of the Church hierarchy -- but also the supreme judgement of all laws and decrees of the Popes and councils.'"²⁸ The emperor's fear of ultramontaniam resulted in innumerable restrictions on the activities of the clergy which severely weakened and

demoralized the whole church. The situation was allowed to deteriorate until the 1870s when, under the reign of Pope Pius IX, Rome expended a great deal of energy trying to regain control over the Brazilian church. Given that the ideas of the Pope, as expressed in his "Syllabus of Errors" and the First Vatican Council, were anathema to Brazil's secular rulers, these efforts were harshly resisted. Two bishops were actually imprisoned for refusing to follow the state line in religious matters. Consequently, when the Empire was overthrown in 1889 there was considerable speculation that the conflict with the Church had helped to precipitate its demise.

Under the First Republic (1889-1930) the official separation of church and state was proclaimed. Influenced by the prevailing intellectual climate of liberal positivism Brazil's new political leaders were indifferent, if not hostile, to religion 'per se', and therefore they hoped to totally exclude the church from the public realm. In effect, the church was granted a measure of internal autonomy (i.e., normal relationships with Rome) at the expense of any social influence which it might have had. Not surprisingly the hierarchy were extremely dissatisfied with this state of affairs, and they actively sought a return to the 'neo-christendom' model. In the meanwhile the church had to content itself with programmes of organizational expansion encouraged and supported by the Vatican. During this "pre-ideological phase", as de Kadt calls it, a realization on the part of the church that it

would have to go it alone was at least somewhat of a blessing in disguise.²⁹

There was a minor revitalization of Catholic thought following the publication of Pope Leo XIII's encyclical "Rerum Novarum" two years after the foundation of the republic. Fr. Júlio Maria spearheaded efforts to convince the clergy that "they should be 'social reformers', instead of ministering to a small 'aristocracy of the devout' in whose service they provide 'feasts for the living and funerals for the dead'. They should show the simple folk, the poor, the proletarians that they 'were the first ones to be called by the Heavenly Master'."³⁰ But, just as the ideas of Brazil's secular elites were imitative of European trends, so too were these attempts to apply the papal social teachings (developed in response to the incipient trade unionism in western Europe) to the Brazilian context without regard to the practical non-existence in Brazil of the objective conditions for industrial democracy. Another problem was that, since many of the new priests were foreign-born and middle class, European pastoral patterns were adopted, further contributing to the embourgeoisement and bureaucratization of the church's ministry. In short, through force of circumstances the church became increasingly ossified as an institution and remained profoundly alienated from Brazilian reality.

When a coherent Catholic ideology did begin to define itself during the turbulent twilight years of the republic, it was an ultra-reactionary one -- a shrill

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protest against pluralism, Protestantism, Freemasonry, and pernicious modernism of every sort. The chief ideologue, Jackson de Figueiredo, was inspired by the authoritarian religious nationalism of de Maistre and Maurras in Europe. He tried to promote the vision of a pure Catholic Brazil, convinced that Catholic action would triumph over the degenerate godlessness of Brazil's cultural and intellectual elites. When the First Republic was toppled in 1930 by a popular revolutionary movement led by Getulio Vargas, the hierarchy immediately saw an opportunity to increase and, if possible, to consolidate its influence. The astute Cardinal Leme used his friendship with Vargas to maximum advantage, and when a new constitution was produced it enshrined the principles of church-state cooperation which had already been revived in practice: "The goal at the most general level was to establish a stable Christian order in Brazil. The Church emphasized 'Christianity and order' and the state 'stability and order', but they were almost indistinguishable."³¹ There were some brief involvements by Catholics in electoral politics, particularly on the side of extreme right-wing 'integralist' parties. But so cozy was the corporatist alliance between church and state that there was little pressure for a Catholic political party, and even Catholic action was largely superfluous. With no impetus for innovation or lay mobilization the church reverted to a Christendom model while continuing to focus its attention almost exclusively on the middle and upper classes. However, as Thomas

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Bruneau points out, such a model, like the original, does not require "autonomous generation of resources or any real life in the institution. It is defined through structures which may or may not have content."³²

The church's institutional stagnation eventually contributed to a moribund ideology. After de Figueiredo's death in 1928 he was succeeded by Alceu Amoroso Lima, a brilliant intellectual who became Brazil's foremost interpreter of the neo-Thomism of Jacques Maritain. But although Catholic action soon shed its right-wing fanaticism and sought to project a reformist mission to students and workers, it was still restricted to thinking in the terms of the past and of "Christianizing" the social order. By the end of the 1950s there was a general malaise within the Catholic groups, a dissatisfaction with the lack of direction of an abstract spiritual theorizing, and with the latter's predominance over concrete engagement at a time when the Brazilian government was trying to turn Brazil into a strong, modern industrial state, and when there was much debate among Brazilians over future national priorities.³³ Particularly in the universities there was a search for a Christian philosophy of history which could read these "signs of the times" and make room for the new consciousness of a democratic and economically independent Brazil in the making.

As the Catholic action militants defined their historical project they began to look at the contrasts in the society around them and to perceive Brazilian reality

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in dynamic conflictual terms. Before, the progressive viewpoint of social Catholicism had been: "'The community is the natural place where men think and will together, where they plan and decide together in function of the common good'." ³⁴ But by the early 1960s the Catholic avant garde was taking a far darker view of the political process: "'We can never insist enough on the need to denounce natural harmony, class collaboration. God is not so dishonest, so false as a certain kind of social peace, consisting in the acquiescence of all in an unnatural justice. Violence is not only a fact of revolution. It also characterizes the maintenance of a false order'." ³⁵

Intellectually, many Catholics were discovering the works of other French humanists besides Maritain. The most important of these, Emmanuel Mounier and the Dominican L.J. Lebreton, went far beyond a mild rebuke of the "abuses" of liberal capitalism: they called for fundamental agrarian reform, production for use not profit, and a fully planned economy based above all on human needs. A young Brazilian Jesuit philosopher, Fr. Henrique de Lima Vaz, also made a notable contribution to this radical awakening by replacing Maritain's 'ideal histórico' with the concept of a 'consciencia histórico' or "historical consciousness". ³⁶

Whereas the former was similar to the Weberian notion of an 'ideal-type', the latter had more in common with the Marxian principle of historical awareness. Increasingly, the Catholic action groups in the universities moved toward collaboration with the secular left, and this in turn

provoked growing tensions with the hierarchy, most of whose members still believed communism, or anything remotely connected with it, to be the scourge of the human race. (There had been efforts to make church structures more responsive to the aspirations of a new generation of Brazilians. For example, under the singular leadership of Dom Helder Câmara, a national episcopal conference (CNBB) was created in 1952 to coordinate pastoral and social concerns. However, with the exception of the Northeast, very few bishops were prepared to support a more activist line.) In an atmosphere of mutual suspicion some of the student militants saw a need for a broader, independent movement which could become directly involved in the political struggle. In 1962 'Ação Popular' (AP) was formed.

The ideology of AP, with its stress on 'populist' cultural action and political mobilization,³⁷ was a mixture of a revolutionary, historical faith in collective processes of 'socialization' (with elements drawn from Teilhard de Chardin, Hegel, and Marx) and a humanistic faith in the destiny of each person drawn largely from Mounier's existentialism. Mounier believed in socialism, but even more passionately in the future of man as a free subject who lives for the 'other'. Unfortunately AP's deliberate isolation from the mainstream of progressive Catholicism led to extreme radicalization and eventually sectarianism. And as de Kadt points out, "even though the more sophisticated intellectual and philosophical leaders of the young Catholic radicals never succumbed to blatant

millenarianism, a 'utopic' streak, based on assumptions which from all past experience would seem unrealistic in human and social terms, developed among the second string of ideologues and diffusers of ideas, once they had brought together Christian principles and social analysis based on empirical data of history and society."³⁸ The story of AP's transformation has been summed up succinctly by Marcio Moreira Alves: "Influenced by such French philosophers as Emmanuel Mounier, Yves Congar, and the Dominicans Lebreton and Cardonnel, AP started as a non-Marxist revolutionary movement. Slowly it discovered Marx as a humanist, then Marxism as a political theory, and finally Marxism as interpreted by Mao Tse Tung. AP's religious origins probably account for the fervor with which it embraced Maoism. In any case what had been an intellectual proposition turned into a political mechanism."³⁹ AP vigorously rejected its Catholic roots and constituted itself as a worker-peasant 'vanguard' party, but, practically speaking, it had no real mass base, least of all among the industrial working class.

The other major manifestation of Catholic radicalism in Brazil prior to the 1964 military coup was the Movement for Basic Education (MEB). It began very modestly in the late fifties with the experience of radio schools in the northeastern dioceses of Natal and Aracaju, but within a few years had greatly expanded under the sponsorship of the federal government and the CNBB. The cadres of the movement, like those of AP, believed in popular cultural agitation. They adopted the method of 'conscientização' ("conscienti-

zation"), developed by Paulo Freire, a professor of education at the University of Recife, for use in adult literacy campaigns.⁴⁰ MEB's growing pains soon led to conflicts with conservative sectors in the church and the state bureaucracy. The militants, who wanted to chart a more independent, more ambitious course, were frequently accused of demagoguery and of improperly extending their activities into such things as rural unionization. More seriously, the populist ideology of these largely middle-class intellectuals led them to overestimate the basis for a broad national reform movement (in particular the potential support for a progressive social policy on the part of the national bourgeoisie), and to underestimate the extent of the entrenchment of patrimonial land tenure in the countryside.

Although the MEB had been founded on an alliance between church and state, its members were greatly radicalized by the debates of the young militants in the universities. The objectives of the MEB were only indirectly political in that they focussed rather idealistically on a cultural transformation, but soon the movement was subject to the same frustrations as AP -- extreme polarization of opinions, uncertainty over religious content, and incessant debates over ideological purity coupled with too much naiveté about the prospects for massive structural reform. The MEB seems to have believed that "the truth will set the masses free", but without linking its educational goals to a concrete political programme or to a clear strategy for

mobilizing and organizing the popular sectors to assume political power. Even so, the movement's enthusiastic experimentation attracted the usual charges of "subversion" and found only a few courageous defenders, notably Dom Helder Câmara, within the church hierarchy. The controversy over MEB's 'raison d'être' came to a head shortly before the coup when a new primer entitled Viver é Lutar (To Live is to Struggle) was seized on the order of Carlos Lacerda, the Governor of the state of Guanabara, on suspicion of being a "communist" textbook.⁴¹ MEB's lack of an independent power base meant that it had no means with which to resist repressive measures. After the coup in April of 1964, the radical leadership was threatened by intimidation and arrest, and MEB could only survive under the shadow of the security forces by jettisoning its ideological orientation. Popular 'conscientization' was impossible in the new police state.

The general response of the church to the coup was to put its survival as a "legitimate" national institution first.⁴² In fact, most of the bishops welcomed the intervention of the armed forces as an alternative to the ineffectual, enigmatic presidency of João Goulart, who was also regarded as dangerously left-wing. The reaction to the ensuing repression was at best equivocal, as right-wing Catholics breathed a loud sigh of relief that Brazil was now "safe" from communism, and that Catholic action could get back to its appointed tasks of saving souls and promoting moral purity and social order. The military was

able to exploit the divisions and uncertainty within the hierarchy which was created by this tremendous anxiety, almost paranoia, of the conservatives against subversion, real or imagined. But the coup did force the church to come to grips with its situation as one involving very fundamental conflicts and disagreements. And since the junta made little attempt to conciliate the progressives, it laid the groundwork for attacks on, and the subsequent alienation of, the institutional church if it was ever less than fully cooperative.

In the early years of the sixties the theology of the Catholic avant-garde came from the fringes. That was part of the problem in that its base was far too narrow, too dependent on small groups of dedicated militants whose only alternative in the face of official suppression was retreat, and eventually either accommodation or marginalization.⁴³ Another problem was that the brand of populism espoused by Ações Populares and MEB was not adequate to break down the 'patrão' relationship in rural Brazil where only a minimal class-consciousness was generated. The emphasis on popular will and local community development did not lead to any organization along class lines which might have been able to overthrow the coercive political and economic structures responsible for keeping the Brazilian masses in a position of powerlessness. After the army's 1964 "revolution" it was clear to all that only a counter-revolution could create the objective conditions for what Freire had called "cultural action for freedom".⁴⁴

With Catholic action severely curtailed, radical elements in the church had to take stock of their precarious position without the luxury of ideological posturing. They had to develop a solid, practical frame of reference for any new initiatives, and therefore several of the main documents during the latter half of the decade are both self-critical and highly concrete in their suggestions.⁴⁵

Also, it was necessary for the progressives to look as realistically as possible at the nature of the oppressive forces confronting them. In July 1968 Bishop Candido Padim, Brazil's permanent delegate to CELAM, presented a study to the CNBB's ninth General Conference entitled "The Doctrine of National Security in the Light of the Gospel".⁴⁶ The document contained a historical and empirical analysis of Brazil neo-fascism and a systematic denunciation of its current official expression in the strongest of language: "If, for Brazil, we replace the word 'Aryan' with 'armed forces' we shall find the same basic assumptions and consequently the same conclusions /as in Hitler's Mein Kampf /".⁴⁷

Another contemporaneous document was, if anything, more sober and tough-minded, and more controversial. It was a set of confidential, critical notes prepared for Dom Helder Câmara prior to the Medellín Conference by a group of theologians in Recife under the direction of Fr. Joseph Comblin. But somehow the right-wing press obtained access to these notes and the ensuing reaction was ferocious. What is extraordinary about the document is its merciless exposure of the Latin American colonial ethos (and the

church's role in it), and the harsh 'realpolitik' of its rejection of both liberal-democratic reformism and 'focismo' guerilla romanticism as offering viable paths toward a popular-based strategy for national development. On the origins of social inequality on the continent the document states bluntly:

As well as the mestizo class there has been and is still a white aristocracy which has all the power, all the wealth and all the culture, and a race of semi-slaves who have none of these things.

That is why all ideas about social classes, social mobility, etc. to be found in American or European sociology have absolutely no relevance to Latin America. What we have here is an inequality far beyond any mere difference of class: here there are two races, two civilizations, confronting one another. The aristocracy considers this astonishing social (or socio-racial) inequality as quite normal. Latin America is a colonial empire in which the conquistadors have become established. Wars of independence and revolutions, far from driving them away, have simply increased their power. Hence it is only tiny groups of aristocrats who are taking any part in the development of the modern world; the only way to extend that development to everyone is by social revolution. You cannot talk of development in Latin America until a social revolution has overthrown the dominant aristocracy and elevated the inferior race.⁴⁸

On the question of the concrete political preconditions for popular self-determination the document does not mince words:

When a government, or a political system, shows itself to be incompetent to carry out its job properly -- the job in our case, of creating a social revolution and enforcing development -- then any group that is more capable or more resolute is legitimately authorized to seize power if it can. Indeed; it is not merely authorized, but positively obliged to do so.... Legitimate power means force used in the service of law, of just and genuine law. Making laws is not enough; they must also be enforced. To get desired processes under way, the power needed will have to be authoritarian and dictatorial. Radical reforms will not be achieved by majority vote, for

majorities always prefer the easy way out, and do not care to look any problem in the face.⁴⁹

Although Comblin's deliberately provocative views on race and social class, and on the authoritarian nature of revolutionary processes, should not be taken as representative of those of Dom Helder or of liberation theologians in general, they did accurately reflect the concern, common to all Christian militants in Latin America, that the effective promotion of major social changes would require a far more acute perception of the strategies involved and the obstacles to be overcome. What the idealistic populism of the pre-coup radicals neglected was that a real cultural revolution must have a pragmatic, and therefore a risky, morally ambiguous, basis.⁵⁰ How will the masses achieve political power and what will they do with it should such a fortuitous circumstance ever come to pass? The role of the church is not to dictate means and solutions. As the outspoken Dom Antonio Fragoso has stated, "bishops are only amateurs when it comes to politics, and it is up to all adult citizens to decide the political fates of their countries."⁵¹ The church is called, not to a new clericalism, but to solidarity with those who are fighting for human advancement. But the church cannot assist specific political action if it is sitting on its hands. Having been part of the problem for so long it must not now pretend non-interference by shunning any involvement in the solution.

The populist experiments of the early sixties failed but they were rich in lessons for the progressive elements which remained, and whose members were determined

to continue working within the church. These experiments provided a legacy of Christian-inspired activism from which a theological language of liberation could take shape. They demonstrated the need for the church to face up to social divisions and to identify with the exploited groups. (This is the basic insight which the liberation theologians apply to the theological enterprise itself.) Yet it was also clear that the church as institution was still primarily concerned with its self-preservation. The theory of radical religion would come from the social action militants among the oppressed and the déclassé intellectuals who associated with their struggles and interpreted them in the light of a prophetic tradition. This theory is a "grass roots" thing in that it offers a voice to the voiceless, but it is certainly not the product of anti-intellectual or millenarian mass movements which run on popular devotional frenzy. Neither is it to be the preserve of ideological factions, but rather the result of the honest reflections of many small groups or "cells" of the committed. Since the coup there has been a great deal of enthusiasm for the idea of "basic Christian communities". It was perceived that the most solid basis for a radical Christian praxis would be the practical innovation of indigenous living communities of the faithful, particularly in those areas such as the Northeast where the need for action takes precedence over ideology.

Ironically, the same circumstances which forced the progressives to reappraise and draw in their activities

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within the larger society also enhanced their position within the church. At the institutional level confrontation with the military increased as attacks on the church became bolder and more direct. As mentioned earlier Bishop Candido Padim identified the junta's "doctrine of national security" as a form of fascism which threatened the very survival of the church. But more than that, all but the most conservative members of the hierarchy simply could not tolerate members in good standing, including the fellow bishops, being held up as scapegoats for government failures and as objects of ridicule, or being subjected with seeming impunity to physical as well as verbal violence. Although the Catholic right wing was still very active it began to be isolated,⁵² because even the experiences of demoralization and fragmentation suffered by the opposition forces during the most extreme phase of the dictatorship (i.e., the events surrounding the proclamation of the Fifth Institutional Act on December 13, 1968⁵³) were also in the long run experiences of politicization. For all its limitations and weaknesses the institutional church was recognized as both the indispensable and the only remaining medium for the expression of a prophetic Christian resistance. The most recent manifestation of this role was in the fall of 1976 when the CNBB published a detailed condemnation, in the strongest terms to date, of the social policies of the government and of the "anti-subversive" terrorism which it at least condones, if not officially promotes.⁵⁴

The willingness of the church to escalate its

conflict with the state has benefitted the progressives. It has also in turn provided a context for the development of new theological perspectives of the church which see it in permanent tension with the established powers, and definitely not as just part of the functional apparatus of social systems -- a Durkheimian unifying myth or a pacifying charitable agency. The Brazilian church had to respond to a brutal, repressive regime which identified itself as strongly as possible with both a cultural Christianity ("Christian civilization") and the global hegemony of Western capitalist modernity. It responded, not out of the pressure of mass discontent, but out of the gradual realization of itself as a critical minority entrusted with a special mission to the rest of society. For the Catholic radicals, therefore, the social function of the church has come to be, to adapt a phrase from Régis Debray, the "revolution in the revolution".

It is particularly in the above sense of self-discovery -- of a "revolution" in perceptions and expectations -- that radical religious ideas in Latin America can be seen as the result of, as J.M. Bonino states, "doing theology in a revolutionary situation". It would be far too simple to dismiss such Christian language as only a cloak for the expression of class interests (following Engels' analysis in The Peasant War in Germany) or as the byproduct of social disequilibrium or a breakdown in functional integration. The theory and practice of Christian radicalism belies such sociological reductionism. Referring

back to the previous chapter, account must be taken of the "hermeneutic circle" which is itself an attempt to get beyond relativism by postulating a unity of social praxis and scientific awareness in the understanding of human reality. When oppression is confronted as an objective force this praxis in turn leads to "ideological suspicion" and so to a radicalized theology. Of course the fact of oppression does not automatically produce a liberating consciousness of it. But this fact is a necessary, even though not necessarily sufficient, condition for the latter: if no objective situation of evil existed to be combatted there would be no radical religious ideas of any significance.

Radical ideas as such can not be relegated to the realm of abstract utopianism or, worse, processed to fit an equally platonic universe of structural-functional adjustment and adaptation. The politico-religious ideals to which this chapter refers have real social roots, but because critical consciousness has a social source or base does not mean that the relationship between the two is epiphenomenal or reductive.⁵⁵ Rather it is interdependent and dialectical in the sense that such consciousness enters into human will and becomes transformative action. The Brazilian experience of efforts at popular mobilization and institutional conflict between church and state indicates that Christian thinkers are becoming conscious of this dialectical process. Through the political praxis of protest and resistance there has been a slow movement from a cultural Christianity

to a political theology based on praxis. If the early Christians are so admired by today's radicals in Latin America it is because they were a persecuted minority, not social integrators or comforters. And Moreira Alves points out: "This is a change of incalculable spiritual and political importance, for it means that South America is the only continent where revolution can be strongly influenced by Christianity."⁵⁶

But if the role of the church is not to be chief systems legitimizer, neither is it to make the revolution or overcome underdevelopment. The sociologists studying the Brazilian church have tended to see it in a positive light only as a sort of development agency. To that end various typologies have been offered which, unfortunately, have generally neglected such objective factors as class while mixing social and political categories ("radical", "conservative") with religious and institutional ones ("papist", "pastor") without much regard to their potentially ambiguous or overlapping character.⁵⁷ Typologies often end up simply describing different sections of the church as retrograde or progressive in the absence of any clear relation to theological criteria or to an actual dynamic of social forces.

In the case of functionalists such as Ivan Vallier the nature of the church's "development" as a social institution is still seen as determined solely by some 'ideal-type' of developmental "modernization" even if it is allowed that the church can be both a dependent and an

independent variable in the development process. Vallier's conclusion that the church is undergoing modernization means, as Alves notes, that "all of the ideological attitudes of the hierarchy serve to accelerate the process of social transformation in Latin America. His "political" typology uses only religious terms: papist, pluralist, pastor."⁵⁸ These categories can be said to correspond to developmental stages: the Christendom mentality (papist) gives way to a ghetto Catholicism (pastor) signifying retreats into internal pastoral affairs, and eventually there emerges an enlightened "pluralism" in which the church learns to exert a moderate and progressive influence in modern culture. As Alves comments: "Pangloss could not have said it better. The North American professor entertains an idea of social development which is purely linear. Development would produce itself in three stages, the first wisely preceding the second, rather like the stages of a spatial fuse, or like the Russian dolls which have inside them other identical dolls, which in their turn also contain others."⁵⁹ Catholic attitudes are labelled accordingly as more or less "developed" within an overarching sequential syndrome. But what is clearly lacking is any objective sense of dialectical tensions within the church or between the church and secular society (over the definition of "development" for example!).

The problems implicit in a development paradigm drawn from North American functionalism are inherited by Thomas Bruneau in his assessment of the current role of the

Brazilian Catholic Church. In the chapter entitled "Consequences of conflict: autonomy and the prophetic mission" Bruneau correctly sees the political nature of religious prophecy in a broad 'practical-critical' sense,⁶⁰ and he acknowledges the self-awareness within the institution of its compromises with the established powers and its complicity in the structures of oppression. He then goes on to conclude:

Because of increasing awareness, general changes in the Universal Church and the stimulus of conflict, large sectors of the Church want to play a socially progressive role. They cannot do so in the present situation through the existing structures; all that remains is the role of speaking out, of denouncing, of preaching the truth. The explanation is, therefore, the combination of the idea or concept of prophecy with a socio-political situation which seems to encourage this mission. If the society was unconstrained, if channels of social mobility were open, politics democratic and the situation of the masses improving, it is not likely that the prophetic mission would be assumed.⁶¹

Bruneau simply presumes that in the smooth-running "open society" (a "developed" liberal democracy?) there would be no need for the church to exercise a prophetic stance in any of the above 'political' senses. Why? Because, in effect, he reduces prophecy to a correlative of functional disequilibrium: it is a phenomenon which "logically" (i.e., according to the rationality of a prescribed model of modernization) need only occur as a result of "blockages" in the system or perhaps during the "crises" of the developmental sequence. Ultimately the "prophetic mission" is given no autonomy since the "transformative capacity" of Christianity is made totally extrinsic to it -- that is,

dependent on certain patterned social factors. Once again radical religious ideas are subsumed under a sociological relativism, as evidenced by the fact that Bruneau does not even seem to be aware of a theology of liberation as a fundamental hermeneutical process.⁶²

The inevitable consequence of the above is contradiction and confusion. Bruneau states in his "Conclusion" that "it goes without saying that the Catholic Church is primarily concerned with the spiritual, and with the social and political spheres only as they relate to the spiritual."⁶³ Yet in the next paragraph he adds: "It seems broadly accepted today in Brazil that for the Church to 'save' anyone, it must help them find social and political liberation."⁶⁴ Such disjunctive comments are only possible because Bruneau holds on, perhaps subconsciously, to a dualistic perspective of 'salvation-history' and 'liberation-history' which is rejected by nearly all progressive theologians in Latin America, and, as he himself implies, by the radicalized sectors of the Brazilian church. The root of Bruneau's problems in interpreting the new language of Catholic radicalism is already clearly evident in his "Introduction":

The church in Brazil is indeed coming to play a 'transformative role' in society, because as it changes there will of necessity be greater secularization, increased pluralism and further structural differentiation. A number of sociologists have developed hypotheses on the role of religion in transformation of societies and from my data I can make a strong case for this role in Brazil. In the simplest terms, the Church is moving from a position as unifying force in the creation and support of a cultural

synthesis to a revolutionary and disruptive force in the present political situation.⁶⁵

It would appear that "of necessity" Catholicism can only be "revolutionary" and "disruptive" along the pre-determined path of development conceived through an 'ideal type' of western modernization. Yet the whole of radical theology in Latin America denounces in the strongest possible language the developmentalist logic imported from the capitalist West. In Brazil the greatest ideological enemy of the progressives is not atheistic materialism but the cold (impersonal and therefore "value-free"?) technocratic systems models so beloved by the "pro-Western" military dictatorship and its domestic policy planners who look to North America for inspiration.

I stated earlier that the role of the church is not to "make the revolution". That is particularly true if "revolution" is conceived theoretically as part of a broad developmental process, and only incidentally as an ongoing minority response to injustice. Small groups of Christian activists can hardly be expected to single-handedly defeat the consequences of centuries of oppression. The conclusion of Alves is therefore absolutely correct: "... those who base their hopes for a profound transformation of Brazil's social and political regime on the militant mobilization of the Catholic Church are greatly mistaken. Several sectors of the Church will be able to contribute to these transformations. The Church will be able to adapt to a transformed society. But it will not be in the vanguard of the necessary struggles to achieve them. There are no short-cuts

to revolution. Those which pass through sacristies do not head any farther than the others."⁶⁶

It is important to remember that any illusions about the church's "transformative role" are largely the product of North American observers, and not shared by most radical Christians in Latin America. What the reductionists consistently fail to realize is that the question of radical religion is ultimately a question, not of what is propitious or empirically "rational", but simply of faith -- that is, of an uncompromised and uncompromising fidelity to the total imperative of the gospel in every socio-historical circumstance. Radicalization is not just an opportunistic attempt to regain cultural influence or relevance (what Bruneau calls "neo-Christendom social progressivism"), nor is it simply a "developmental" response to modern demands under difficult conditions. The radicals are fully aware of the lesson of history that, as Dussel puts it, "time spent on seeking to preserve Christendom is so much time lost for Christianity."⁶⁷ Of course, there will always be those who will not take Christian political ideas seriously except within a context of social relativism. That too is a question of faith. So perhaps there is no better answer than that given by a Brazilian brother, Frei Osvaldo, to an interrogator in his country's security establishment. The official declared accusingly -- "Your gospel is very revolutionary", -- to which the monk simply responded -- "But it wasn't I who wrote it."⁶⁸

NOTES

1. For an examination of the influence of this world-view on Latin American political culture see Lawrence Littwin, Latin America: Catholicism and Class Conflict, (Encino, Calif.: Dickenson Publishing Co., 1974).
2. Cited in John Gerassi, ed., Revolutionary Priest, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 9.
3. For a documentary cross-section of this activism see Alain Gheerbrant, The Rebel Church in Latin America, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974).
4. In Carlos Marighela, For the Liberation of Brazil, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 15.
5. Cited in Francine du Plessix Gray, Divine Disobedience, (New York Vintage Books, 1971), section on "Mendez Arceo and Ivan Illich", pp. 311-312.
6. Cf. Nelson Rockefeller, Report on Latin America, (Washington: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs, Committee on Foreign Relations, November 20, 1969). For a highly critical analysis of the general context of American policy see John Gerassi, The Great Fear in Latin America, (New York: Collier Books, 1965).
7. Vittoria Lanternari, The Religions of the Oppressed, (Toronto: Mentor Books, 1965), "Preface", pp. v-vi.
8. This is a serious lacunae, but no doubt it is partially attributable to the constraints imposed on Latin American sociological scholarship by a lingering Marxist scholasticism. The subject of Catholic radicalism is virtually ignored in Luis Aguilar, ed., Marxism in Latin America, (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 1968). The occasional outside article surfaces such as Roque Dalton's "Catholics and Communists in Latin America", World Marxist Review, (January 1968, pp. 82-90). However Dalton offers only impressionistic comments and personal declarations such as: "what unites Communists and Left Catholics, above all, are their lofty dedication to the ideal, their desire for truth and justice, their constant search for spiritual values and, their common stand against the dehumanization and fetishism imposed by modern capitalism." (p. 89)
9. Ivan Vallier, Catholicism, Social Control and Modernization in Latin America, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970); and especially the article "Radical Priests and the Revolution", in Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science, 30:4, August 1972, pp. 15-26.

10. Ibid., p. 81.
11. Thomas Sanders, "The Church in Latin America", Foreign Affairs, 48:2, January 1970, p. 295.
12. Frederick Turner, Catholicism and Political Development in Latin America, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), passim.
13. Cf. Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, trans. by Talcott Parsons, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958); R.H. Tawney, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1938, repr. 1972); S.N. Eisenstadt, ed., The Protestant Ethic and Modernization, (New York: Basic Books, 1968). For an overview of the problem from a Latin American Catholic perspective see Mario Zañartu, Desarrollo Económico y Moral Católica, (Cuernavaca: CIDOC Sondeos no. 26, 1969), chps. 4-6.
14. Vallier, op.cit., p. 157.
15. Donald Smith, Religion and Political Development, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971). See also Smith, ed., Religion and Political Modernization, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).
16. See Joseph Comblin, "Problems of the Church in Brazil", The Clergy Review, January 1972, pp. 3-15. On an ironic note Leonardo Boff, in analysing various "pathologies" in the evolution of Catholicism, writes: "Roman Catholicism ought to be more traditional and less traditionalist." ("Catolicismo Popular: que é Catolicismo?"), Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira, vol. xxxvi, 1976, p. 51.) The profound superficiality of Catholic culture is by no means restricted to Brazil since it is the dominant reality even in the most radical diocese in Mexico. See Cuernavaca: Mentalidad Religiosa Popular, (Cuernavaca: CIDOC Sondeos no. 58, 1969); and for a continental overview cf. Vitalis Hellmut Gnadt, The Significance of Changes in Latin American Catholicism since Chimbote, 1953, (Cuernavaca: CIDOC Sondeos no. 51, 1969).
17. Josué de Castro, Death in the Northeast, (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), p. 11.
18. N. Gall, "Latin America: The Church Militant", Commentary, vol. 49, April 1970, p. 30.
19. de Castro, op.cit., pp. 10-11. For a moving personal account of a foreign priest's struggle to cope with this climate of misery and despair see Paul Gallet, Freedom to Starve, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972).

20. Lanternari, op.cit., p. vii.
21. Cf. Norman Cohn, The Pursuit of the Millenium, (London: Paladin, 1970). The millenarian salvationism and revolutionary chiliasm analysed by Cohn were associated with mass movements of rootless poor -- the 'lumpem-proletariat' of medieval Europe. There does not appear to be anything comparable in the colonial "Christendom" of Latin America. Today Marxists may still look back to figures such as Thomas Münzer, but the intellectuals doing liberation theology tend to find their prophetic voices in the annals of church history (see Enrique Dussel, History and the Theology of Liberation). Unfortunately there is very little published material in English on the social, and not simply institutional, history of church-state relations in Latin America.
22. Thomas Bruneau, "Power and Influence: analysis of the Church in Latin America and the case of Brazil", Latin American Research Review, 8:2, Summer 1973, p. 29.
23. Ibid., p. 44.
24. Thomas Bruneau, The Political Transformation of the Brazilian Church (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974); Emmanuel de Kadt, Catholic Radicals in Brazil, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970); David E. Mutchler, The Church as a Political Factor in Latin America, (New York: Praeger, 1971).
25. For a condensed analysis of the basic social relations which conditioned the church's role see de Kadt, op.cit., chp. 2.
26. Ibid., pp. 51 ff.
27. Bruneau, The Political Transformation of the Brazilian Catholic Church, p. 21.
28. Ibid., p. 22.
29. de Kadt, op.cit., p. 54 f. With respect to the continent as a whole Dussel writes: "In Hispano-America, anticlerical liberalism and positivism were instruments of divine providence. Secularization, laicism, and secularism helped to restore some degree of liberty to the Church." (History and the Theology of Liberation, p. 107).
30. de Kadt, loc.cit., p. 54.
31. Bruneau, op.cit., p. 43.
32. Ibid., p. 50.

33. The suicide of Vargas in 1954 signalled an intense questioning in Brazil of the prospects for a healthy and self-sustaining national economy. The "developmental" industrialization pushed by Vargas's successor Juscelino Kubitschek, was dependent on foreign capital, and, because it left the patrimonial rural economy alone, was structurally incapable of substantially enlarging the internal market. Kubitschek's heirs were more unorthodox, but also weaker men. And amidst all the rhetoric about nationalism and economic reform there was an ever-present threat of military intervention. (Cf. de Kadt, op.cit., chp. 3.)
34. Fr. Fernando Bastos de Avila, Neo-capitalismo, Socialismo, Solidarismo, 2nd ed. (1963); cited in de Kadt, p. 65.
35. This comment appeared as part of a series of articles by a Dominican Friar Thomas Cardonnel in a student paper in July 1960. (Cited in de Kadt, ibid.)
36. de Kadt, p. 70.
37. I am using the term 'populist' in de Kadt's specific sense of applying to social action movements insofar as:
 1. They are made up of intellectuals (and students), concerned with the life-situation of the down-trodden masses in society, the 'people' who apparently cannot by themselves assert their interests;
 2. These intellectuals have a deep-seated horror of the manipulation of the people: their central credo is that solutions to the problems lived by the people must ultimately come from the people themselves, that their own ideas and visions, developed in a wholly different milieu, may at most serve as a sounding board for, but never as signposts to the people. (p. 98.)
38. Ibid., p. 64. de Kadt rightly stresses the need to make a distinction between a 'utopia', seen as an ideal construct based on certain political or philosophical notions, which can serve as a guide for purposeful social change, and 'utopics', the belief in the actual possibility of the construction of an ideal society, free from evil, power, 'contradictions', etc. (See footnote 33; p. 78.) For example, the radical Catholic view of the state sees it as a historical instrument of domination to be overcome, not as part of the Thomistic "nature of things". But if that view remains truly Catholic it probably owes as much to St. Augustine's pessimistic discussion of kingdoms as "great bands of robbers" as to Marx's faith in a future classless society. Mounier expressed this as a "tragic optimism": "The real problem lies in the fact that while we are

engaged in a struggle of force for as long as humanity will exist, we have simultaneously the vocation to struggle against the reign of force and against the installation of a state of force." (Cited on p. 93.)

39. Marcio Moreira-Alves, "Christians, Marxists and Dictatorship in Brazil," Christian Century, June 19, 1970, p. 724. Alves raises an interesting point about the appeal of Maoism. For a recent sympathetic inquiry see Raymond Whitehead, Love and Struggle in Mao's Thought, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1977).
40. For the basic text of the conscientization method see Paulo Freire, Educação como Prática da Liberdade, (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Paz e Terra, 1967); in English: Pedagogy of the Oppressed, (New York: Seabury, 1970). Chapters 7 to 13 of de Kadt, op.cit., provide an exhaustive study of MEB.
41. See de Kadt, ibid., pp. 156 ff. de Kadt shows extremely well how the 'subversive' character of the book was a logical consequence of its audacious descriptions of Brazilian reality as in itself 'subversive'.
42. Cf. Charles Antoine, Church and Power in Brazil, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973), especially the introduction by Richard Schaul.
43. As Antoine says of groups such as AP: "The gamble they took was that of men trying to live as christians with a marxist view of society right from the beginning, one can see the narrow limits of a choice between a political action of the christian democratic type, and one of the marxist type based on the class struggle." (Ibid., pp. 57-58.)
44. Cf. Freire, op.cit.
45. See especially the two manifestos, signed by hundreds of priests from Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo during 1967 and 1968, reproduced in Gheerbrant, The Rebel Church in Latin America, pp. 123-139 and 154-167.
46. Reproduced in ibid., pp. 201-220.
47. Ibid., p. 202.
48. From "The 'Pseudo-Manifesto' of Fr. Comblin", in ibid., pp. 223-224. The document goes on to assert:

The traditional Latin American élites feel a strange inferiority in regard to the societies which dominate the West -- a phenomenon quite unknown by the élites of Asia or Africa. These latter can claim roots deep in the past of their

people, whereas the Latin Americans have no links at all with a people who are simply a cause of shame to them -- shame not over the fact that there are Indians, mestizos and illiterates in their society, but over the fact that they form one people with them. The Latin American élites are the most alienated in the world: their roots are in Europe, and in that part of Europe where they would least like them to be. Not merely do they reject the genuine origins of their nations -- African, Indian and Iberian, but they regret that they themselves are not French, English or North American: this is alienation of a kind to be found nowhere else. (p. 225.)

Comblin's Fanonian indictments make no exceptions for the church insofar as it has been thoroughly implicated in the 'pathologies' of the ruling classes.

49. Ibid., pp. 234-235.

50. The agony of the political activist is living with the consequences of the conclusion that "we act in a realm of power and necessity, of knowing that good intentions and ideals lead through an ugly reality..., that both love and hate underpin the political struggle equally.... The radical who does not turn to political cynicism which leads back into the status quo or political despair which ends in personalism (ultimately mysticism) must live with the agony that his activity will create evil as well as good, pain and suffering as well as justice." (George Melnyk, "Simone Weil", The Chelsea Journal, 3:5 Sept.-Oct. 1977, p. 234.)

51. Cited in Gheerbrant, op.cit., p. 197.

52. For a survey of rightist agitation see in particular Antoine, op.cit., passim, and L'Intégrisme brésilien, (Paris: Centre Lebreton, 1973); and Marcio Moreira Alves, L'Eglise et la Politique au Brésil, (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1974), chp. VIII. Shortly after the coup David Mutchler expressed the following judgment: "The Church in Brazil has a gigantic task before it in convincing the poor that Catholicism is concerned with practical, day to day living. At any rate, however bleak their prospects, the progressives have won control of the church's mainline forces." ("Roman Catholicism in Brazil", Studies in Comparative International Development, 1:8, 1965, p. 117.) This may have been both too emphatic in its pessimism and too premature in its optimism.

53. Cf. Alfred Stepan, The Military in Politics: Changing Patterns in Brazil, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

54. This document has been widely reported in various Catholic documentation services. A good summary is Jonathan Kandell, "La Iglesia, Contra la Tortura en Brasil", El Excelsior, Mexico City, December 13, 1976, pp. 1, 2, 6.
55. As Alves points out: "... unfortunately for political analysts, who could have their work immensely simplified, nature does not pass on political options like eye color, and the social environment does not form ideological choices in the same way as manners of speech or culinary habits." (op.cit., p. 60.)
56. Alves, "Christians, Marxists and Dictatorship in Brazil"; p. 723.
57. See the critical remarks in Alves, L'Eglise et la Politique au Brésil, pp. 235 ff.
58. Ibid., p. 236. For the full extent of the confusion see Ivan Vallier, "Religious Elites: Differentiations and Developments in Roman Catholicism", in Seymour Lipset and Aldo Solari, eds., Elites in Latin America, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967).
59. Alves, loc.cit.
60. Bruneau points out that:

... while subjectively not political partisans, the prophets were objectively acting in a political manner. The Church and its individual members have always been political agents but in an accepted context in support of the established regime. A movement away from this traditional role has led to attacks by critics claiming the Church is 'acting politically'. The vast majority of the conflicts have involved some aspect of this question and there is really no way to resolve it. On the one hand any change in the Church, particularly if the change includes a social role, must be political simply because the institution has always been a legitimizing force for the system and because it has relied upon power to define and exercise its influence. On the other hand the priests and bishops who are most active in promoting change are the least likely to be involved in political parties. (p. 237.)
61. Ibid., pp. 235-236.
62. There is virtually no reference to the liberation theology movement in the entire social science literature in English dealing with Latin American Catholicism.

A rough parallel would be to try to explain the Reformation in Western Europe without even mentioning the writings of Luther and Calvin.

63. Bruneau, op.cit., p. 239.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid., p. 6.

66. Alves, op.cit., p. 248.

67. Dussel, op.cit., p. 109.

68. Cited in Thomas Sanders, Catholic innovation in a Changing Latin America, (Cuernavaca: CIDOC Sondeos no. 41, 1969).

SECTION 2.2 THE PHENOMENON OF DOM HELDER CÂMARA

An Examination from the Standpoint of the Movement to a Liberationist Christianity

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MAN AND THE MISSION: A VOICE FOR THE THIRD WORLD

On dit que les hommes de génie sont des hommes contrastés, imprévisible en même temps que cohérents. Helder qui vérifie ces caractéristiques, est-il un homme de génie? Il appartiendra aux générations suivantes d'en juger. Et c'est après sa mort qu'on découvrira, au-delà du mythe, et trop tard peut-être, le plus essentiel et le plus méconnu: s'il faut parler de génie, ce qui est certain, c'est qu'il s'agit d'un génie de la vie, d'un génie humain et prophétique, né de souche brésilienne authentique au soleil de l'Évangile.

- René Laurentin, L'Amérique Latine à l'heure de l'enfance.

José Bonino in Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation (the first major 'insider's' overview of the liberation theology movement to appear in English) singles out Archbishop Helder Câmara of Recife, Brazil as having become "the living voice of the Christian conscience in Latin America."¹ How is it that a small, frail Brazilian bishop, now nearing seventy years of age, is recognized throughout the world as the sign of Christian struggle in an entire continent against the forces of political repression and economic underdevelopment? Enrique Dussel points to the answer in History and the Theology of Liberation:

On April 12, 1964, Dom Helder Câmara delivered an address which, in my opinion, was one of the most

forthright theological statements ever made in Latin American history. It was truly prophetic, in the tradition of men like Montesinos / a Dominican who was the first important church figure to denounce the Spaniards' treatment of the Indians /. Camara is a prophet and a poet who uses a dialectical approach.... He began this way: "I am a native of northeast Brazil, speaking to other natives of that region, with my gaze focused on Brazil, Latin America, and the world. I speak as a human being, in fellowship with the frailty and sinfulness of all other human beings; as a Christian to other Christians, but with a heart open to all individuals, peoples, and ideologies; as a bishop of the Catholic Church who, like Christ, seeks to serve rather than be served. May my fraternal greeting be heard by all: Catholics and non-Catholics, believers and non-believers. Praised be Jesus Christ!"²

Dom Helder's vision is both truly "catholic" and the classic stance of a radical political theology which seeks not the imposition of a "civil religion", but the common struggle against exploitation and evil by all men of good will. A little later on in the same address cited by Dussel Dom Helder declares:

"Let no one try to attach me to a group or link me with a party so that I would consider their friends to be mine and share their aversions.

My door and my heart will be open to all, absolutely to all. Christ died for all; I should not exclude anyone from fraternal dialogue.

It is obvious that, loving everyone, I must have, as Christ had, a special love for the poor. At the last judgement, we shall all be judged according to the way we have treated Christ in those who hunger or thirst, who are degraded, wounded, and oppressed."³

The context of these remarks is equally significant. They were delivered by Dom Helder upon taking possession of the archdiocese of Olinda and Recife only a few weeks after the military coup which overthrew João Goulart, but also after a long period of sustained pressure to have the former

removed from his previous post as auxiliary bishop of Rio de Janeiro. In this tense, hostile atmosphere Dom Helder simply repeated calmly: "Let no one be scandalized at seeing me mingle with people considered unworthy or sinful Let no one be alarmed to see me in the company of men who are supposedly compromising or dangerous,"⁴ Not surprisingly, however, the authorities and many of the privileged upper-class Catholics in the Northeast were scandalized by the simplicity, openness, and above all insatiable social conscience of the new bishop. For Dom Helder himself the transition from a long illustrious career as a "good bishop" to notoriety as a troublemaker in clerical garb was a very big adjustment, and a slow, painful process.

As was noted in the preceding chapter the church in Brazil has historically been dependent for support on the state and, particularly in the Northeast, on the rural oligarchy. Although with the foundation of the Republic some efforts were made at internal renewal, the church directed its ideological energies principally toward stemming the tide of liberalism and 'modernist' philosophies, as it continued to channel its social energies almost exclusively into ministering to the rich and traditional works of "charity". In short, the church was a dependent, underdeveloped institution, -- virtually bankrupt in terms of fulfilling any progressive role in society. As one of Dom Helder's predecessors as bishop of Olinda, Dom Sebastião Leme, put it in a famous pastoral letter in 1916 (his first

after arriving from Rio de Janeiro): "We are a majority that does not fulfill its social duties; we reach the peak of absurdity by being a great national force, but a force that does not act, does not exert any influence: a force, in fact, inert."⁵ This was the Catholic culture into which Dom Helder was born and from which he was eventually to emerge as such an outstanding symbol of dissension and contestation, but at the same time great hope. The pages which follow are an attempt to trace the roots of his maturing prophetic presence from within the context of his own personal evolution and personal contribution to the transformation of his church.⁶

Helder Câmara was born on February 7, 1909 in the port of Fortaleza, the capital of the state of Ceará. He grew up in an irreligious atmosphere: his father was a masonic freethinker; his mother a schoolteacher who went to church only once a year. Yet he learned from his parents the qualities of openness, forgiveness, and sensitivity to others which were to sustain him during the trials which lay ahead. As he was later to remember: "My father helped me to see that it is possible to be good without being religious."⁷ Still Dom Helder also remembers that he always wanted to be a priest, and in September of 1923 he answered that call, entering the seminary of São José at Fortaleza. His intellectual experiences at the seminary were rather unusually broad. He learned French and was an avid reader of European authors. He was particularly interested in the philosophy of education, -- this at a

time of great innovation in the field of educational psychology when the theories of Freud, Dewey, and Watson were just beginning to gain prominence. Within Catholic circles in Brazil it was also a time of great controversy over the dangers of behaviorism, social evolutionism, and modernism in general.

During Helder's years in the seminary (1923-1931) the church experienced a revival of sorts. Several prominent intellectuals converted or returned to Catholicism, chief among them, a 'nordestino', Jackson de Figueiredo. During the twenties a generation of Brazilians disillusioned with the tarnished ideals of the Republic would prove to be fertile ground for a renewed Catholic social crusade. With the support of the hierarchy Jackson, a gifted propagandist, founded the review A Ordem and the Centro Dom Vital to promote his vision of a great Catholic Brazil. As was pointed out in chapter three Jackson was greatly influenced by the reactionary integralism of Charles Maurras and other founders of the "Action Française". So intransigent was the theology of the movement spearheaded by Jackson that it might have been drawn directly from Pope Pius IX's Syllabus of Errors.

Not surprisingly Helder was exposed to these ideas in the seminary. In fact, he soon adopted Jackson's moralistic world view of an inspired national church combatting its mortal enemies of Protestantism, free-thinking, and socialism. When Jackson died in 1928 the lay leadership passed to another repentant apostate Alceu Amoroso Lima.

By temperament and education Alceu was a moderate, open to cultural pluralism and to a diversity of opinion on questions of social reform. Yet in his new role he was moved to take up the cause of reaction with all the fervor of his predecessor. It was Alceu who gave Helder his entrance into the political arena by putting him in contact with Severino Sombra, a young army officer who had recently converted to Catholicism.⁸

Severino's right-wing indoctrination in the military school at Rio de Janeiro was reinforced by his discovery of Catholic integralism. In Fortaleza he began an anti-communist league of rural and urban workers, and with the young seminarian Helder Câmara and another young Lieutenant, Jeova Mota, founded the Centro Jackson de Figueiredo. Helder plunged into the work of these organizations with a missionary zeal. When he was ordained a priest on August 15, 1931 Severino and Jeova were the servers at his first mass. These early years of the 1930s were ones of intense turmoil in Brazil. Two years after the fall of the Republic the Brazilian Integralist Party was founded by Plinio Salgado. Severino was offered the post of Provincial Chief of the Northeast with Padre Helder as educational secretary. With the approval of his bishop the latter accepted, despite some doubts about the Integralists' open emulation of European Fascism. The church hierarchy's resistance to the establishment of a Catholic party had not stopped Pe. Helder from becoming a thorough-going political demagogue.

The leader of the hierarchy, Cardinal Leme, did

however permit the organization of a Catholic Electoral League (LEC) during the first years of the Vargas régime. Its ties with the Integralists were unofficial but extensive. Alceu Amoroso Lima was its first President. Pe. Helder, though he had not run for any office, was persuaded both by his bishop and by the new right-wing Governor to become State Director of the Department of Education. However, in his new position Pe. Helder held to the belief that the educational sphere must be free from partisan interference, a stand which caused his relations with the government to deteriorate rapidly. Within a year he resigned. In January of 1936 he left Fortaleza for Rio de Janeiro where he had been offered an administrative position in the Secretariat of Education.⁹ He was welcomed into the archdiocese by Cardinal Leme on the understanding that he would sever all ties with the Integralist Party.

Given Padre Helder's passionate views a complete renunciation of fascist ideas must have been a slow and painful process.¹⁰ In fact his political involvement continued clandestinely when Cardinal Leme permitted him on certain conditions to represent the church on Salgado's twelve-member Supreme Council. As a consequence he was embroiled in the events which followed Vargas's 1937 coup. Vargas used the support of the Integralists to engineer his corporatist 'Estado Novo', but once made dictator he had no intention of sharing power with them. All political parties were suppressed and Pe. Helder's political career came to an abrupt end. He was fortunate though not to have been

arrested nor to have lost his job. The turmoil subsided and he continued working in the Ministry of Education until 1943, keeping a low profile and rethinking many of his ideas.

At this time also Alceu Amoroso Lima was turning to the works of Jacques Maritain, whose landmark Humanisme Intégral appeared in 1936. Alceu was to become the foremost interpreter of neo-Thomism in Brazil. Through Alceu, and through reading Maritain in the original, Pe. Helder was introduced to the possibilities of a democratic, reformist Catholicism. He began to recognize the fallacy of his manichean anti-communist dichotomies and to try to understand the real causes of communism's appeal. In 1943 he was released from his civil service post but he continued to work closely with government agencies, particularly as a consultant in education. This friendly collaboration with the federal bureaucracy in the development of "progressive" domestic policy was to extend to the next decade, most notably during the 'developmentalist' administration of Juscelino Kubitschek. Indeed Dom Helder was a personal friend of the President, and not only was offered the position of Secretary of Education and urged to run for Mayor of Rio de Janeiro, but was even seriously considered as a possible successor to Kubitschek.¹¹

While in Fortaleza Pe. Helder's political proselytizing overshadowed his work in religious and educational associations. There seems to have been little time for the exercise of his priestly ministry. In Rio de Janeiro his forced retirement from direct involvement in the political arena

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was providential in that it opened up a more reflective period of his life. He was still for a time a government employee not a parish priest, but Cardinal Leme encouraged him to devote as much of his attention as possible to the problems of religious education. Cardinal Leme's successor, Dom Jaime Câmara asked Pe. Helder to become vice-director of catechetics for the archdiocese. It was a difficult task given the deep ideological divisions surrounding the introduction of religious instruction in the public schools. (This had occurred in Rio de Janeiro after the fall of the Republic in 1930.) By this time, moreover, his views were considerably more moderate and heterodox than those of many influential Catholic educators and of his superior, Dom Jaime. Pe. Helder no longer shared their conviction that Communism was the greatest evil facing the church. He was beginning to see that the manifest failure of previous efforts at religious education lay in such things as the elitism of "top down" approaches, the uncritical use of foreign models, and ignorance of, and resulting incapacity to come to grips with, popular religiosity -- i.e. with the mixture of Christian symbols with ancestral traditions and superstitions, and the host of syncretic accretions to liturgical cults. The seeds were being sown of the insight that the teaching of the gospel must reach out to the people to make it an integral and authentic part of their self-expression. Much later as Archbishop of Recife Dom Helder would put this insight into practice in his diocesan radio broadcasts and in his stress on grass roots interaction with the laity and the

formation of 'comunidades de base' or "basic Christian communities".¹²

In 1946 Pe. Helder was named diocesan chaplain to Catholic Action (ACB) in Rio de Janeiro, and a year later national vice-chaplain. After the death of Cardinal Leme the movement of the lay apostolate had lost much of its vitality. Many in the hierarchy, including Dom Jaime, continued to be suspicious of lay leadership. Moreover, once the dangerous liberalism of the Republic had been vanquished and the threat of communism contained, the need to inoculate the masses against evil ideas was a less compelling 'raison d'être' for activist lay organizations. Pe. Helder's interest in reviving Catholic Action did not lie in these traditional prejudices and fears of the clerical elite. Rather, he and another young organizer, Pe. José Távora, were strongly influenced by the ideas of José Cardijn, who had sought to recruit lay militants from among the working classes of France and Belgium and had founded the Young Catholic Workers. During the next few years Pe. Helder demonstrated his tireless energy by organizing conferences and workshops, improving communications, editing circulars and study materials, etc. Both he and Pe. Távora agitated for greater autonomy from the hierarchy for the various branches of ACB. They wanted to inject some dynamism into the organization and to promote increased social awareness. The inadequacy of traditionalist catechetics and anti-communist phobias was all too apparent. Thanks largely to Pe. Helder's efforts Catholic Action was reorganized into a lay movement

of strength and purpose. As usual though, he had to constantly allay the fears of the hierarchy that ACB would not become too strong or too independent.

A large part of the problem was that the bishops themselves were completely unorganized, each clinging to an individualistic, almost feudal, relationship with Rome. Pe. Helder was convinced of the need for a national conference of bishops, and, being on excellent terms with the Papal Nuncio to Brazil, he was able to arrange a meeting with Msgr. Montini (the future Pope Paul VI), the Papal Secretary of State, to solicit Rome's approval and support for his idea. Msgr. Montini was won over, but he wondered aloud where a suitable leader was to be found to head the new organization since Pe. Helder was not yet a bishop! The problem was solved when Pe. Helder Câmara was named Auxiliary Bishop of Rio de Janeiro in March, 1952. The bishops' conference (CNBB) came into being in October of that same year with Dom Helder as General Secretary and the editor of an official monthly bulletin.

During the 1950s Dom Helder's talents were much in demand. With the CNBB barely off the ground Dom Jaime Câmara convinced the Vatican that Rio de Janeiro should host the thirty-sixth International Eucharistic Congress in 1955. The immense problems of accommodating the expected crowd of nearly a million people quickly became the responsibility of Dom Helder, who earned the nickname the "electric mosquito". The Congress was a huge success, and so was the tiny bishop from the Northeast who was in the process of developing a

mass following among the ordinary people of Brazil. The Congress also helped the CNBB and ACB to gain more acceptance within the hierarchy. Both of these organizations were dominated by the charismatic Dom Helder, and both owed much of their coherence and progressive orientation to him. Beyond that, his visionary leadership did not stop at the borders of Brazil. During the same year as the Congress he was also instrumental in setting up the Episcopal Council of Latin America (CELAM), later serving two terms as second vice-president (1959-60, 1961-63) and one as first vice-president (1964-65).

The existence of the CNBB was a big step forward in stimulating coordinated action for social change among Catholics. Furthermore, ACB, freed from the control of individual bishops, underwent considerable growth and radicalization. Over the years of Dom Helder's involvement with ACB more emphasis was placed on agrarian reform and on justice rather than charity as the core of Christian social teaching. His corresponding exhortation to the bishops was to preach "the whole social doctrine of the Church instead of mutilating it to save the rich."¹³ Still such appeals to the hierarchy frequently fell on deaf ears. For most of his fellow bishops reform could only be countenanced within the existing structures, and even if that principle were respected the response to calls for action could be expected to be sluggish.

Gradually Dom Helder began to question the adequacy of reformist solutions. He was particularly alarmed by the

desperate situation of his native Northeast where the perennial problems of hunger, drought, and massive underdevelopment were growing so severe that the region was threatened with social and political chaos. The peasant leagues founded by the left-wing lawyer, Francisco Julião, though not the hot-beds of subversion that their opponents claimed, were a challenge to the lethargy of church leaders. At first Dom Helder tried to work with the bishops of the Northeast and the Kubitschek government to develop programmes geared to the most urgent needs of the peasants. But a long-term approach was clearly demanded. Finally in 1959 in the midst of a major drought the Superintendency for the Development of the Northeast (SUDENE) was created on the recommendation of a report by a young liberal economist Celso Furtado. The birth of SUDENE in the face of tremendous opposition from the rural oligarchy was a tribute to the progressives in the church. However, the leading member of the hierarchy at the centre of these events was moving farther and farther ahead of his fellow-bishops on social questions. Increasingly Dom Helder's projects, including several urban renewal schemes, brought him into conflict with his ultra-conservative superior Dom Jaime. The more he worked with the rural masses or the poor of the 'favelas', the more he recognized the necessity of basic structural reforms. By contrast, Dom Jaime was only interested in averting supposed Communist threats. After 1962 Dom Helder also had to contend with the hostility of Carlos Lacerda, an extreme rightist who had become governor of the state of

Guanabara.

As Fr. Leonard points out: "Dom Helder continued from time to time to use the threat of Communism or of Protestant infiltration as a means of reaching people who were closed to any other argument."¹⁴ It was still true during these years that the "North American hierarchies launched their appeals for material and personnel to help Latin America on a combat-Communism and be-as-keen-as-the-Protestants line."¹⁵ But Dom Helder's increasingly serious misgivings about this kind of "foreign aid", and especially his constant talk about the scandal of injustice in the Brazilian church's own backyard, began to alienate him from his well-placed conservative friends. A parting of the ways was inevitable, and the decisive break came in early 1963 when a television interview with him made by the National Education Foundation was broadcast in the United States. Dom Helder used the opportunity to deliver a mordant critique of the kind of "liberal" defense of the "free world" represented by the Alliance for Progress, which was doomed to failure insofar as it may have had any pretensions of curing Latin American underdevelopment and creating a more just society. Dom Helder had stated flatly: "It is one of your great illusions. Liberty is only a name, a sound for two-thirds parts of mankind without houses, without clothes, without food, without a minimum education, and above all without human conditions of work."¹⁶ The interview stirred up an intense negative reaction in Brazil. It appeared that the man who was virtually synonymous with the

national leadership of the Brazilian church in the 1950s was rapidly becoming the institution's most celebrated 'bête noire'.

The broad context for Dom Helder's transformation from esteemed churchman to political villain begins during the latter half of the 1950s when Catholic Action was also evolving a more radical critical stance. Social involvement at the mass level led to a recognition of the need to recruit more lay militants from the lower classes and to change the movement's focus away from "spiritual" activities which failed to deal with the fatalistic religiosity of these classes. Dom Helder became acquainted with the approach of the worker priests in France, and with the ideas of Lebreton and Mounier, both of whom advocated a planned economy and were not afraid to acknowledge the truth of many of Marx's insights. By 1960 the student branch of Catholic Action (JUC) had taken the lead in formulating a radical Christian perspective of practical action aimed at structural change. JUC's rejection of the ideology of class harmony created new tensions within the church which were exacerbated when in 1962 many ACB activists helped found Ação Popular as a mass-oriented movement completely separate from the institutional church and aligned with left-wing politics. Although Dom Helder was far from agreeing with all of the revolutionary ideas being circulated at the time, he did his best to minimize the antagonistic reaction which was setting in among the hierarchy.

It was not enough. He himself was more and more the

object of right-wing attacks, and as the campaign of villification intensified his influence and that of the CNBB declined accordingly. Conservative resistance was also being mounted against church-sponsored rural unions and adult education programmes to which lay activists had tried to give a less paternalistic organization and a more revolutionary direction. For example, the Movement for Basic Education created in 1961 with the backing of the federal government soon progressed beyond the goal of simply eliminating illiteracy to that of promoting popular awareness and self-determination, using the 'conscientization' strategies developed by Paulo Freire. The intended consequence -- consciousness of oppression leading to a struggle against the oppressors -- was not exactly welcomed by Catholics in high places.

The culmination of the process of radicalization occurred with Vatican II, which was still in session at the time of the March 1964 coup. At first the calling of an Ecumenical Council had failed to arouse many expectations in Latin America. The response of the Brazilian Hierarchy to Pope John's social encyclical Mater et Magistra was rather tepid. Although some of the Pope's appeals for more concerted pastoral action were well-received, there seems to have been no realization that the proposed Council would be one of far-reaching renewal.¹⁷ What eventually transpired was therefore a pleasant surprise and an important boost for Dom Helder and the tiny core of progressive prelates active in the CNBB and CELAM. The former threw himself into the

behind-the-scenes work at the Council. As one commentator described his catalytic role:

A Latin American bishop originated the movement that would finally result in the Schema on the Church in the World. Dom Helder Camara ... constantly buttonholed visitors to discuss with them the problems of the third world. He kept on repeating: "And now, what are we to do? Are we going to spend all our time debating the internal problems of the Church while two-thirds of mankind is dying of hunger? What have we to say about the problems of underdevelopment? Will the Council express its concern for the great problems of mankind? Are we going to leave Pope John all alone in this great struggle?" /.../ "Is shortage of priests the biggest problem in Latin America? No! It is underdevelopment!"¹⁸

Dom Helder continually used his critical powers and charismatic presence to sharpen the social orientation of many group discussions. He strongly identified with a group led by the French priest Paul Gauthier who taught that the primary mission of the church was to preach the gospel to the poor. However Dom Helder insisted that romanticizing poverty would be a regressive mystification if it did not differentiate between really serving the poor and simply extolling voluntary poverty as a virtue in itself. He also worked extensively with Cardinal Suenens of Belgium to keep the pressure on the Council for a more outward-looking focus. Much of this effort bore fruit in the landmark document "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World". Though Dom Helder never spoke in any of the plenary sessions of the Council his presence was noted by all. At one point he even sent a letter to every bishop expounding in no uncertain terms on the themes of collegiality, First World-Third World dialogue, and the need for 'conscientization'.

among clergy as well as laity. He lamented: "We are more used to associations that listen to us in reverent attention than to groups of militants who use their heads and say what they think."¹⁹ Further on in the letter he asked:

When two-thirds of the world lives in under-development and hunger, can we squander money on temples of stone while forgetting Christ in the person of the poor? Temples which the poor will not have the heart to enter, in which they cannot feel at home? Have we not developed a capitalist mentality more suited to a banker than to "another Christ"? Are there not latifundary churches? Are there not dioceses that treat their workers, their functionaries, their teachers unjustly?²⁰

When Pope John's final encyclical Pacem in Terris appeared in April, 1963 the response from the Brazilian hierarchy was enthusiastic. The CNBB issued a manifesto "Towards an Authentic Christian Reform of the Brazilian Social Structures" which went so far as to assert: "Our social order is still weighed down by the heavy load of capitalist tradition....". The document was hardly revolutionary but it was a significant step given that it was signed by such arch-conservatives as Dom Jaime Câmara. It also quickly became a 'cause célèbre', provoking an immediate outcry from the right, much of which was automatically directed against Dom Helder who, ironically, was not even one of the signatories.

Despite the turmoil in Brazil Dom Helder continued to take a leading role in subsequent sessions of the Council, now presided over by Pope Paul VI. His long friendship with the new Pope stood him in good stead as complaints about the "Red Archbishop" flooded in to the Vatican. Dom Helder's

wide influence allowed him to speak out with characteristic forthrightness on a variety of subjects. He even tackled the traditionally taboo subject of reform of the Vatican bureaucracy. Above all, he emphasized the need for the church to be open to the world and to recognize man as the co-creator who is to fulfill Christ's work of justice and peace on earth. Dom Helder constantly encouraged the spirit of Teilhard de Chardin which animates many passages in the Council documents. He himself said: "Teilhard in my opinion has no rival as regards influence on my life."²¹ All in all Dom Helder contributed a great deal to the Council and also made use of it as a learning experience and an opportunity to make contacts and expand horizons. He regarded the deliberations as only hesitant first steps in an ongoing process of renewal. His own thinking, as Leonard points out, still had serious weaknesses. His enthusiasm for change and experimentation was salutary, but too often linked to the mistaken assumption that the Pope and the bishops would have been able to exercise, even presuming they wanted to, a broad 'conscientizing' influence over public opinion in the western industrialized nations. In a related vein, a primary weakness of Dom Helder's approach was "his belief in the power of truth, once presented, to prevail." As Leonard notes:

This assumption probably has its roots in his optimistic view of man, coupled with a Thomistic trust in human reason. But it takes more than a rational knowledge of the truth to set men free; much more to set society free. The poor and the oppressed may receive the message of truth with joy -- the oppressors will probably need a stronger message.²²

Very soon Dom Helder was to have to work out his thought in relation to harsh new realities of political repression. He was still at the Council when named Archbishop of Recife early in March 1964. Before he could take possession of that See the Goulart regime was toppled by the armed forces. Dom Helder had made many enemies in Rio de Janeiro and his close associations with Presidents Kubitschek, Quadros, and Goulart -- considered dangerous nationalists and even "Communists" by some sectors of the ruling class - made him a prime target of political abuse. Actually he had refused all involvement in party politics and agreed to take a chance on government social programmes only hoping for some improvement. Moreover, he was deeply disturbed by the incompetence of Goulart, whom he considered a bourgeois despite his sporadic flirtations with left-wing radicalism. Nonetheless, Dom Helder's position in Rio de Janeiro had become impossible. He was denounced by the extreme right led by Governor Carlos Lacerda as little short of a traitor -- a demagogue who makes it his business to "cultivate misery". The relations between Dom Helder and Cardinal Jaime Câmara were also strained to the point where a move out of Rio was inevitable after twenty-eight years. In a fortuitous turn of events, just as these conflicts were coming to a head the Archbishop of Recife died. The providential significance of that vacancy was not lost on the Pope and Dom Helder was appointed to the sensitive and highly visible Northeastern post.

Dom Helder would have to adjust to his new situation

under extremely difficult circumstances. Following the coup there were even demands for his arrest. (In one story of bad faith and political intrigue a photograph of Dom Helder and Cardinal Motta conferring in secret with Goulart during his last days was widely circulated as evidence of guilt by association. Actually the photograph had been engineered by Goulart, and the two bishops had only agreed to the meeting to warn him of the folly of his policies.) Still Dom Helder's first reaction to the new military government was a controlled one of 'wait and see'. If nothing else the coup had at least ended an ineffectual period of factionalism and unrest. But Dom Helder's offer of tolerance was not reciprocated. In fact it soon became clear that many of the victims of the junta's belligerence were Catholic activists arrested as "Communist infiltrators". The "revolution" instituted by the army was openly a sham. It was a situation described by Alceu Amoroso Lima as a "reign of cultural terror". Dom Helder's own residence was invaded by soldiers on suspicion of harboring a relative of Miguel Arraes, the socialist Governor of Pernambuco who had been forced into exile by the coup. Almost overnight Dom Helder had become the most important remaining (and therefore dangerous) populist figure in the Northeast.²³ This and the fact of his immense international prestige produced a vehement reaction and at times an almost irrational resentment against him among the established elites. In a particularly vitriolic series of articles an older but not wiser Gilberto Freyre managed to accuse him of being both a Goebbels and a

Kerensky! One owner of a chain of newspapers urged the armed forces to "run the surgical knife also through those traitors of the Church, the rotten, Castro-loving clergy of the Northeast."²⁴ Officially, the policy was simply to cut off the progressive wing of the church from the mainstream of Brazilian life if not to wage war on it directly.

The climate of suspicion and intimidation assiduously fostered by the Junta produced the desired effect in that divisions within the hierarchy became more manifest and acute than ever before. The progressives had little choice but to salvage what they could. Dom Helder met with President Castelo Branco and continued to press for realistic development programmes. But in other respects he did not curb his outspokenness. At a major public address in 1965 opening a new regional seminary for the Northeast (which he considered something of a "white elephant") he took the opportunity to stress again the inhuman situation of underdevelopment, and to call for priests dedicated to serving the oppressed, for more study of social problems, and for a search for a "new socialism".²⁵ This last reference in particular did nothing to endear him to the authorities. When Castelo Branco, who had favored a swift return to democracy, was succeeded by General Costa e Silva, and there was still no indication that anything but a deaf ear would be extended to Dom Helder's pleas for some sign of flexibility or good will, his patience was exhausted. He was forced to question his previous acceptance of church-state collaboration and to recognize that as a general principle accommodation to "legitimate"

power had served the ruling class to the detriment of the true mission of the Church:

The great mistake of my life in Rio was my idea of the relationship between the Church and those in authority or with power. I convinced myself that the Brazilian form of Church-State relationship was the ideal one: fortunately, no official religion but a mutual respect and loyal collaboration between the two powers. I was in principle far from realizing that the so-called social order was rather a stratified disorder. I did not perceive the internal colonialism -- privileged native groups guaranteeing their wealth at the cost of the misery of their fellow citizens. It took me a long time to realize that the Church in its preoccupation with order and authority was giving a too passive version of Christianity. With the best intentions we were living and causing to be lived an alienated and alienating religion, providing opium for the people I see every day more clearly that our vocation as Christians is to serve the world, to be the presence of Christ in the midst of men. Instead of ulterior motives regarding a temporal leadership or a new Christendom, this vocation obliges us more and more to denounce injustice, to encourage the integral human promotion of the marginalized masses, to take part in the peaceful yet unrelenting struggle to rid the world of every kind of oppressive structure.²⁶

As Dom Helder came into increasing opposition to the new military regime he was also increasingly alienated from official support within the church. Even before Vatican II had ended the CNBB had been paradoxically becoming more vulnerable to reactionary pressures. After the coup, when the "Red peril" could no longer be used as a rationale for church-sponsored social action, the church was in full retreat. As the progressives were isolated leadership passed to conservative or uncontroversial prelates. Just as during the same period in the United States anti-war protest was being blamed for government failures in Southeast Asia, Catholic radicalism in Brazil, symbolized in the person of

Dom Helder Câmara, was being made the supreme scapegoat for supposed weak links in the defenses of the Brazilian fatherland.²⁷ During the turbulent years of 1968-69, which ended in extreme censorship, there was unleashed in the pro-government press an incredible number of vociferous attacks on Dom Helder, and to a lesser extent on the eminent Catholic philosopher Alceu Amoroso Lima who remained his staunch friend and defender. A characteristically sarcastic assessment of Dom Helder would exclaim that "he is preaching armed struggle, an alliance between marxism and christianity," snidely adding that "the man is a cheat who hasn't the courage to take up a gun."²⁸ During the early 'sixties Dom Helder had always defended the radical groups of Catholic Action and especially the revolutionary enthusiasm of the youth, but now he bore the brunt of the criticism for these stands more as a pariah of the established church than as an official spokesman for it. The beautiful words of the Council and many CNBB documents had become an embarrassment as the greater part of the hierarchy opted for collaboration with the dictatorship, while the progressive elements either abandoned the church, their ideals, or both.

Even though Dom Helder took charge of the archdiocese of Olinda and Recife under such difficult circumstances, he was still much beloved by the common people. Yet in every other way the situation had changed dramatically from the time of 1930s, when as a partisan priest he was the idol of the crowds. The local military officials, the upper classes, and even some clergy and religious made no secret of their

hostility toward him. Many of his fellow bishops resented his eagerness to speak out and his penchant for always being several steps ahead of the pack.²⁹ Dom Helder was aware of course that his public personality was a source of great irritation to a lot of people, but he accepted that risk because of a profound conviction that he must speak for the voiceless even though it meant being condemned as a "politician". As he once said, only half tongue-in-cheek, it was important to make use of what remained of the old clericalism: "...I am persuaded that the Church, in Latin America, can still be of service to the people. And so, for the moment ... I am making the most of a certain clerical advantage. There! That is what I am doing! Because, in this country today and in present conditions, a bishop can say what a student or workman or an intellectual, even a professor, could not risk saying."³⁰

Nevertheless, although the spotlight always seemed to be on Dom Helder, in practical terms his activities within his own country were extremely limited. He faced a chronic lack of personnel and resources, especially since involvement with him in social projects and associations could be considered dangerously "subversive".³¹ Moreover, the growing pressure of outside commitments and international speaking engagements meant frequent absences from Recife. But most importantly, he had begun slowly but surely to reject the path of pragmatist reformism within the existing system.³² In effect, this deliberate withdrawal from the "moderate" mainstream took place at the cost of the marginalization of

his efforts at nonviolent 'consientization'. In 1968 he tried to launch as a joint project with the CNBB a movement of nonviolent resistance -- first known as "Action Justice and Peace" but changed after the Medellin Conference to "Moral Liberating Pressure" -- to all attacks on the human rights of the Brazilian people, understanding the term "rights" in the broadest social as well as legal sense.³³ The movement simply dissipated, however, when faced with increased censorship and only a lukewarm response from the institutional church.

As a dissident under these conditions Dom Helder's range of social activity was necessarily reduced to being 'ad hoc' and personalistic. So it is rather disingenuous when a liberal American political scientist accuses Dom Helder of a "messianic rather than programmatic approach to reform", and of making "charitable handouts" a cornerstone of his dealings with the people.³⁴ To pass him off as either only a naive or a demagogic "angel of mercy" to the poor is inexcusable. Dom Helder is simply vitally interested in the welfare of every human being, and at the same time he is fully aware that his own personal projects and acts of assistance within the local community, have in the past been, and will no doubt continue to be, labelled as paternalistic "bandaid" measures.³⁵ He has never hesitated to ask -- what of the old, the despairing, and all those marginal to any imagined revolution? He once told a group of radical students in São Paulo: "I know what you might say: that it is preferable to leave that portion to rot, so that the revolution can

ferment As for me I think otherwise, although I understand your anxiety. You are afraid that if I concern myself just a little in caring for those war-wounded, I will forget the war. And I tell you that decidedly I shall not!"³⁶

The plain fact of the matter, as Leonard makes clear, is that Dom Helder could not have revolutionized his own archdiocese of Recife, much less the entire Brazilian church, from the top down even if he had wanted to. He had come to realize that change, if it were to take place at all in a continent dominated by multinational conglomerates yet obsessed with "national security", would necessarily have modest beginnings among the grass roots. In such books as Spiral of Violence and The Desert is Fertile he constantly affirms that even in the face of cynicism and failure there is a 'David-and-Goliath' role to be aspired to by what he calls the "abrahamic minorities" in every society. After the 1964 coup Dom Helder lost any status he may have had as a national celebrity to become the Brazilian establishment's number one 'persona non grata'. The high profile abroad of acting as a conscience for the Third World would be greeted not with fanfare but with censorship and unremitting scorn in his own country. But the certain knowledge of that fact did not deter him or cause him to lose faith, still less feel sorry for himself.

Dom Helder looks for the best in everyone and everything, so he is not unduly disturbed by the fact that his openness to dialogue means being vulnerable to attack, as well as being a constant object of public attention. He

once confessed to an interviewer that perhaps Padre Cicero, the crowd-pleasing miracle-worker revered throughout the rural Northeast, was in some respects a model for him.³⁷ But although Dom Helder has always loved his contacts with ordinary people, his awareness of being the focus of attention is accompanied by a growing conviction that life's humiliations too have their place in forming the basis for ever new learning experiences. As Leonard puts it: "Only very slowly would Dom Helder come to realize that in the marginalized powerlessness and silence to which he was being condemned in Recife and Brazil, he was becoming one with the voiceless poor of Brazil and of the whole world. But only then could he realize that the revolution he hoped for and strove for would be made not for the poor but with them and by them."³⁸

Before proceeding to an examination of the content of Dom Helder's message as a Third World spokesman, it is important to note that his missionary stance, although quite traditional in a biblical sense, has also developed very much along the lines of the 'practical-critical' consciousness espoused by 'political theology'. This fact generally goes unnoticed by political analysts, insofar as they remain under the spell of a theoretical functionalism. In The Political Transformation of the Brazilian Catholic Church Thomas Bruneau quotes the following passage on the church and historical change from Dom Helder's book Revolution Through Peace:

Since the day of the Discovery, Latin American society has grown and developed under the influence of the Church. Its social, economic, and cultural structure was forged in the molds of

Iberian Christianity, and our wars of independence made no material change in our societies. Only now, for the first time, are we witnessing the prelude of substantial change. The Church is indissolubly linked to this historical past, with its true values, its authentic achievements, and its crowning moments of glory -- and its failures, its false values, its aberrations.

This fact burdens the Church with an indisputable responsibility to confront these new challenges, and makes demands upon it which can no longer be denied. The Church must not allow the authentic values of our civilization, which she helped to create, to be swept away by the avalanche of imminent structural change. But the Church must find the courage to acknowledge that she is a part of that past in order to recognize more deeply her responsibility for the present and the future.³⁹

These remarks were originally part of a statement by Dom Helder to the Mar del Plata assembly of CELAM in October 1966, at a time when he was rejecting his previous ideas on church-state collaboration. In the above citation is clearly indicated a belief in the realistic politicization of the church as the only responsible alternative to all Christendom approaches, be they of the "above politics" or "Catholic social order" variety. Yet Bruneau uses the passage to illustrate what he claims was the "Christianizing" intent -- before the coup and during the 1950s -- underlying the Brazilian hierarchy's (i.e., the CNBB's) elaboration of an ideology of social change: "The Church intentionally attempted to shift the nature of its power from maintaining the status quo to supporting social change in order to continue to exercise religious influence. The Church developed a strategy of pre-influence so that religious influence could then have meaning."⁴⁰

This is an evident 'non-sequitur', and not only

because of the time discrepancy which is duly noted by Bruneau. The lines immediately following the first quotation from Dom Helder's statement read: "Whatever may have been the course of history in the past, today the Church is an effective presence in the development of Latin America.

This human situation, this society in crisis, demands that she search her conscience and make a determined effort to help the continent free itself from the shackles of underdevelopment. In order to carry out this mission, a radical effort of purification and conversion is demanded of the Church"⁴¹

There are two conclusions to be drawn here: (1) that the church does not have to invent a socio-political role for itself since it has never been, nor could it ever be, culturally neutral, and (2) it is the political

exigencies which demand that the church change itself and not vice versa. Bruneau puts this radicalized position in the earlier context of agitation for a "Christian social order", when as Dom Helder himself has said of his ideas during that period: "I was in principle far from realizing that the so-called social order was rather a stratified disorder."⁴²

In short, Bruneau completely misinterprets the "progressive" nature of Dom Helder's mature thought. Moreover, the ideas of the latter were never representative of the church as a whole, even when he was its acknowledged and politically respectable leader. Moreira Alves provides a perspective on these points which is especially instructive:

Dom Helder Camara dominates so totally the ten first years of the CNBB's existence that it is difficult to think of the organization without

thinking of its leader. A "charismatic" personality such as his monopolizes the attention of the analyst who tends to extrapolate the evolution of his ideas and to consider them as those of the group. Furthermore, it is almost inevitable that his ideas not be examined except from the moment when they constitute a coherent and finished whole, that is to say, reach an advanced stage in their elaboration, a phase which coincides with the point at which the leader breaks through the limits of his original field of action in order to influence broader groups. The evolution of Dom Helder's thought is unique and cannot be considered as representative of the options of the majority of those involved in the foundation of the CNBB. It is the fruit of several characteristics of a personality which are only brought together in Helder Camara: his exceptional openness to political and social problems, his permanent disposition to adapt to change, his particular mysticism, which seems at times naive, and which allows him to be guided willingly by inspiration or chance, in which he often sees the hand of God.⁴³

The phenomenon of Dom Helder as a voice for the Third World has its roots not only in the extraordinary events leading up to and including the Vatican Council and the military intervention of 1964, but above all in his extraordinary participation in and response to these events. As a true social militant Dom Helder eventually found himself an outcast within the parochial confines of Brazilian political culture. Instead of retreating or giving up he moved forward to evolve a more global and a more radical frame of reference for the basic intuitions which had been forming in his mind over decades of experience. Dom Helder has never claimed any special expertise in the technical matters of implementing development strategies. But few people possess as intimate a knowledge of the effects of a political economy of underdevelopment on one region of the globe. Dom Helder therefore sees his contribution in relation to moti-

vating people everywhere, expert and non-expert alike, to raise searching questions about the value judgements -- the human or anti-human priorities -- implicit in various patterns of interaction or "models" of relations among the industrialized countries and those of the Third World. Since the problems are international in scope, so too must be the forum in which the "abrahamic minorities" pose their challenge to assaults on human dignity and communal self-determination.

The central political intuition articulated by Dom Helder is that: "Political independence without economic independence is an illusion."⁴⁴ He sees the chauvinistic nationalism of Brazil's military rulers as a cruel joke when it is still foreign capital which must provide the mainstay for the regime's ambitious economic policies of, as Gunder Frank puts it, "development for the few and underdevelopment for the many". Dom Helder's long observation of the progress of Brazilian capitalism has led him to expect nothing in the way of a genuinely broadly-based political and economic advancement from the capitalist or neocapitalist models now operating in Latin America. In the early 1960s he had placed great hopes in SUDENE, the new regional development agency for the Northeast which was to be part of an overall strategy of industrializing national capitalism. Gradually, however, he was more impressed by its limitations than by its possibilities:

At one time I believed that SUDENE would manage to change things in the Northeast by creating jobs, by permitting higher wages and thus enable the masses to cease being subhuman and become people.

But today I no longer have any illusions in respect to SUDENE, which is part of the capitalist system and without any political possibilities; hence, it cannot redeem the Northeast. Here, as in the rest of Latin America, development can take place only through political action.

... Politics is a world to which the masses have no access. The experts who work in SUDENE know very well that, without a radical structural change in economics and politics, the social and cultural strata, there can only be a development without justice, that is to say, a spurious development. But they also know that SUDENE has neither the right nor the means to bring about this basic structural change....

SUDENE does the best it can. With the present structures it cannot go further. And thus, we have a spurious development: the rich become richer, the poor become poorer.⁴⁵

Dom Helder's loss of faith in a national capitalist path to development is backed up by a wealth of statistics and first-hand knowledge. Although he decries the denationalization of Third World economies within the world capitalist system, he is even more concerned within his own country about what he calls the sin of "internal colonialism". He points to the great irony that "In our region co-exist the early twenty-first century and the twelfth century: the electronic cybernetic era and the era of feudalism."⁴⁶ Unlike the iconoclastic critic of developmental modernization, Ivan Illich, Dom Helder has no objections in principle to the advance of technology. Rather, for him the real question is "how to put technology at the service not of always more restricted groups, but of all humanity?"⁴⁷ Dom Helder accepts to a point a "dual society" thesis -- that is, he sees the terrible contrast between a dynamic economy in the industrializing urban areas and the stagnant semi-feudal mode of production to which the rural

sector is still shackled.⁴⁸ In this he follows substantially the analyses of left-liberal economic nationalists such as Raul Prebisch on Latin America as a whole, and Celso Furtado, and Josué de Castro on Brazil and the Northeast.

The "dual society" view has been sharply criticized by Gunder Frank in Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America and later works. He is concerned to argue that no area which has developed, or as he maintains, "underdeveloped" in the context of commercial relationships with the West can be considered truly "feudal" or "precapitalist". Furthermore, it is true that de Castro, for example, sets great store in the capitalist transformation of agriculture as the solution to the plight of the Northeast, without giving any evidence as to why this "cure" might not be worse than the disease.⁴⁹ However de Castro is more perceptive than Frank on aspects of the Northeast as 'sui generis' and on the relation between mercantilism and the evolution of a slave and later latifundary system of production in the countryside. Dom Helder, with the former, grounds his perspective on internal colonialism primarily in the contradictions of the mode of production, and he also accepts the dualists' stress on economic planning and regional integration. But he is closer to Frank in his categorical rejection of technocratic neocapitalistic models which tend to be capital-intensive, thereby increasing the division of labor and income disparities, while providing at best short-term gains in return. Dom Helder has seen the "miracle" of economic growth which goes hand in hand with a growth of misery to be borne by the working classes. This

fact is eloquently documented in the manifesto "Development Without Justice" prepared by the Catholic Worker's Action of the Northeast in 1967, and included in Dom Helder's book Church and Colonialism.⁵⁰

Dom Helder's critical insights into the situation of underdevelopment facing the Northeast have led him to explore the wider context and consequences of economic exploitation. As he and a group of fellow bishops affirmed in a document published in the same year as the Catholic Workers' manifesto: "The peoples of the Third World are the proletariat of humanity today."⁵¹ Dom Helder sees everyday the brutal facts of economic dependence which reduces millions of his fellow human beings to a bare subsistence, depriving them of any hopes for taking control over their lives. Starting with the Northeast, the awareness of the exact nature of the oppressive structures and their interrelatedness becomes a stepping-stone for reflections at higher levels of generality. The most outstanding example of this is "I Have Heard the Cries of my People", a message issued on May, 1973 by a group of bishops in the Northeast headed by Dom Helder. The document is certainly not an academic exercise in left-wing populism. It deals in a very concrete and specific way with the problems of housing, education, SUDENE, land reform, etc. Particularly in the section entitled "The Reality of Northeastern Man" there is included, as is often the case in Dom Helder's discourses, a host of statistics and other historical and empirical references. However the document also interprets the Brazilian experience in the light of the

evolution of Western capitalism. And it does so bearing in mind Gutierrez's admonition in A Theology of Liberation that to talk of a rich 'centre' and a poor 'periphery' is misleading unless placed within the context of a class analysis.⁵² The bishops' conclusions are as radical as any to be found in current Catholic writing:

The historical process of class society and capitalist domination leads inevitably to class conflict. Though this is a fact which is more evident each day, it is denied by the oppressors, but affirmed also in that very denial. The oppressed masses of workers, peasants, and the many unemployed among them, are becoming aware, and progressively assuming a new liberating consciousness.

The dominated class has no other way to achieve its own liberation except through the long and difficult journey, which is already under way, in the direction of the social ownership of the means of production. This is the fundamental principle of the enormous historical project which seeks to globally transform the present society into a new society, where it would be possible to create the objective conditions for the oppressed to recover their despoiled humanity, to throw off the bonds of their sufferings, to overcome the antagonisms of class, to conquer freedom at last.⁵³

It is clear from the above that Dom Helder does not expect any liberating political development to occur in the Third World through the adoption of forms of western liberal democracy which remain tied to a capitalist economic base. In his speeches and articles he has increasingly pointed to the ironies in the conventional ideologies of capitalist development. Economic projects can be undertaken in the Northeast only insofar as they do not threaten the power of the local oligarchy or the security of foreign capital. Both of these policies condemn the majority to economic marginalization. So it is that in the "Brazilian model" the government must manage the people along the lines of the

technocratic cold-war philosophy which its military colleges import from the Pentagon.⁵⁴ The multinational corporations which represent the chief outside economic interest in the operation of the model will support its systems of national security as long as it fulfills its promise to provide a reasonably stable and favorable environment for the production of profits. Economic development means that the ruling elites can continue to expand their benefits from an internal colonialism at the price of an external dependence or neocolonialism. What is more absurd is that the model has led to a policy of "sub-imperialism" with respect to Brazil's weaker neighbors. Dom Helder is one of the strongest foes of these vicious circles of neocolonial exploitation and of the inhuman social costs which have been generated in their wake. For many years he has been a tireless advocate of regional economic integration among developing countries, and in particular of a Latin American common market. As he has said many times: "It is in a continental ambit that we will be permitted to complete, in brief, our political independence through our economic independence."⁵⁵

The Latin American states have all adopted democratic constitutions since the time of independence, many of them patterned after that of the United States. Yet today in most countries democratic rights exist only on paper if at all. In many countries anyone who dares to exercise these rights is immediately accused of "communist subversion". Dom Helder sees what he has recently called the trend toward "neo-Nazism" in Latin America, not as the work of an

extremist fringe, but as a calculated alliance of economic, political, technocratic, and military power. Dom Helder further sees the complicity of international relationships in these ominous developments, so he has become a world pilgrim on behalf, not of Third World governments or interest groups, but of the voiceless masses who are the first and the real victims of economic injustice. He points to the domestic irony of an ideology of private enterprise under which a monopolistic international capitalism is allowed to crush local initiative. Not only communism, he argues, but "free enterprise" too can function as a totalitarian justificatory myth when it is elevated to the level of a sacred dogma; -- and private property for the few becomes "depriving property" for the many.

For Dom Helder the supreme international irony is that when the Third World attempts to counteract the fact of dependence by forming its own cartels, it is violently denounced by the same countries who stand by the self-interested, interlocking practices of "global" corporations, or who have never hesitated to use whatever measures necessary to protect their own current economic hegemony. As he put it at a conference of "Ten Days for World Development" in 1975: "It is interesting to note the reaction of the super-industrialized countries when other groups of Nations, heretofore considered with the greatest contempt, as indolent and culturally backward, have the supreme audacity to resort to the same methods of defending their economic interests by creating new cartels against the cartel established by the

powers of the North Atlantic."⁵⁶ Within the "Free World" Dom Helder directs most of his fire at the highly secretive yet clearly manipulative activities of transnational corporations which have links, not only to the great power centres and security establishments of the industrial West, but also to the local ruling classes or 'comprador bourgeois' of most industrializing nations. He views the multinationals -- the ultimate creations of an internationalized monopoly capitalism -- as inherently amoral enterprises which know no law higher than the utilitarian expansionist principles of self-preservation and profit maximization.⁵⁷

Dom Helder does not deal in idle speculations when he sees everything from the opportunity for democratic expression to freedom of speech and authentic indigenous development as gravely imperiled by both the domestic and international operations of such organizations. The lesson of Chile, Dom Helder believes, is that the political self-determination of a people will be construed as first and foremost a challenge to the structures of economic dependence, so long as these constitute a basic and at times dominant fact of international relations within the capitalist world. The implications for western democracy, he says, are extremely serious.

The Chilean experience has taught us how spontaneous and natural is the alliance between Multinationals and local privileged groups. But what makes the case of Chile even more instructive is the fact of the government of the United States admitting, publically, that the CIA, the Central Intelligence Agency, had participated in

the sordid manoeuvres to bring on the débâcle of the Chilean economy and finally to overthrow by force the government of Salvador Allende. In view of the example of Chile one can establish within the high command posts of the super-powers, the use, in the international political arena, of the same illegal methods, the same contempt for tax monies raised from the citizens of a country, the United States, as was verified in the case of Watergate. And all of these manoeuvres were undertaken for the Multinationals at the expense of the sweat of the ordinary American working man.⁵⁸

Dom Helder is no less blunt in his views of the relations between the Third World and the Socialist Bloc. Although he does not argue a "convergence thesis" of industrial societies, he insists that on the specific question of international justice and cooperation the example of communist empires has hardly been more edifying than that of the capitalist empires. Both sides are determined to exploit to the maximum their respective differences, but when circumstances dictate they know perfectly well how to work together for mutual advantage. The continuation of the race to carve up spheres of influence is not only the height of folly and madness, but belied by a cold-war philosophy which is no longer credible, if indeed it ever was. Choosing one neocolonial orbit over another, contends Dom Helder, offers nothing whatsoever toward the political emancipation and self-directed development of Third World peoples. At the same time he readily agrees that liberation from underdevelopment would be impossible without a revolutionary socialist transformation which would break the structures of dependence within the international capitalist system. It is just that he sees no panacea in

socialism as such.⁵⁹ For him, the only socialism which holds any real promise is one of "justice and freedom for all" which owes its allegiance, not to outside models or the impersonal axioms of rationalized planning systems, but to the basic human needs and cultural aspirations of indigenous communities: in short, a 'sui generis' "socialism with a human face".

Dom Helder is not in any way, nor would he want to be, an official spokesman for the Third World, much less the Northeast of Brazil. After all, it is difficult to conceive of a ruling elite such as the Latin American bourgeoisie having any physical or 'spiritual' solidarity with the great mass of suffering humanity which is denoted by the phrase "Third World" -- a phrase which immediately brings to mind images of impoverishment, underconsumption, and subjugation. The Third World is therefore as much a part of a mental as of a geo-political landscape. Dom Helder is a voice for this world because he witnesses so personally and directly to the cry of anguish from growing millions of human beings left behind by the conventional modernizing ideologies obsessed with super-rational development or quantitative economic progress, and based, as they so often are, on the depersonalized, utilitarian value systems of sociological functionalisms or economic determinisms.

Dom Helder may often appear over-hasty or imprecise in his critical judgements, or too prone to blanket condemnations. As he so frequently acknowledges, his role is not to speak as an "expert" or a technician. But if it

is true, as Thomas Sanders says, that his greatest impact "lies in his embodiment of prophetism",⁶⁰ this cannot be used as an excuse to write him off as a serious analyst of the human condition. Dom Helder himself has wondered: "How can one be a prophet in a century which does not believe in prophets, or miracles, or a supernatural mission?"⁶¹ He answers with his own enigmatic presence. He is the kind of prophet who seems to be able to combine a frankly utopian vision of the world's future with a consistently down-to-earth understanding of his own particular social situation.⁶²

The picture of Dom Helder which emerges is that of an exceptional man who, through the fortuitous course of events, has become a universally-recognized "sign of contradiction" within both the life of his church and the social struggles of underdeveloped peoples. With respect to the former, no other person in Brazil has contributed as much to the growth of a progressive orientation and a vitality in the institution. What Bruneau has called the "political transformation" of the Brazilian Catholic church can be attributed to Dom Helder more than to any other single individual. Within the continental context of Catholicism he has been an outstanding beacon of hope through his vigorous participation in CELAM, his continuous dialogue with new ideas, his encouragement of the development of a Latin American theology of liberation, and his call for a revolutionary social praxis joining all those willing to participate in good faith in the work of justice and peace.⁶³

In the universal church Dom Helder has been a catalyst -- a

charismatic figure from the periphery whose example provides a point of entry for the renewal which not only seeks an end to the colonialism, immobilism, and hypocrisy within the church, but embraces the totality of the church's mission to the modern world.⁶⁴ With respect to the social and political reality of underdevelopment Dom Helder witnesses to a rediscovery of cultural integrity in the Third World, to a rejection of imported bourgeois values and the priorities of technocratic systems. His vision of an alternative future stands as a Marcusean "great refusal" to the managerialist models of 'development' so dearly loved by the forward-looking power elites of the First World (namely, those enlightened sections of the governing classes who recognize multinational enterprises as the wave of the future) and their junior partners, the military establishments and 'modernizing' elites of its Third World satellites.⁶⁵

Dom Helder is, as Brady Tyson has said, truly a "symbolic man" and: "Symbolic men are sometimes better expressions of a reality than abstract statements."⁶⁶ That reality, to which Dom Helder gives a personal testimony, is the agonizing and uncertain journey of Latin American Christianity from obscurantism and the captive sanctification of the status quo, to pluralism and the prophetic denunciation of the "established disorder". The radical evolution of his thought must be seen in the context of this militant praxis.⁶⁷

Helder is not a voice crying in the wilderness. Nor do his ideas have anything in common with the cheap slogans of armchair revolutionaries. Unlike them he really is

dangerous. The great Alceu Amoroso Lima sees him as a Christ-figure, -- as also a sign of contestation and a 'trouble-maker' among his own people.⁶⁸ Indeed, as a prophetic phenomenon Dom Helder has been largely created by the virulent opposition to him inside Brazil. He is constantly accused of slandering the fatherland and subverting the state. The ruling classes view his nonviolence as many American whites viewed that of Dr. Martin Luther King: as inciting the very violence and hatred which it is trying to overcome. Dom Helder is dangerous because he is a living example of having the courage of one's convictions, and a living symbol of the Christian resistance to the "powers and principalities" with which Jesus himself is said to have been tempted in the synoptic gospels. It is to the philosophical basis of that resistance to which I now turn.

NOTES

1. J.M. Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 46.
2. Dussel, History and the Theology of Liberation, p. 117.
3. Cited in Jose de Broucker, The Violence of a Peacemaker, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1970), p. 102.
4. Ibid.
5. Cited in Patrick Joseph Leonard, "Dom Helder Camara: A Study in Polarity", Ph.D. thesis, St. Louis University, 1974, p. 10.
6. This section relies heavily on the extremely useful bibliographical information and analysis presented by Fr. Leonard in the above study.
7. Cited in Leonard, ibid., p. 14.
8. Ibid., chp. 1, p. 28.
9. Ibid., chp. 2, p. 43.
10. See ibid., esp. pp. 46-48.
11. Ibid., pp. 60-61. It is significant to note that Dom Helder was an important political figure in Brazil long before he achieved his current international prominence.
12. Despite the pressures of military censorship and harassment Dom Helder makes the most of any and every opportunity to establish contact with ordinary people. A collection of his radio addresses has recently been published as Uma Olhar Sobre a Cidade, (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1976).
13. Cited in Leonard, op.cit., p. 149.
14. Ibid., p. 202.
15. Ibid., p. 203.
16. The interview was aired on January 27, 1963. A transcript is in the special file on Helder Câmara in the microfilm library of Pius XII Library, Saint Louis University, Saint Louis, Missouri. (This important documentary collection will hereafter be cited as "PL")
17. Leonard, op.cit., p. 248 f.
18. Cited in ibid., p. 252.

19. Helder Câmara cited in ibid., p. 261.
20. Ibid., p. 262.
21. Ibid., p. 285. The influence of Teilhard is particularly evident in Gladys Weinger and Bernard Moosbrugger, Voice of the Third World: Dom Helder Câmara, (New York: Paulist Press, 1972); see also Helder Câmara, Race Against Time, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1971), chp. IV, "Teilhard as prophet of development".
22. Ibid., p. 301.
23. See the references to Dom Helder in Joseph Page, The Revolution That Never Was, (New York: Grossman, 1972). Arraes has written his own version of the débâcle -- see The People and the Power, trans. by Lancelot Sheppard, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972).
24. Cited in Leonard, op.cit., p. 329.
25. For the text of Dom Helder's speech in English see his Church and Colonialism, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1969), chp. 2 "Towards a Christian vision of development".
26. Cited in Leonard, op.cit., pp. 329-3.
27. Appropriately the best and most comprehensive presentation of Dom Helder's thought during the turbulent years of the 1960s is José Cayuela, Hélder Câmara. Brasil: ¿ Un Vietnam Católico?, (Spain: Pomaire, 1969).
28. Nelson Rodriguez, quoted in Charles Antbaine, Church and Power in Brazil, p. 234. Rodriguez was probably the most widely-read columnist among the military.
29. Dom Helder's exaggerated gestures and irrepressible zeal make him appear at times temperamental and perhaps even impetuous. / Cf. Betap de Rosb, Hélder Câmara, Signo de Contradicción, (Salamanca, Spain: Sígueme, 1974), chp. 6 on the positive and negative aspects of Dom Helder's public personality. / Although Dom Helder is extremely astute politically and visibly animated by political concerns he has always maintained a clerical reserve. / For a discussion by him on his relations with successive governments see José de Broucker, Dom Helder Câmara: The Violence of a Peacemaker, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1970), pp. 45 ff. / Dom Helder's sincerity as a true pastor and open, thoughtful "man of the church" is beyond question. He knows the risks of his public image and accepts them out of the deep conviction that the expression of faith must not only be about people and their condition, but reach out to people, and indeed to the whole world. As for his private lifestyle, Dom Helder gladly embraces the path of evangelical poverty, but he is certainly not a non-conformist for non-conformism's sake.

30. Cited in de Broucker, op.cit., p. 51.
31. There have been numerous incidents of confrontation with the authorities involving Dom Helder's name. Two of the most widely reported were the assassination in 1969 of Fr. Pereira Neito, a young chaplain at the University of Recife, by an anti-communist terrorist group, and the 1974 arrest and torture in Recife of an American ex-missionary who had written articles favorable to Dom Helder for Time magazine and the Associated Press. In the first instance the death of Fr. Neito was the occasion for a new defamation campaign against Dom Helder, accusing him of fomenting violence and "corrupting youth". (See Antoine, op.cit., pp. 242-246.) In the second case, the Time reporter later described the attitude of his torturers: "They cursed Dom Helder, claiming that he was a liar when he accused the government of condoning torture. Their tirade was accompanied by more shocks and my screams." (See Fred Morris, "Torture, Brazilian Style" in Time, November 18, 1974, pp. 45-47.)
32. Dom Helder could no longer in good faith participate in social programmes controlled by the dictatorship for its own ends. His approach began to diverge sharply from that of those religious activists, notably Fr. Antonio Melo in the area of rural unionization, who were more prepared to adapt to working within the system. Cf. Alexis Floridi and Anette Stiefbold, The Uncertain Alliance: The Catholic Church and Labor in Latin America, (Miami: University of Miami Press, 1973), pp. 32-39.
33. See the documentation on the movement in "PL"; also de Broucker, op.cit., chp. 3.
34. Frederick Turner, Catholicism and Political Development in Latin America, pp. 150-152.
35. See his remarks in de Broucker, op.cit., pp. 92-97.
36. Cited in ibid., pp. 95-96.
37. Ibid., chp. 6 "God Dislikes Pride".
38. Leonard, op.cit., p. 358.
39. I have used the translation in Revolution Through Peace, (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 32-33. Bruneau's translation appears on p. 72 of his book.
40. Bruneau, loc. cit., p. 72 (emphasis in original).
41. Câmara, Revolution Through Peace, p. 33. (emphasis added)
42. Cited in Leonard, op.cit., p. 328.

43. Marcio Moreira Alves, L'Eglise et la Politique au Brésil, p. 59.
44. Helder Câmara, Church and Colonialism, p. 80.
45. de Broucker, op.cit., pp. 29-31.
46. Ibid., p. 31.
47. See Câmara, "A Serviço do Povo de Deus em Marcha", October 29, 1967, in PL.
48. This theme runs through all of his social analyses. See, for example, "The Church and Modern Latin America", in the collection Between Honesty and Hope (Maryknoll, 1970), esp. p. 32.
49. Cf. de Castro, Death in the Northeast, esp. chp. 3. de Castro simply equates capitalist agriculture and economic progress, with little indication that there might be capitalist as well as feudal structures of dependence.
50. In the same book Dom Helder comments as follows on the paradoxes of dependent capital-intensive development:

The North-East, while retaining all the characteristics of an underdeveloped region, is the area of Brazil which has evolved economically with the greatest rapidity in the last six years, thanks mainly to heavy investment in electric power, roads and general improvements of the basic conditions for higher production, and thanks also to a decisive industrialisation policy stimulated by generous fiscal assistance.

The Catholic Workers' Action (ACO) recently denounced this development as unjust and inhuman. Antiquated industries, especially textiles and sugar refineries, are being modernized by the Centre for the Development of north-east Brazil (SUDENE), which is stimulating the expansion of industry equipped from the outset with modern machinery. Now, the more modern the undertaking the more it is automated, and the less need it has of manual labour. The result, in the underdeveloped countries, is a tragic problem of unemployment and an enormous gap between well-to-do workers and the great mass of destitute. (p. 93.)

51. "Letter to the Peoples of the Third World", in Between Honesty and Hope, p. 3.
52. Gutierrez argues that: "... only a class analysis will enable us to see what is really involved in the opposition between oppressed peoples. To take into account only the confrontation between nations misrepresents and in the last analysis waters down the

real situation. Thus the theory of dependence will take the wrong path and lead to deception if the analysis is not put within the framework of the worldwide class struggle." (p. 87.)

53. "Eu Ouvi Os Clamores do Meu Povo", Brazil, May 6, 1973, p. 22; in PL.
54. Cf. the field reports of Frances Foland to Richard Nolte, Executive Director of the Institute of Current World Affairs, New York; in PL.
55. From his thanksgiving message, "Dia Nacional de Ação de Graças", Brasilia, November 24, 1960, p. 6; in PL.
56. "Liberté et Justice Pour Tous", conference at the University of Ottawa, Canada, February 1, 1975, p. 5. (transcript in author's archives).
57. See, for example, "Transnational Corporations and Changes of Values Today", (Switzerland, February 6, 1974), and "A Verdade Nos Libertará" (Zurich, February 9, 1974); both in PL. In a recent statement Dom Helder reiterates: "The multinational companies in alliance with privileged groups in our countries, intensify existing discrimination between the rich who always grow richer and the poor who always grow poorer. It is your mission, CELAM, to alert the international conscience to the maneuvers of the multinationals who are accustomed to operate on an amoral level and who never stop to consider the consequences of any means which promise success." ("Socio-Political Conflicts in Latin America", in LADOC, 7:3, January/February 1977, p. 42.)
58. "Liberté et Justice Pour Tous", p. 9.
59. The strengths and weaknesses of his approach to socialism will be evaluated in detail in the next chapter.
60. Thomas Sanders, Catholic Innovation in a Changing Latin America, pt. 6/p. 13.
61. "A Servizio do Povo de Deus em Marcha", op.cit., p. 2.
62. For an appreciation of how concrete and realistic he can be see the excellent chapter on Brazil in Gary McEoin, Revolution Next Door, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971).
63. Not only Catholics, but the whole of Latin American Christianity find inspiration in his unique example of leadership. Cf. J.M. Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, chp. 3, and "Hélder Câmara: Un Obispo del Tercer Mundo", Fichas de ISAL, 3:27, December 1970.

64. See Brady Tyson, "The Role of Dom Helder in the Brazilian Church and his Importance in the World Church", typescript prepared for Latin American Bureau, USCC, Washington, D.C.: November 1973, (in PL).
65. See Tyson, "Dom Helder as a Symbolic Man", IDOC, no. 22, March 27, 1971, pp. 20-42.
66. Ibid., p. 40.
67. Cf. "Hélder Câmara: Un Obispo del Tercer Mundo"; also Paulo Schilling, Hélder Câmara (Uruguay: La Marcha, 1970).
68. See the intimate reflection included at the beginning of de Rosb, op.cit.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTRODUCTION TO A CHRISTIAN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF REVOLUTION THROUGH PEACE

In 1955 Dom Helder Câmara, fresh from the acclaim which greeted him upon the successful staging of an International Eucharistic Conference, had a private meeting with one of the participants, the Cardinal of Lyons, France. "... I must tell you that you have exceptional capacities as an organizer," the visitor began, but then added pointedly: "This is not a compliment I am paying you. I say it instead to awaken you to a sense of responsibility. Now I ask you: why do you not put those capacities of yours to work at solving the problem of the slums, what you call the 'favelas'?"¹ As Dom Helder later reflected: "Formerly, I had felt the problem, but had not been involved in the battle."² As Dom Helder's involvements in social and pastoral action among the poor increased two things occurred: (1) he became more and more convinced that Christian charity was fundamentally about, not almsgiving or handouts, but creating just relationships among individuals and social groups; and (2) he began to work out, albeit in an undeliberate and unsystematic fashion, an ideology of human development which would awaken Christians of every nationality and socio-economic rank to their responsibilities in the struggle against injustice and for the amelioration of human societies.

Originally, Dom Helder's concept of development borrowed primarily from the spiritualistic humanism and

functional integrationism of Maritain and the more audacious social evolutionism of Teilhard de Chardin. The result was the translation into Third World language of a rather traditional social gospel formulation of the Christian imperative, but not without the seeds of a radical critique. To the extent that Dom Helder's message took shape in an atmosphere of fierce anti-communism it reflected an initial need to address the concerns of the ruling elites and to appeal to the consciences of the rich. As late as 1965 he spoke to a European Conference of Young Christian Business Executives, covering a variety of subjects. One of his proposals dealt with birth-control, about which he argued: "It would be ingenuous to ignore the grave problem of population explosion, whose most tragic effects are felt in the Third World. It would be deceitful to overcome infant mortality only to condemn those saved to a sub-human existence. But anyone who claims to reduce development to birth-control is in need of psychoanalysis."³ The rationale behind this statement is potentially radical in that it seeks the root causes of oppressive underdevelopment, but in the context it would have been "safe" to oppose birth-control for whatever reason, given that the interests of the audience obviously lay in a moral defense of the "Christian civilization" of the "free world". Similarly, Dom Helder's ringing conclusion includes some biting social comment, but ultimately it rings false and founders on an illogic typical of much of traditional Catholic social action:

Let them / The Young Christian Business Executives / not fear to oppose the great combines,.

3

who are more powerful than the mightiest states and whose dealings cry to heaven, especially in the developing countries. Let them know that exploitation by international combines -- which kills incipient local industry -- sucks from the poor countries more than it gives and threatens to install automation in our underdeveloped areas; that exploitation by international combines is debasing the concept of private initiative and fomenting unjust and indiscriminate hatred against the propertied classes.⁴

The analysis of oppression in the above shows signs of becoming more structural than moralistic, but the response to it does not. It remains totally dependent on an implied level of personal conversion ('metanoia' or "change of heart"), even though it is simply not credible to suppose that a "structural revolution" could ever be accomplished by the individual moral action of those who benefit from the existing structures.

A serious flaw runs through the developmental ideology espoused by Dom Helder at the time, in that it suggests that full human development -- that is, increased "quality of life" and democratic participation of the masses -- is possible, within the existing system of Brazilian capitalism, for example, through the simple addition of well-intentioned effort. In a seminal address following the 1964 coup he stated:

By means of SUDENE the use of foreign capital in a manner befitting national dignity has been made possible and, what is more encouraging, a reversal of the situation in the North-East has been initiated. But let us not deceive ourselves. Development cannot come from above, it cannot be imposed. It demands awakening the conscience, arousing public opinion, stimulating education, self-improvement, technical planning.⁵

The continued faith in SUDENE is consistent with a liberal-progressive view of development in which education, enlightened self-interest, and technological advancement form the essential elements in the pursuit of happiness. To be sure Dom Helder does tie development to popular consciousness, but by virtually ignoring the realities of the class structure he ultimately equates the promotion of greater justice with rational argument and moral suasion. This is particularly evident in one of his earliest interviews on the subject of underdevelopment in November 1963, during the second session of the Vatican Council. His programme for social justice was very earnest and questioning but otherwise unexceptional and based in the final analysis on some very wishful thinking, as indicated by his statement that: "... the problems will not be solved by generous fund-raising alone, but rather by bringing about a sympathy and brotherly love between rich and poor. The rest will follow from that."⁶

Just how traditional this line of argument can be is graphically illustrated by the fact that a decade later the interviewer on that occasion, Fr. Piero Gheddo, published a book -- in English entitled Why is the Third World Poor? -- which devotes more attention to a "Christian" alternative to Marxism and dependency theory, than to actual questions of international political economy. Gheddo vehemently rejects a class analysis, relying instead on a unilinear vision of economic progress as synonymous with western modernization (progress which, following Weber, Toynbee, Dawson, et al., is

destructive of traditional values and therefore a very mixed blessing; definitely not the source of a true humanism), and an overall concept of development as the organic growth of different communities in which the principal problems are identified as cultural and moral. Gheddo's concept of underdevelopment is also completely undialectical: "Of all the former colonies the more developed ones are those that were the most colonized"⁷, and eventually he simply ends up calling for a "real" revolution of private consciences and conversion to Christ. On relations between "rich" and "poor" Gheddo quotes a certain Abbé Pierre to the effect that: "What the poor ask for and require is not the levelling-off of wealth; what they require is honesty, whereby if you have more you will serve more. Of the rich this is demanded: to be honest and to ask yourself every day: Did I earn my privilege today?"⁸

As was pointed out in the previous chapter, it took a long time for Dom Helder to cure himself of such blatantly paternalistic neo-Christendom attitudes. But gradually, as his reflections deepened, and as the contradiction between economic liberty for foreign capitalism and military dictatorship for local populations became more widespread and acute, he evolved a more radical perspective of the specific causes of underdevelopment. In Why is the Third World Poor? Gheddo virtually ignored the South American continent and, more incredibly, the phenomenon of multinational corporations. In the same year as this book appeared in English a text of Dom Helder's was published

under the title "The Oppressive Structures Grow Heavier". In it he had this to say about ADELA, a venture of the American-dominated Latin American Agribusiness Development Corporation (LAAD) set up in the early sixties to "save Latin America from Cubanization":

- With the aid of the CIA, which long has specialized in exposing Communist infiltration; or pseudo-infiltration, they modernize business methods -- but in a reformist way;
- With help from the International Monetary Fund, they get underdeveloped countries to adopt neo-capitalistic development models that have nothing to do with real development but only promote the economic growth of privileged groups, almost always robber barons of international capitalism;
- With the backing of international agencies dedicated to building up "free" trade unionism, they promote a false worker leadership that worms its way into office, lulls the working class into inaction, and makes every effort to sidetrack the workers' democratic and constructive revolutionary energies into merely paternalistic activities;
- With the collaboration of commercial banks, investment banks, insurance companies and mutual funds, they maintain a false mystique of development, while effectively nipping in the bud any genuine liberating education and real human advancement.⁹

Dom Helder's chief contention was that the multinationals which make a show of injecting new funds into Third World areas such as Latin America "in fact bleed the small local economies and leave the continent further enslaved".¹⁰ It hardly needs to be mentioned that such a pointed refutation of the claims of advanced capitalist reformism has seldom been heard from the lips of a Roman Catholic archbishop. Nevertheless, it was in common with a great many theologians and Christian activists in Latin America that Dom Helder began to discover the facts of internal and external dependence. In doing so he has

retained in his concept of development the traditional Christian warning against sacrificing priorities based on human needs and aspirations to those which might tend to objectify man, but his principle of social justice is now fundamentally equalitarian and participatory rather than hierarchical and paternalistic. In 1971 he wrote: "Development is not merely economic growth, above all when it is restricted to privileged groups. Development can only be integral: the promotion of the whole man and of all men."¹¹

Even so, because of the usually reformist connotations of the term 'development', Dom Helder has increasingly adopted the language of liberation we discussed in chapter two. He sees the basic theme of liberation as a challenge uniting evangelization and humanization in a political struggle against the idolatry of all established orders based on unjust but often "legitimate" relations of domination. "Some people", he says, "still have the impression that Christ's liberation is a spiritual liberation, the liberation from sin. But when you read the Gospel carefully you discover Christ was challenging the worst domination of his time -- theocracy, pharisaisms, authorities that were oppressing the people in the name of God."¹² The standards which Dom Helder asks of the modern church are as high as those he applies to social and political institutions. At the 1974 Roman Synod he was very plain-spoken in calling upon his fellow bishops to help to undertake the church's own conversion to political awareness and to support the laying of a groundwork for a theology of liberation.¹³ In

general Dom Helder has come to the conclusion that the authentically Christian role in modern society lies not in being an 'authorizer' of development -- i.e., secular norms of "progress" -- but rather in discovering the 'prophetic authority' of a political theology:

That word "development" lends itself to inevitable mistakes because our ideal shouldn't be to replace our situations of poverty and misery by a consumer society that creates, inside the rich countries, zones of misery, racial discrimination and subhuman living conditions.

So let us adopt a new expression, to be our new flag of peaceful but determined struggle. Let us grasp, with both hands, the flag of liberation. Liberation from selfishness and its consequences. Liberation from enslaving structures. Liberation from wars. Liberation from misery, as the worst, most hypocritical, and bloodiest of all wars. Liberation like that brought by Moses when he freed the people of God from the slavery of the Pharaohs. Liberation like that brought by Christ on the cross, so that there will be neither supermen, nor submen, but simply men, all sons of a common Father, made brothers in the redeeming blood, all led by the Spirit of God.¹⁴

At first glance, it may appear that Dom Helder has simply climbed on the new semantical bandwagon in Latin America. But it cannot be over-emphasized that he is above all a supremely loyal churchman. If he is now a cutting edge or "sign of contradiction" within the institution it has never been for abandoning official social doctrine in favor of 'avant-garde' theology. Dom Helder has not been a direct participant in the liberation theology movement or in its controversies, choosing instead, in his public discourses, to work from recent papal encyclicals and church documents of the Vatican II era. This has produced some fundamental tensions and ambiguities in his thought between the language of political theology and that of the Catholic

social gospel. The influence on him of the writings of Pope John XXIII is a case in point. They exude liberal optimism and continue to found the political community on neo-Thomistic premises, i.e., on a naturalistic teleology. By contrast, liberation theology takes a more neo-Augustinian view of the state and is attempting to assimilate the Marxist philosophy of history into its analytical framework, rejecting the notion that there is such a thing as a Catholic theory of society.

Dom Helder no longer envisages a specifically Christian model of development, but the spirit of neo-Thomism and Teilhard de Chardin, so prominent in the works of Pope John, still occupies an important place in Helder's total outlook. He has a deep faith in a natural Christian humanism, although in recent years he has signalled the important contributions of secular, atheistic humanisms.¹⁵ In an essay on "Science and Faith" written some years ago the liberal, Thomistic elements of his thought are clearly outlined. Referring to the Council's overdue but nonetheless genuine embrace of modern culture he wrote:

Man has not yet realized how well Christianity, in spite of its limited horizons in the past, has prepared him for the amazing marvels of today and for the surprises that await us in the third millenium. For example, he has not, generally speaking, been struck by the circumstance that it is Western Christianity that is living through the technoscientific explosion of our time

Technology has need of faith if it is not to engender monsters. The only way we can avoid being devoured by the machines we create, or by forces we unleash, or by the missiles and robots we bring into being, is through, a high-minded, frank understanding between science and faith, which will then complement each other in a partnership of mutual respect.¹⁵

This is basically a repetition of the traditional axiom that "grace perfects nature". Today, too, it is commonplace for Christian thinkers to assert that Christianity is at the forefront of the secularizing, socializing, and rationalizing tendencies posited by modern humanism, or the "New Humanism" as Dom Helder calls it in his article.¹⁷ This position is not without grave dangers. It can degenerate into a new monopoly of truth -- a new theological politics which reasserts that Christianity, or even more narrowly, the Catholic church, is somehow indispensable and optimally-suited to define the proper political ideals of modern man.¹⁸ (Piero Gheddo, for example, uses the Judaeo-Christian contribution to a dynamic western cultural ethos in just such a counter-revolutionary fashion. The triumphantism is evident in sub-headings such as "Christianity is the Source of Modern Progress": i.e., everything positive in modernization is due to Christian influence; everything negative to that of the materialistic alternatives -- namely, liberal capitalism and communism.) The rehabilitation of Teilhard de Chardin during the 1960s has also threatened to create a new orthodoxy based on a pantheistic left-wing Aristotelianism.

Dom Helder's thought, as it has matured, reflects the inevitable tension between the seemingly unwarranted optimistic faith in a natural moral reason, typical of the social gospel tradition, and the quest of contemporary radical theologians for a historical realism which will not end up in the pessimistic conservatism of previous critics of that tradition (e.g. Reinhold Niebuhr). As a result Dom

Helder's belief in the historical project of a just society has come to be combined with a high degree of skepticism in the possibilities of a liberal, constitutionalist establishment of political justice. His defense of human rights rests on the profound conviction that, as he puts it, "the force of right will conquer the pretended right of force."¹⁹ But he does not seek juridical solutions to what he sees as essentially problems of social injustice originating in the organization of the common productive life of societies. In short, it is unreasonable to trust in just laws if there is no social justice, and social justice is first and foremost a question, not of natural rights or legal guarantees, but of a political economy oriented toward the integral development of "the whole man and of all men". When Harvard University presented Dom Helder with a Doctorate of Law for the Defense of Human Rights in 1975, he did not hesitate to articulate this position in an acceptance speech entitled "Am I Being Honoured or Mocked?". He began:

Within us dwell together an optimist and a pessimist. When the pessimist ... learnt that your university, numbered among the greatest of your country and of the world, would bestow on me the Honorary Doctor of Law Degree, he laughed.

He questioned me, asking if I had not yet discovered the farce, the mockery of a doctorate in Law, when Law is ever more a hollow word, resonant but empty, in a world increasingly dominated by force, by violence, by fraud, by injustice, by avarice -- in a word, by egoism ... Dom Helder at this point questions in turn the efficacy of constitutional, civil, penal, and international law.

The most cruel laughter, the strongest mockery, came when the pessimist asked if my doctorate would be in Human Rights. He challenged me to indicate even one of the human rights that is not stepped on, not demoralized, not ridiculed.

On written texts there can be found the four fundamental freedoms presented by your President Roosevelt in his message of January 6, 1941 to the Congress of the United States: freedom of speech and of expression; freedom for all human persons to pray to God in a manner that suits them; freedom from want; freedom from fear.

The four fundamental freedoms -- portrayed so brilliantly on paper -- soar like mockery, like jeers from the absolute majority of humanity. If we select any one of the particular rights, we will encounter the same sadness as that caused by the beautiful and most human right: the right to work. In countries that produce raw materials, the phantasm is that of subwork leading to sublife. In industrialized countries, the specter of unemployment begins to thrive -- fruit of the egoistic application of automation or of the greed of multinationals that export entire factories to paradises of investment where salaries are low and dispute impossible.²⁰

What does the Optimist in Dom Helder propose? He comes back, again and again, to the theme of the courageous "Abrahamic Minorities" which can be found in every existing human group, and whose resistance, united and determined, to the reign of force constitutes a flickering candle of hope for a more human world. The ongoing action of these minorities is related to the anarchist notion of an extra-legal opposition unbound by political (or religious) institutions or sets of rules. The concept of abrahamic minorities also has parallels in the literature of sociology: for example, Weber's discussions of charismatic leadership and the 'virtuosi', and the study of "counterveiling trends" within social organizations. Dom Helder sees the bold resolve of even tiny groups as reason enough not to resign oneself to a pessimistic fatalism about the gap between existing political arrangements and the ideal of an order based on equality and justice. Like the neo-Augustinian

"realists". Dom Helder takes a dim view of conventional power politics, but he does not at all share their inveterate skepticism about the potential for realizing earthly justice. Resistance and hope, not accommodation or despair, are the reasons why he frequently uses Emmanuel Mounier's concept of "stratified disorder" to decry the gap between man's vocation as a free subject of history, and his all too common situation as a passive object of other men. Injustice, Dom Helder insists, can be overcome. So before turning to Dom Helder's theory of violence and political revolution, it is necessary to examine the antecedent question of the nature of social justice as he understands it.

As we have seen, Dom Helder's ideas have evolved out of a growing conviction that the problems of poverty and underdevelopment have their basis in unjust structural inequalities, and therefore demand a response other than that of charitable action on the part of the better off. That response, following Maritain and Lebreton, is the creation of a humanistic economy. Dom Helder enthusiastically adopted a developmental ideology of "Christianized" social progress combining the economic humanism of the social gospel with the left-wing Aristotelianism of Teilhard de Chardin. But, as the paralyzing failure of liberal democracy (recall his biting criticisms of the Alliance for Progress as early as 1963) and Christian democracy has become more apparent with respect to the achievement of economic justice and self-determination, and as radical new political theologies have taken shape, Dom Helder has rejected

Christianized "third ways" and opted directly for socialism. Only some form of socialism, he maintains, holds out the promise of a humanistic social system. Yet, schooled in the Catholic social gospel tradition, he has not entirely abandoned the ambivalent language of a morally-based social democracy. As he told an interviewer several years ago:

"My socialism is a special one that respects the human person and turns to the gospel. My socialism is justice By justice, I mean a better distribution of goods, nationally and internationally."²¹

The above definition of justice in terms of a more equalitarian distributive ethic is in fact only what is minimally implied by Dom Helder's philosophy of social revolution, and therefore is potentially seriously deficient. In the same interview, for example, he indicates both that he is in broad agreement with Marx's analysis of capitalist society, and that a just distribution of goods would require the structural elimination of internal and external colonialisms. This must mean that justice is not simply a moral question, and that the establishment of socialism necessarily involves a historical, materially-based dynamic. Dom Helder does not deny this so much as ignore it. He seems to speak only of action for justice and peace based on "moral liberating pressure". This is undoubtedly part of his desire to appeal in a prophetic way to all men of goodwill regardless of their class position. Unfortunately it obscures a basic problematic faced by all Christian socialists: Does the biblical concept of justice refer only to an ethical

distribution of consumption, and is the pursuit of justice therefore not conditional on a socialist mode of production?

The classical social doctrine of Christianity suggests an affirmative response for two reasons: one having to do with a static concept of human nature; the other, and related one, with the foundation of the legal order on an abstract and metaphysical as opposed to a historical principle of justice. With respect to the former it is instructive to note the parallels and divergences between the ideas of Dom Helder and those of Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr in an essay on "Social Justice" published in 1937 alludes to the Marxist insight "indispensable for the solution of the problem of social justice", namely: "All human actions and ideals, whatever their pretensions, are coloured by interest. It is therefore impossible to secure justice simply by appeals to conscience."²² Dom Helder clearly does not accept this moral relativism. But is the above insight in fact-Marxist, or does it derive more from Hobbes and what C.B. Macpherson calls the political theory of "possessive individualism"? Niebuhr himself answers in favor of the latter by defining justice as the relative by-product, not the historical end, of a competition for power akin to what Lipset in Political Man was later to term the "democratic class struggle" -- a concept owing more to classical political economy than to Marx. It is true that Dom Helder tends to agree with Niebuhr that the root of social evil is in the "egoism of each individual soul."²³ And he has also warned: "Let us not confuse the clash of economic interests with holy wars

or ideological battles."²⁴ But he does not follow Niebuhr at all in thereby tying justice to a totally relativistic balance-of-power equilibrium. As he once said of his hope in the future:

Am I forgetting that selfishness will be part of man to the end of time? Am I forgetting that sin entered the world and still casts its sinister shadow?

Well, I do hope, at least, for a respite War has become a greater absurdity and folly than ever, now that whole cities are laid waste and whole civil populations exterminated, now that it is quite possible that humanity itself may be destroyed. And this power of destruction co-exists with a capacity to build, to guarantee every human being a human standard of living.²⁵

Dom Helder, with his great faith in powers of man, follows Teilhard de Chardin in seeing history as a process of humanization and Christ's salvific thrust as a conversion to the 'other' in history -- what the liberation theologians refer to as the creation of the "new man". Humanization is therefore also 'socialization', the evolution of man as a social being. Dom Helder's position is very close to the socialist "personalism" of Emmanuel Mounier: for the Christian, man is not a perfectible being, but his destiny is nonetheless a historical one of struggling against the reign of force (Niebuhr's competition for power) and for the social conversion to an economy based on human need not human greed. In short, the historical quest for social justice is impossible within a capitalist mode of production.

On the second issue of the moral foundations of the social order the classic doctrine is summed up by Emil Brunner:

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The Christian religion is the only one in which the idea of justice is inherent, which combines with the recognition of the equal, unconditional dignity of persons the recognition of responsibility to society as a duty and privilege of mutual dependence and service, which emphasizes equally the equality and inequality of human beings and recognizes the independence of the individual as well as his subordination to a social whole as anchored in the will of God. Hence Christianity alone can protect men from the demands both of one-sided individualism and one-sided collectivism.²⁶

It is quite possible to remain within this tradition and assert that in the biblical scheme of things "to give alms" means "to do justice" (Dom Helder's "justice not charity"), and that justice is the only foundation of true social peace (Dom Helder's "peace through justice").²⁷ But the problem with the interpretation of justice as a constitutional nexus of reciprocal rights and duties is that it ignores the historical origins of social inequality, or worse, confuses this inequality with 'natural' inequality. With respect to justice and the social organization of production Dom Helder, and even the Catholic Marxists, accept the traditional doctrine of a natural right to own property. However, as José Miranda points out, two things must be borne in mind in this regard: (1) the right of ownership in the papal encyclicals is neo-Thomistic, not that of bourgeois individualism -- that is to say, the 'telos' of personal property is based not on private accumulation but on a use-value in which the overriding criterion is the "common good"; (2) reformist talk of correcting the "abuses" of the private property system (i.e., in the modern world, capitalism and the wage economy) is inconsistent with the biblical and early church view of differentiating ownership as necessarily the

fruit of avarice and injustice, and as maintained by a false order based on "institutionalized violence", to use a favorite phrase of both Miranda and Dom Helder.²⁸ In the contemporary context differentiating ownership refers to the capitalist right to private property as self-aggrandizing not social, and as leading therefore to the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few and the dispossession of the many, -- what Dom Helder calls appropriately a situation of "depriving property". Miranda poses the problem succinctly:

... If we prescind from history as the only possible origin of ownership, then we need not pose the decisive question of whether differentiating ownership can come to be without violence and spoliation. If we prescind from the historical question, the problem of the possibility of legitimate ownership is reduced to a merely essentialistic issue: Essences descend vertically from a Platonic world; ownership has no genesis; it is not a product of history. Such a mentality came to us from the Greeks, and Marx criticized it in the classical economists: "Political economy starts with the fact of private property, but it does not explain it to us." This is also what is done by the moralist who is an heir of the Greeks: He speaks of ownership with the explicit or tacit presupposition that it was rightly acquired. With this presupposition all his lucubrations are very logical and coherent and he believes he is grasping ownership "in itself", the essence itself of ownership, and not its anecdotal and accidental abuses. But the real problem is completely different: Could differentiating ownership be acquired without these anecdotal and accidental abuses which can be reduced to violence and spoliation?²⁹

Miranda's answer to the last question is an unequivocal "no". This biblical insight, he argues, has been lost through the influence of the essentialist metaphysics and principles of Greek and Roman legal philosophy in which commutative interchange becomes the foundation of a concept of distributive justice ('to every man his due') which does

not call into question the legitimacy of the prevailing distribution. A similar charge could be levelled against the modern, yet equally Platonic, purely formal "contractarianism" of John Rawls. In his Theory of Justice he develops a "difference principle" whereby, in the optimal system of social justice, the "inequality surplus" is to be distributed so as to benefit the least advantaged.³⁰ This "surplus" is simply an assumed axiom which takes no account of how much a surplus might be historically generated or how it is actually produced in capitalist society. Yet as Marx pointed out in his "Critique of the Gotha Programme": "Any distribution whatever of the means of consumption is only a consequence of the distribution of the conditions of production themselves."³¹ Within the bounds of the liberal constitutionalist theory of the state Rawls is clearly unwilling to tie the establishment of justice to the historical question of the mode of production.

At this point it can be said that Christian doctrine has given rise to contrasting perspectives, both conservative and revolutionary. It is interesting to note that St. Augustine's famous aphorism "love and do what you will" coincides with a view of the political order as based on necessity and force, not true justice, which is to be found only in the kingdom founded by Christ. Niebuhr accordingly concludes that Christian love is "unrealistic" as a political ideal and therefore: "Justice in the larger relationships of life can be established only by a contest of power which creates a fair equilibrium of power."³² As with Rawls,

justice as "fairness" inheres in the "rules of the game". In direct contrast, Miranda (and implicitly Dom Helder) argues: "One of the most disastrous errors in the history of Christianity is to have tried -- under the influence of Greek definitions -- to differentiate between love and justice."³³ Here the Augustinian imperative of love is politicized and rebels against the "established disorder". A state of force (unequal classes and relations of domination) cannot be the just social order upon which Brunner confers divine authorization in his definition. On the contrary, for Miranda transcendent authority lies not in the traditional ontology of a hierarchically-ordered universe, or in the presumed moral legitimacy and necessity of law, whether based on consent or not, but only in the existential historical imperative to do justice to the 'other' -- in short, in the most traditional formula of all: "love of neighbor".³⁴ It is this desacralizing of the political order -- the state is no longer in the 'nature of things' a necessary good or a necessary evil ordained by God -- which allows peace to change from a conservative into a revolutionary concept: peace is to seek the true order of justice and the overthrow of the false order of "institutionalized violence".

It is clear that the question of the establishment of justice has broad implications for Dom Helder's thought. For the moment we can say that he founds political justice not on law and contract, but on economic justice. What he understands by the latter is more ambiguous, reflecting, at

least in part, the transition from the moral authority of the social gospel with its goal of a Christian social order, to the prophetic authority of political theology with its goal of permanent revolution. However, it is certain that Dom Helder sees distributive justice not as based on any relativistic equilibrium, "fair" or otherwise, among competing interests, but rather in the context of the historical evolution of a humanistic mode of production in which production for use replaces production for profit. And, to return to our earlier question, this is a consequence of the gospel, though the relationship between Christianity and socialism is no longer that of the "Christian socialism" of the social gospel.

This latter tendency to "Christianize" socialism seems still to be strongly evident in the 1967 "Letter to the Peoples of the Third World" signed by Dom Helder, which quotes a participant in the Vatican Council debates that: "Christians must show that 'authentic socialism is Christianity lived to the full, in basic equality and with a fair distribution of goods.'" ³⁵ However, the use at times of rather traditional language can be misleading, since more and more, Dom Helder, in keeping with the great majority of Christian activists in Latin America, was turning away from all ideals of a societal Christianity or a Christian Democratic state. ³⁶ The full extent of this radical new intention is strikingly revealed in the following quotation from the Spanish theologian José Maria Gonzales Ruiz, which Dom Helder wrote out for an interviewer in Recife who had asked

him what he considered to be the most important work of the church around him:

Christians have important tasks in the construction of a world being born and which is heading for a socialist solution. In this construction of socialism we Christians have no concrete technical solution: the experience of 2,000 years teaches us that the 'civitas humana' should not be absorbed by the Church. The Church does not have the mission of creating its own 'civitas' in which the Gospel is converted into an economic, social, and political code. The 'civitas' should be built with its own autonomous means The Christian should commit himself to the socialist revolution without technical misconceptions and without stressing his role as a believer, but giving at the same time his notable contribution of mystique for universal brotherhood and total hope. Because -- and this must be known -- socialism never will be built with a sectarian call to the blind fatalism of a mechanically-conceived history. Socialism is an option of the free creative will of man and, for the realization of this option, the Gospel has served and continues to serve as an impulse of immense efficacy.³⁷

In the above the task of creating socialism and the pastoral mission of the church are clearly separate yet mutually reinforcing.³⁸ Dom. Helder, like the liberation theologians, sees the path of evangelization as parallel to the historical process of liberation, which in the political sphere means the humanistic socialization of all forms of interpersonal interaction. This is a truly revolutionary politics based on a historical conversion to the 'other', not on a balance of power among competing selfish interests. In the same way as freedom for the Christian is based on the ideal of selfless service, so too political liberation is seen as inseparable from the progress of social justice and the transition to a humanistic socialism. This is not a question of carving out a Christian politics dedicated fundamentally to the fulfillment of human needs (rather than

interest articulation, conflict resolution, stability, etc.) and opposed to anything which would transform man into an object. Such a politics demands a 'political' Christianity: an open, all-embracing evangelical response to the problems facing mankind, without, however, any self-justifying attempt to force the Christian message into a particular political party or ideological package. Evidently, as in any radical 'politicizing' of the Christian promises, there are large risks. But, as Dom Helder told me: "... when I hesitate to speak, to take a stand, I am [still] assuming some positions. If I do not have the audacity and the courage to denounce injustice my silence is my answer and a support to oppression. It is not an abstention. It is not an omission. I am taking a position."³⁹ The Christian option for socialism, by no means exclusivist or unqualified, can only be affirmed in the light of such a 'practical-critical' political humanism:

If we take politics to mean being concerned with the great human problems, evidently it is a part, a conclusion of the gospel. We have a common Father. If we love the Father it is impossible not to love the children, the sons of this common Father -- our brothers. As for the political realizations of this love, the gospel is not tied to any one in particular. Whenever there are persons of good will decided to apply justice, to respect and to love human beings, the gospel is respectful of them and of the political system.

Many persons have the impression that socialism, and above all communism, are necessarily materialistic, while capitalism is the support of Christian civilization. There are great mistakes in this position because capitalism puts profit over man. This is the great sin of capitalism. Theoretically, socialism puts man over profit. The great sadness is that in this historic moment, when huge empires are crushing and exploiting more than two-thirds of mankind, we

have not only capitalist empires, but also socialist empires. The two great socialist empires are the worst propaganda against socialism I am dreaming of a personalistic humanism, a personalistic socialism that is absolutely different from what we are seeing in Russia or China....⁴⁰

Dom Helder's espousal of socialism is self-consciously and unabashedly "revisionist". He does not see any hope in the systems of what Michael Harrington has called "bureaucratic collectivism".⁴¹ In general, he finds it is an illusion to think that there is a ready-made model for the Third World to follow: the Czechoslovakian experiment was nipped in the bud, African "village socialism" such as in Tanzania "doesn't have the conditions for a valid experiment", the Scandanavian brand of social democracy "gives the impression of neo-capitalism",⁴² and as for the heroic example of Cuba: "Cuba is too small a country to serve as a model for a country like Brazil. Cuba has waged its revolution in circumstances that will not be reproduced. The lack of foresight and the egotism of the United States impelled Cuba to throw herself into the arms of Moscow, and Cuba has merely exchanged one master for another. It also seems to me that Fidel Castro, who is a great fighter, is not a great economist."⁴³

Whatever the failings of existing socialisms Dom Helder remains opposed to capitalism in principle, while seeing in socialism the future hope for a humanistic organization of social relationships. It is in this context that he calls for, not a Christian "third way", but a "line of personalist socialization":

I am thinking of a conscious and deliberate participation of the broadest sectors of the population in the control of power and the sharing of wealth and culture That men will become the subjects of social progress; that society will reach a high level of science and professional aptitude; that man will be free, the protagonist of society, constantly in greater solidarity on every plane -- local, regional, national, continental, worldwide; that the state, as a subsidiary authority, will respect the responsibility of each individual and his total participation in the life of society; that the state will respect minorities and favor, without any discrimination, a better harmony among ethnic, ideological and religious groups; that the structures of the state will tend toward an ever wider socialization, in which exist and function basic communities and independent, intermediary institutions, responsible and organized. I believe that man can arrive at a rational and functional planned society, and, at the international level, a self-determination of peoples and a balanced integration.⁴⁴

Dom Helder's pluralistic heterodox socialism does retain clear affinities to the frequent expressions of liberal populism in recent church documents on social justice, but in its insistence on socialism as the alternative to capitalism it is far closer to the philosophy of Mounier and to the kind of option for socialism which many Chilean Christians made under Allende. Mounier accepted the Marxist theory of alienation, arguing that only a materially-based humanism could liberate man's spirit and overcome the exploitation of man by man.⁴⁵ "Mounier's 'personalism', as his philosophy was called, advocated working towards the Kingdom of God through total commitment to God's children -- the poor, the hungry, the homeless, the alienated. The commitment, he said, was only possible in the personalization of man's social responsibility towards his fellow man, that is, in socialism."⁴⁶ Applying the grass roots socialism

envisioned here to the Third World means that the developmental process (the technological liberation from economic necessity) must be accompanied by "a conscientization of the people" who "have to become the true agents of development, preserving their freedom by insisting that the leaders really be their representatives -- and under their control too, as they should be in any authentic democracy."⁴⁷

In a seminal article in the Chilean Jesuit monthly Mensaje in 1971 Sergio Molina and Hernán Larraín introduce as follows the alternatives of a "popular, democratic socialism" to a "bureaucratic, totalitarian socialism":

As Franz Hinkelammert wrote in his Problemas del Desarrollo (1969), "The central problem consists in being able to conceive a socialism in which economic /social, political and cultural/ power, i.e., the dominant power in society, is legitimated by giving representation to the popular base that it affects. We must, then, destroy every sort of elitist generation of power /i.e., self-election/. Self-election, as it exists in the class society, whether capitalist or bureaucratic /socialist/, must disappear. Economic power /and all power/ should represent popular sovereignty. /Interpolations by the authors/⁴⁸

Can the modernizing state become the "subsidiary authority", the instrumentality of the popular will of which Dom Helder speaks?⁴⁹ Can the developmental state produce the pre-conditions of the socialist dream of human emancipation, at the same time "stressing greater equality, more consumption, genuine participation"?⁵⁰ Michael Harrington, rejecting dogmatic messianism and advocating an experimental empiricism, argues persuasively: "... it is quite possible that socialist values, like equality and democratic participation, have a special relevance in Asia, Africa and Latin

America. Contrary to what so many in the West have thought for so long, a radical concern for the individual may be an economic imperative in these areas of the world."⁵¹ Dom Helder would add: "They accuse me of being dangerously imprecise and vague when I allude to a socialism which respects the human person and the peculiarities of our people's spirit /'alma de Povo'/". I am imprecise and vague because it is not for me to go further. I leave to the technicians and the youth of my country and my continent the task of going further, by way of our needs and our aspirations in the search for a model of our own."⁵²

Dom Helder does not shy away from taking similarly heretical positions in his appreciation of Marxism. In a "brotherly salute to Roger Garaudy" he writes:

The hour has come for Marxists to review their two assumptions: that religion is alienation, and that socialism is necessarily bound up with dialectical materialism;

The hour has come for Christians also, not necessarily to adopt any one system, but at least to recognize the existence of a neo-Marxism that rejects the distortions of socialism and can see in the Christian message a strong inspiration for the full socialization of property, power and knowledge.⁵³

"Power and knowledge", as well as property, Dom Helder emphasizes. In that, I suspect he has greater respect for what Harrington calls the "democratic essence of Marxism", than those who take Marxism as Holy Writ. And as Harrington writes: "... the point of socialism, if one can sum up the three volumes of Das Kapital in a phrase, is that man, having socialized almost everything else, must now socialize himself."⁵⁴ (This is no fond nostalgia for the "early Marx"!)

Of course, some may find in this a certain continuity with classical Catholic social teaching. And they would be right. Harrington, besides being a brilliant socialist thinker, is the product of a liberal Catholic education, and Dom Helder once gave an address at Harrington's alma mater, the University of Chicago, entitled "What Would Thomas Aquinas do About Karl Marx?". Did not the traditionalist Catholic philosopher Christopher Dawson write: "The choice that is actually before us is not between an individualistic humanism and some form of collectivism but between a collectivism that is purely mechanistic and one that is spiritual."?

Dawson, to be sure, interpreted "spiritual" in a conservative, anti-Marxist sense. Fortunately, as Mounier was one of the first to recognize, in coming to terms with the Marxist theory of alienation "spiritual" can also represent a truly revolutionary hope -- never man as an object, as a slave to the mode of production!⁵⁵

That is not to say there are no dangers in a humanist approach to socialism. In particular, those who hold to a structuralist interpretation of Marxism will see a great weakness in the failure to enunciate a historical materialist theory and strategy of class conflict (which might then be applied to religious praxis itself), and the reliance instead on a rather wishful convergence of humanization and socialization owing as much to Teilhard as to Marx.⁵⁶ As we shall see in subsequent chapters, Christians are still struggling to assimilate the truths of Marxism without trying to possess it in whole or in part -- to claim socialist man

for Christianity as the "death of God" theologians tried to do with secular man.

Granted these caveats, it is apparent that the real strength of Dom Helder's vision of the progress of socialism as interhuman justice lies in his recognition that "participation in the collective work of liberation must be linked to the concrete context of our personal, individual relations."⁵⁷ It is here that the alternative between violence (class war) and nonviolence ('conscientization') takes on its full meaning at the centre of a philosophy of "revolution through peace". Dom Helder has no patience with the bourgeois "revolutionary" content only to fan the flames of revolution at a safe distance, and he sees no solution to the vicious circle of violence (Mounier's "reign of force") in models which operate only at the level of structural antagonisms. Revolution, for him, means both a liberation from violence -- the "established disorder" -- and a personal sacrifice, a personal conversion to the 'other'. As he once told a group of jurists: "In order to arrive at a change of structures, it is necessary to begin with changes in mental structures."⁵⁸

Does this imply that the revolution he contemplates is ultimately only spiritual? Absolutely not! When, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights, Dom Helder participated in a symposium on "human reality" in Houston, Texas, his contribution, of all the suggested approaches to the amelioration of the human condition, was the only one to focus directly on the transformation of social structures of

oppression. By contrast, Dr. Jonas Salk presented a biological model of society in which "cancerous" growths would be "cured" by behavior modification. (Shades of Clockwork Orange.) Another participant, an American psychiatrist, spoke exclusively in terms of the moral education of individuals.⁵⁹ But what is personal morality without personal responsibility in the struggle for social justice? Functionalism, moral individualism, legalism, are all rejected by Dom Helder as failing to address the central fact of exploitation in the modern world -- the enslaving of so much of mankind by external and internal neocolonialisms. What then is to be done? The answers will never be easy. But first it is essential to ask oneself if one has understood the full dimensions of the question of revolution, starting with the causes, nature, and consequences of oppression, alienation, and political violence. To do so is to ask whether there are solutions which are truly authentic, solutions which are not also inevitably part of the problem, revolutions which will not end up devouring their own children.

In one of Dom Helder's most important addresses "Violence -- The Only Way?", delivered appropriately in April 1968 in Paris, he began simply:

I ask you to hear me as one who lives in a continent whose climate is pre-revolutionary, but who, while he has no right to betray the Latin American masses, has no right either to sin against the light or against love.

Here is a first basic remark, necessary to the understanding of the problematic of violence: the whole world is in need of a structural revolution.⁶⁰

Our approach, therefore, must be holistic, since the problems are not only for the Third World. "No one is innocent. It is not enough to say that there are staggering economic imbalances in the world. The fact of material deprivation must point to a deeper stratum of human reality, one not based on the inequities of "natural" endowments, but which is historical and relational -- that is to say, structural. Exploitation is fundamentally alienation, or dehumanization: it is that which transforms man into an object of other men. The material comfort of "development" can be as great a prison as the poverty of "underdevelopment": "With his power to raise to a human level millions and millions of fellow children of God whom stark misery has reduced to a subhuman existence, the superman does not even realize that excessive affluence and self-centredness are reducing him, too, to a subhuman level."⁶¹ In Revolution Through Peace Dom Helder therefore asserts: "What is more difficult and more exciting: to humanize subhuman men made wretched by misery, or to humanize supermen dehumanized by luxury? The two tasks complement each other in such a way that the realization of each is dependent on that of the other."⁶²

It is instructive to compare the approaches of Dom Helder and Herbert Marcuse to dehumanization and to revolution as a humanizing process. In "Violence -- The Only Way?" Dom Helder echoes a familiar theme of the latter:

The United States is a living demonstration of the internal contradiction of the capitalist system; it has succeeded in creating underdeveloped strata within the richest country in the world -- 30 million Americans live in a situation below the dignity of the human condition; it has succeeded

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in provoking a fratricidal war between whites and blacks; under the guise of anticommunism, but in fact driven by a lust for prestige and the expansion of its sphere of influence, it is waging the most shameful war the world has ever known. The dominant system in the United States is so irrational in its rationalisation, as they call it, that it has succeeded in creating a one-dimensional, 'robot' existence, to such an extent that young Americans of different cultural traditions feel called to build a more just and more human society by transforming the social context and humanising technology.⁶³

Dom Helder goes on to attack the scientific dogmatism (a contradiction in terms!) of Soviet Marxism. He agrees with Marcuse that dehumanization is directly attributable to the violence of a status quo which does not allow man to become a free, creative subject. In fact in his book Spiral of Violence Dom Helder presents a basic typology of violence which largely parallels that of Marcuse in his famous essay "Repressive Tolerance". Violence, argues Dom Helder, is not simply an unfortunate fact of human nature. Rather, it is in essence structural and relational: violence "number one" is the "institutionalized violence" of the "established disorder"; violence "number one" is directly responsible for the violence "number two" which is the counter-violence of revolt against oppression. But Dom Helder also stresses a violence "number three" which is the official repression which established regimes (presumably even "revolutionary" ones) direct against all counter-violence, and which therefore begins the cycle over again.⁶⁴ Both Dom Helder and Marcuse see the violence of the establishment as alone culpable, but the former unlike the latter sees revolutionary violence as part of, not a break with, the "spiral of violence". Con-

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sequently the only truly revolutionary violence is that of the peacemakers who seek a new order based on a revolution against the cycle of violence itself.

As we have seen, Dom Helder accepts Marx's analysis of capitalist exploitation and Marcuse's negation of technocratic determinism. But just as Dom Helder rejects the conclusions of a doctrinal Marxism -- namely that the process of class struggle is self-denying rather than self-perpetuating: exclusively leading to the abolition of classes by means of a pseudo-scientific (i.e., empirico-rationalist) logic of history⁶⁵ -- he also rejects the contention of Marcuse that nonviolence is ultimately reactionary whereas counter-violence is at least potentially liberating. On the contrary, insists Dom Helder, it is non-violence which is the ultimately effective form of resistance to oppression, precisely because it owes nothing to violence. It does not begin and end with the destruction of old structures, but rather demands first what Paulo Freire termed 'conscientization': the liberative education or "cultural action for freedom" which will allow the masses to become the authors of a revolution which will make them truly masters of their political destiny. For Dom Helder revolution is above all a human and a democratic event -- a directed, willed "transfiguration" of power relationships, not an induced inversion of those relationships which only turns the oppressed (or more likely their leaders) into a new ruling class.⁶⁶

Dom Helder's emphasis on the revolutionary objectives

of nonviolence distinguish him from the pacifist who condemns all violence indiscriminately. Dom Helder clearly blames the violence of the oppressors for that of the oppressed, although in his judgement the latter can never provide an adequate basis for a Christian response to the former. It would be misleading, moreover, to simply counterpost the peaceful witness advocated by Dom Helder with that of the other great symbolic man of contemporary Latin American Christianity, the pirate-guerilla Camilo Torres. As Gustavo Perez-Ramirez notes: "He [Dom Helder] does not present 'non-violence' as an absolute or as the uniquely and exclusively Christian means for effective social change. His nonviolence is a personal option, in a very concrete situation, and according to specific commitments and personal loyalties."⁶⁷ Dom Helder explains:

I respect those who feel obliged in conscience to opt for violence -- not the all too easy violence of armchair guerilleros -- but those who have proved their sincerity by the sacrifice of their life. In my opinion, the memory of Camilo Torres and of Che Guevara merits as much respect as that of Martin Luther King. I accuse the real authors of violence; all those who, whether on the right or the left, weaken justice and prevent peace. My personal vocation is that of a pilgrim of peace I would prefer a thousand times to be killed than to kill.

This personal position is based on the gospel. A whole life spent trying to understand and live the gospel has produced in me the profound conviction that if the gospel can, and should, be called revolutionary it is in the sense that it demands the conversion of each of us. We haven't the right to enclose ourselves within our egoism; we must open ourselves to the love of God and the love of men.⁶⁸

No one is innocent or self-sufficient, not even the revolutionary! And Dom Helder has no sympathy at all for

those ideological militants who spend more time conducting inquisitions among themselves than in living dangerously for their fellow human beings. As Victor Frankl demonstrated so graphically in Man's Search For Meaning self-liberation (or preservation, fulfillment, gratification, etc.) is nothing if not at the same time liberation from selfishness. Truly revolutionary purity rejects triumphalism, demanding instead a humble self-conversion -- the self-renunciation of love which is willing to suffer for others. This is a long way indeed from any purely rationalistic depersonalized dialectic in which the fraternal society is "scientifically" generated through (an inexorable logic of self-aggrandizement, not self-sacrifice. But Dom Helder makes no apologies for seeking his revolutionary inspiration in the "pre-critical" Christian ideal of selfless love. In classically Augustinian fashion he assails the individual and collective egoism, the 'hubris' which reifies the 'other' and imprisons both oppressor and oppressed within alienating structures. As Alceu Amoroso Lima summed up this fundamental continuity in Dom Helder's thought, "The analysis of the reality of the world today brings him to denounce the primacy of self-love as the most terrible heresy to which the bourgeois philosophy of life has brought us."⁶⁹

'Conscientization', 'coined by Freire for the politicizing adult literacy training first applied in the Northeast of Brazil, is taken over by Dom Helder as a universal rubric for the "personalistic socialization" which confronts the alienations of bourgeois rationalism and utilitarianism, and

indeed the entire objectivist philosophy of western modernity upon which conventional models of social and political development have been based.⁷⁰ 'Conscientization' in this latter sense both retains its original popular-democratic character and gains a philosophic-religious dimension as radically counterposed to Weber's scenario of the "iron cage" as messianic anarcho-communism was to the Babylonian captivities of the past. The immediate task of 'conscientization' in the Third World is economic justice because "material and physical underdevelopment leads to intellectual, moral and spiritual underdevelopment."⁷¹ But ultimately the universal goal is nothing less than "a cultural revolution which will produce a new hierarchy of values, a new world vision, a global strategy of development, the revolution of mankind."⁷² Despite the fact that after the military coup in Brazil 'conscientization' was branded subversive or even communistic, Dom Helder has fearlessly popularized the term as linking the necessary self-awakening of the masses with the equally compelling imperative of a humanistic socialization of the economy:

To rebel against conscientização, then is to try to keep the subhuman masses from becoming people; it is to demand that human beings refrain from using their intelligence, their freedom, and their consciences

Is there anyone who does not know that man today is capable of conquering nature and wresting from her what is necessary (and even more than necessary) to provide a human standard of living for all of us? Is there anyone who does not know that there is no underproduction but only underconsumption, the offspring of superselfishness?⁷³

'Conscientization' lies a "nonviolent" road to socialism in the sense that the vicious circle of violence/

counter-violence -- the simplistic dialectic of elites versus masses -- must be challenged and broken for there to be an authentic liberation from the reign of force and necessity. 'Conscientization' therefore goes beyond a narrow class-consciousness to seek a common interpersonal ground for humanization, in contradistinction to the view of progress as emerging from the clash of antagonistic, structurally-determined interests.

Anyone who laughs at this proposal /'conscientization' of the ruling elites/ as if it were platonic or quixotic, is confessing that he does not believe in the power of ideas.

Of course it isn't easy to row against the tide, to overcome obstacles or preach to the deaf (and all of us have hearing when the talk is about our rights, and go deaf suddenly when we're reminded of our obligations.) It is a matter of stirring up minds and changing hearts.

What good is it to win by force, to conquer by fire and sword, when hate engenders only hate, when nothing lasting can be built on a foundation of hate? Our task is much greater, much deeper, more difficult, and more beautiful. Our task is to help human beings to conquer their own selfishness and to comprehend that, out of intelligence if not from a spirit of faith, they should see how they might deal more justly with those who work for them, even if they must rend their own flesh in order to do so. Our task is to persuade the slavocrats of the present day to make the abolition of slavery a reality, to make a decisive contribution, not to some broad philanthropic movement of social welfare, but to an authentic movement of human advancement.⁷⁴

The church must always declare itself unequivocally on the side of the victims of injustice, but not in order to become a surrogate revolutionary vanguard. The church is called to reach out to all men: it cannot give up hope on even the worst perpetrators of injustice. But of course Dom Helder is not so naive as to expect the oppressors to undergo conversion voluntarily. They must be "persuaded".

That means a grass roots promotion of the values of popular mobilization and genuinely democratic participation. In Brazil, to create the objective conditions for democracy is to agitate for agrarian reform and to encourage the organization of the working class.

If we love democracy and believe in its methods, we must demand much of it. Democracy has no right to be blind and deaf, no right to be naive. There are grave wrongs to be righted, above all in the rural areas. Mere pathetic appeals to the heart-strings, laws on paper, and bureaus with pompous names are not enough.

If we are sincere in our desire for human advancement and truly want to organize our communities -- the initial step in authentic development -- we should be overjoyed to see the workers struggling to get a basic education and running their own unions and their own cooperatives, without constraint or paternalism, without fear and without puppet leaders imposed from above.⁷⁵

Even when democracy seems to be thwarted at every turn by military dictatorship Dom Helder sees no solution in a "revolution from above" creating the conditions for eventual popular rule. If revolution "in the name of the people" is not first revolution of and by the people, it will only succeed in generating a new ruling class. As Dom Helder frequently says: "If I demand much of democracy, it is because I believe in it."⁷⁶ The role of class-consciousness must be seen in this light as defining the particular bases for the achievement of universalistic goals. As the Catholic Workers' Action manifesto inspired by Dom Helder states:

The hope of a better world must be based on these values /of democratic humanism/, which are the only effective weapons in the battle for a just solution. To them are directed the cry of anguish and of justice which issues from this document.

But our greatest hopes are still turned to the working class itself, whose capacity for suffering indicates a reserve of moral and spiritual force which must be discovered and evaluated by the workers themselves, so that unity may give them strength and awareness, so that brotherhood may overcome their instinct of self-defence which narrows reaction and ambition to the dimensions of the individual, so that human solidarity may give life to the great community of those who have only arms, intelligence, and heart to fulfill themselves as men and as sharers in the work of creation.

It is essential that the examples of human and christian greatness, given by the more authentic leaders, should bear fruit in the womb of the working class, so that a collective and unifying consciousness may strengthen the unity of the workers.⁷⁷

Dom Helder is often accused of being a moralist, but like Marx he sees working people as the potentially "universal class". It is necessary too to distinguish between self-interest which implies only particularistic means and selfish interest which implies also particularistic ends. If it is in everyone's ultimate self-interest to create socialism, there must be an overriding common value which prevents group egoism from leading only to "economism" and embourgeoisement. Socialism is not simply a mode of production, a structural end in itself. On the contrary, the root and end of socialism is man, -- not essentialist, ontological man, to be sure, but historical, scientific man. So for Dom Helder the common value referred to above is the "permanent revolution" of a humanizing democratization which stands as an ongoing challenge to alienation and reification in social structures. The working class which seeks only its "objective, historical", i.e., particular, interest can never become an instrument of universal liberation.

Only through a dehumanized determinism could socialism ever be arrived at unintentionally. For the working class to be revolutionary it must become conscious of itself as the universal class, capable of subordinating immediate apparent advantage to the long-term interest of the whole, and thus of incarnating the democratic-socialist ideal. A group of Canadian trade unionists once asked Dom Helder what they could do to help the underemployed of the Third World. He began his answer by wondering if there was a danger Canadian workers were becoming middle class. Then he added:

What you can do of most value in favour of the under-employed in the Third World, is not to send aid. What you must do is try to integrate a fourth of your own population that exists on the margin of the national life. There are 5,000,000 underemployed here in Canada

... If I demand the integration of those 5,000,000 marginals, it is because I emphatically hope they will explode the old structures! Five million people cannot be injected into the general society without bringing about some change!⁷⁸

Dom Helder does not address himself directly to the technical issues of how a liberating class consciousness might be generated and sustained. Although this could be considered a weakness in his approach it is quite deliberate. Dom Helder simply wants to appeal to the humanity in every person. So, for him, socialism is not a good thing because the socialization of the means of production demands the elimination of the capitalist class, but because it promises to satisfy man's hunger for interhuman justice. Democracy is not a good thing because it protects "western civilization", but because it promises to give an equal voice to each member of society. Such objectives as these demand both structural

changes and a revolution of hearts and minds. At the personal centre of consciousness the struggle is against embourgeoisement and the failure to act, to "suffer for justice". At the national level it is against the illusions of neocapitalism and the reality of a neo-corporatism which legitimizes oligarchic, military, or technocratic control over the means of social communication. At the global level it is against the neocolonialism of transnational corporations, the internal colonialism of comprador bourgeoisies, and the empire-building of the super powers.⁷⁹

'Conscientization' must integrate all these levels because: "It is only those who achieve an inner unity within themselves and possess a worldwide vision and universal spirit, who will be fit instruments to perform the miracle of combining the violence of the prophets, the truth of Christ, the revolutionary spirit of the gospel -- but without destroying love."⁸⁰

Despite endless humiliations in his own country Dom Helder retains an extra-large measure of liberal optimism in the triumph of men of good will. Like all prophets he places questions about ends above those about means. This is a form of poetic license which can be extremely frustrating, but even the most critical and practical revolutionary ideology has less in common with the dictates of "the way it is" than with the inspiration behind the inscription on the walls of the Sorbonne during the May "revolution" of 1968: "Be realistic -- ask for the impossible!" And, moreover, in the case of Dom Helder it is a religious

faith in man's destiny, both as a personal and as a social being, which ultimately sustains the dream in the face of violent reaction. "For personal sins," he declares, "personal conversion is sufficient. For collective sins, for structures of injustice, the spirit of God will teach us a path to communitarian conversions."⁸¹ This is not to say that we are to sit on our hands until this "Spirit" lights the way ahead, but that the future is an open-ended creation, not an extrapolation of past and present.

Such vagueness is perhaps the risk of being human in a world of violence, and it is not without attendant dangers. What are the grounds for hope in the future of man in the face of what Roger Garaudy calls the "disastrous currents" of the contemporary world? They can never be purely "objective", for faith, even faith in the enterprise of western science, is at heart an a-critical, (though not uncritical) personal choice which is prior to the logic of the given.⁸² Nor can the problem be evaded by a fuzzy attempt, as in Teilhard de Chardin, to found Christian hope on a "scientific" anthropology. Dom Helder, following de Chardin, is perhaps guilty, as indeed are many of the liberation theologians, of tending to view history as a unidirectional process of co-creation, which is assured thereby by the divine presence in and over history. While "socialization" may well be the only hope for man, it does not follow that it comes with a made-in-heaven guarantee.

Ultimately Dom Helder, given his background in Brazilian education and as a liaison for radical Catholic

action groups, falls back on an irrepressible populist faith in the liberative power of the word (Freire's 'conscientização') and of the spontaneous action of the masses. Recently he stated that: "United, without violence, but without fear; united in defence of their rights, the little people are invincible."⁸³ There is no real strategy here other than the passionate belief that truth and justice will prevail over the "established disorder". Even Dom Helder's references to "abrahamic minorities" keeping alive the flame of truth and justice are simply a corollary of his position that faith in human beings, however quixotic, is never misplaced, whereas faith in violence cannot escape dehumanizing consequences. This is the clear message of the following passage from a closing speech to a conference on world development:

And now? What to do? To have recourse to arms against the established powers? No. A categorical no. If we combat the results of the excess of power which is supported by the force of arms, how do we intend to impose, equally by force, by new massacres, new hatreds, new injustices, new losses of liberty, a more human life for the earth's inhabitants?

In the first place, I draw your attention to a fact, a reality which is easily demonstrated even though for many it may seem naive or even ridiculous.

Open your eyes. Look around you. You will discover that you are not alone. You will discover in your country what is happening in all the other countries: you will discover in the human group to which you belong what is happening in all human groups: the presence of sincere persons decided on any sacrifice in order to aid in the construction of a more just and more human world.⁸⁴

But even if Dom Helder's philosophy is somewhat tendentious and unconvincing as a guide to action, it is extremely powerful in giving equal weight to both oppressive

structural injustice and what Freire calls the "oppressor within". Violence directed only against external structures does not begin to touch this second oppression. By contrast, in Dom Helder's revolutionary dialectic, those on the side of an authentic liberation can never claim superiority or a monopoly of truth, since primacy is given to the Christian ideal of mutuality through selfless love, in which the only ultimately redemptive violence is directed against the self. Moreover, Dom Helder sees clearly, as do César Jerez and Juan Hernández-Pico in a penetrating appraisal of Freire, that

... one cannot liberate by using the same methods that have been used for oppression: dependency, ukases, propaganda, manipulation. Only a critical praxis /i.e., 'conscientization'/ can guide toward liberation, particularly today, as authority grows more powerful with the technological means at its disposal only when oppressed people dialogue with those who, having belonged to the oppressors, now take the side of the oppressed, can a movement and a project for liberation be initiated. It will be utopian, in the sense that it is a commitment to a future full of risks.⁸⁵

Such insights have grown very slowly over a lifetime of concern for social problems. At first, as we have seen, Dom Helder was a dynamic but otherwise rather conventional apostle to the poor, and a well-connected promoter of economic development and independence for Brazil. Soon, however, he began to discover that the sufferings of the Brazilian poor were the inevitable result of structural and worldwide relations of dependency -- principally in the form of super-power expansionism, capitalist neocolonialism, and internal colonialisms based on regional (rural/urban) exploitation and class domination -- in which the strong

systematically plundered the weak. Such relations were not the result of the "will of God" (as he may have been inclined to believe in his Integralist youth), or the "will of reality" (as the classical liberal economists pretended), or the mere product of accidental "abuses" (as "moderate" reformers would like to believe). The social problem was and is fundamentally one of justice, and requires therefore a social revolution which is also a political revolution. But the Brazilian military too had called their 1964 coup and subsequent dictatorship a "revolution". Dom Helder, in direct contrast, defines social and political revolution in terms of 'conscientização': liberty and justice for all will only be achieved when the masses become a people, -- when every man becomes 'political man'. Development conceived as growth in the productive means of society may well be a condition of popular democracy, but by itself it can never lead to liberation from injustice. Just as socialism is an end as well as a means, development is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for liberation.

Dom Helder like Freire "understands liberation as the pursuit of a freedom that is inseparable from the pursuit of justice."⁸⁶ On this interpretation the scope of revolution is much greater than that permitted by political philosophers such as Hannah Arendt. "For her, liberation is negative process, liberation from the yoke of necessity. The sphere of necessity and the sphere of freedom are different: the problems of the first have to be solved through technology, the problems of the second through political participation in

public life."⁸⁷ But for Dom Helder the social question is not primarily the Malthusian one of scarcity and consumption, but the political one of justice. Nor does Dom Helder accept the dualism whereby democracy becomes identified in practice with bread and security as the goal of the many and political liberty as a luxury of the few. Rather, democracy is a freedom for the many based on justice, in contradistinction to the bourgeois privatization of life or the monolithic socialism in which the individual is swallowed up by the collectivity.

Freedom is therefore meaningless without justice, because the imperative of justice for Dom Helder is much broader and more radical than simply charity, or development, or law and order. Justice is a personal-social-structural dialectic. It demands a liberation from self -- the egoism which is the personal source of alienation and dehumanization. It demands a liberation from material deprivation -- the man-made underdevelopment which afflicts so much of the globe. It demands a liberation from "institutionalized violence" -- the right of force and the order of domination. Justice, finally, demands the integration of all these levels of action, which might be summed up in a phrase as "revolution through peace".

Peace is defined by Dom Helder as the overcoming of a false, alienating "order", whether in the self, or in the distribution of goods, or in the organization of political power. In effect, to call for peace in today's world is obviously to call for revolutionary change. (What sort of

change is indicated when Dom Helder makes justice a synonym for peace and socialism a synonym for justice. As José de Luca puts it: "There can be no peace in the injustice and the lie /alienation, false consciousness/ of a system /capitalism/ that says no to man in order to say yes to capital."⁸⁸) And to call for revolution in a world of violence is to call for peaceful change, because the only lasting revolution is the revolution which brings about true peace: that is, revolutionary "violence" /destruction of false order/ must be a liberation from the reign of force and the spiral of violence itself. So, paradoxically, peaceful resistance is the one form of "violence" which is always revolutionary.

What is the role of the Christian church in the process of revolution through peace? It is not, emphasizes Dom Helder, to advance a "third way" -- a special theory or strategy of "Christian" revolution -- or to set up the community of believers as a "liberated" vanguard of revolution. The Christian God is undoubtedly for justice and against oppression, since in the biblical scheme of things to know God is to do justice to and to love one's neighbor. But to claim God for one's revolution (e.g., 'God is on the side of the proletariat') is as blasphemous as to claim Him for one's right to rule. The clues to an authentic Christian response are to be found in political theology and liberation theology. At the level of conscious awareness the church must become 'politicized' -- that is to say, it must shed its political naiveté and speak with a voice that is

public, critical, and prophetic. At the level of praxis, the church must make decisions and take risks, mindful always that the politics which best embodies the humanizing and liberating thrust of Christian transcendence and Christian love is the politics which frees man for the future.

Dom Helder follows Michael Harrington in his article "Religion and Revolution" in making two basic points: (1) the violence of hatred and arms has not succeeded, and does not give any indication that it will succeed, in creating the needed new forms of social consciousness and social relations; (2) Christian political praxis does not at all mean political religions, but rather, participation in the common struggle among all men of good will for the creation of the "new man" (liberation from the egoism of "human nature") and the new order of justice and peace (liberation from social conditioning and "established disorder").⁸⁹ This is what is implied by saying that, for the Christian, revolution is the object of peace.

Of course, thus stated, the relationship between Christianity and revolution remains problematical. So it is to the broad questions raised by this problematic that we turn our attention in the next part, with the help of the initial insights of Dom Helder. In chapter six we ask: "Is revolution necessarily a form of violence, or is it primarily an end rather than a means?" In chapters seven and eight we ask: "If, as Garaudy claims, Marxism is the historical science of human initiative 'par excellence', is

Marxist revolution the politics which, from a Christian point of view, frees man for the future?". In chapters nine and ten we ask: "If revolution is also to be a liberation from sin and the consequences of sin (i.e., part of salvation-history), how must the religious community, or church, define its role in relation to the attainment of concrete revolutionary goals?".

NOTES

1. Cited in de Broucker, Dom Helder Camara: The Violence of a Peacemaker, p. 152.
2. Ibid.
3. Church and Colonialism, p. 31.
4. Ibid., p. 38.
5. Ibid., p. 7.
6. Ibid., p. 47.
7. Piero Gheddo, Why is the Third World Poor?, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973), p. 79.
8. Ibid., p. 138. (emphasis in original)
9. From the collection Helder Camara, LADOC 'Keyhole' Series no. 12, (Washington: Latin American Documentation -- USCG, 1975), pp. 26-27.
10. Ibid., p. 26.
11. "Respostas ao Questionário Enviado Por Visão", June 12, 1971, (in PL).
12. Interview in Cooperation Canada, organ of the Canadian International Development Agency, May/June 1975, pp. 8-9.
13. Dom Helder concluded: "We need, then, a liberation approach for our pastoral planning. We must encourage our theologians too to lay the basis for a theology of liberation, even though some of them are still groping and uncertain, even if some, here and there, fall into errors or exaggerations." ("The Gospel and Liberation" in LADOC Series no. 12, op.cit., p. 12.) See also Grandes Linhas de Uma Teologia da Libertação, n.d. (in PL).
14. "Youth and Age Must Work Together", in LADOC Series no. 12, p. 49.
15. He made the following remarks at a symposium at Cornell University, February 7, 1967:

An important feature of the new vision of Christian humanism is its understanding attitude toward atheistic humanism

... Marxist humanism, in the realm of economics, gives priority to labor and therefore to man, and so has a central basis for a humanistic economy.

Existentialist humanism has the great merit of keeping us from excessive rationalization Psychoanalytical humanism reminds us ... of some dimensions of man that ... are of decisive importance to human behavior.

Evolutionist humanism makes possible a new vision of creation, much more in keeping with the greatness of God than colorless and petty intervention in the direct and personal creation of each being.... (cited in de Broucker, op.cit., pp. 121-122.)

16. Revolution Through Peace, pp. 17, 23.
17. See, for example, the works of "secularization" theologians such as Harvey Cox. Cf. also Arend van Leeuwen, Christianity in World History, (London: Edinburgh House, 1966).
18. There are traces of this tendency in a book for which Dom Helder has written the foreword -- André Biéler's, The Politics of Hope, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1974).
19. "Am I Being Honoured or Mocked?", text of Harvard address published as "The Force of Right, or the Right of Force?", Christianity and Crisis, 24:14, August 5, 1974, p. 177.
20. Ibid., pp. 175-176.
21. Interview with Oriana Fallaci, 1970, reprinted in LADOC Series, op.cit., p. 3.
22. Niebuhr, "Social Justice", in H. Harris, ed., Christianity and Communism, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1937), p. 67.
23. See the essay by Niebuhr in John Lewis et.al., Christianity and the Social Revolution, (London: Victor Gollancz, 1935), p. 443.
24. Revolution Through Peace, p. 45.
25. Ibid., p. 48.
26. Cited in Paul Lehmann, The Transfiguration of Politics, (London: SCM, 1975), p. 256.
27. See José Miranda, Marx and the Bible, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1974), pp. 14-21; *passim*.
28. Wealth in this view is never innocent. Miranda quotes St. Jerome's commentary on Jesus's phrase 'money of injustice' (Luke 16:9): "And he very rightly said, 'money of injustice', for all riches come from injustice."

Unless one person has lost, another cannot find. Therefore I believe that the popular proverb is very true: 'The rich person is either an unjust person or the heir of one.'"

29. Ibid., pp. 13-14.
30. John Rawls, Theory of Justice, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971). For another major recent attempt to rescue the liberal pluralist theory of the state, minus the social conscience, see Robert Nozick, Anarchy, State, and Utopia, (New York: Basic Books, 1974).
31. Cited in Robert Wolff, Understanding Rawls, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977) p. 210. Cf. also the critical remarks in Brian Wren, Education for Justice, (London: SCM, 1977), chps. 3-4.
32. In Lewis, et.al., op.cit., p. 470.
33. Miranda, op.cit., p. 61.
34. The entire nature of divine authorship is revolutionized by the primacy of interpersonal justice as an existential and historical as opposed to legal command. Leslie Dewart, in a fascinating introduction to Roger Garaudy's From Anathema to Dialogue, points out that the concept of 'dike' (to each his due) -- justice as an absolute, abstract, rational principle -- coincides with the metaphysical theism of the Greeks. Law and justice, like the civil religion, are pre-political, belonging to the very foundation of the state. When Christian love is the criterion of justice, it becomes, on the contrary, historical and subversive.
35. In Between Honesty and Hope, (Maryknoll: 1970), p. 7.
36. On both of these counts P. Gilhodes' assessment of Dom Helder as the head of the "social Christianity" group is plainly in error. (See "L'Eglise catholique et la politique en Amérique Latine", Revue française de Science politique, 19:3, June 1969, p. 602.)
37. Cited in N. Gall, "Latin America: The Church Militant", Commentary, vol. 49, April 1970, p. 31.
38. As Dom Sergio Mendez Arceo, a leading member of Christians For Socialism, has also pointed out, it is not a question of a specific interrelationship of Christianity and socialism -- a Christian socialism or a socialist Christianity -- but of "coincidences" in the basic human values held by Christians and socialists. (Interview with the author at Cuernavaca, Mexico, January 13, 1977.)
39. Interview with the author, Recife, Brazil, March 25, 1977.

40. Ibid.
41. Cf. Michael Harrington, Socialism, (New York: Bantam Books, 1972), esp. chps. VII and IX.
42. "How My Thoughts Have Changed", Christian Century, December 10, 1969, p. 6.
43. In de Broucker, op.cit., p. 88.
44. In Betap de Rosb, Hélder Câmara, Signo de Contradição, p. 134. (Also in de Broucker, p. 90.)
45. See Emmanuel Mounier, Communisme, Anarchie, et Personalisme, (Paris: Les Editions du Seuil, 1966); also his many articles in the review he founded, Esprit, and the work of his eminent successor Paul Ricoeur -- in English cf. Political and Social Essays, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1974).
46. John Gerassi, "Introduction" to Revolutionary Priest, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 14.
47. Sergio Molina and Hernan Larraín, "Democratic Socialism, Not Totalitarian Socialism", in Latin Americans Discuss Marxism-Socialism, LADOC 'Keyhole' Series no. 13, (Washington, 1975), p. 5.
48. Ibid., p. 4.
49. Dom Helder is not so naive as to expect economic development without a strong central state or a simplistic resolution of the dialectic between elites and masses. The key problem, write Molina and Larraín, "is how to give the worker, while he still remains a worker, the right to determine the policies he wants carried out and an effective control over the administrators who are to execute them. As Hinkelhammert points out: "We can conceive the existence of a classless society /democratic, popular socialism/ that would maintain the basic dichotomy between dominant groups and popular masses /of workers/, but in it that dichotomy will be characterized by a balance and institutionalization of conflicts between the two groups, in addition to permitting social mobility." (op.cit., p. 5.)
50. Harrington, op.cit., p. 419.
51. Ibid., p. 418.
52. "Posição Em Face do Marxismo e do Socialismo", Brazil 1970, p. 3, in PL; see also "Dom Helder se Explica", Informaciones Católicas Internacionales, July 1968.
53. "Christianity, Socialism, Marxism Seek Dialogue", in LADOC series no. 12, p. 17.

54. Harrington, op.cit., p. 129.
55. This, insists Dom Helder, must be the underlying goal of an economic progress at the service of the whole man and of all men. (See "Rebelião dos Economistas", Natal, Brazil, December 12, 1967; in PL.)
56. Cf. the highly critical remarks on liberation theology in Alfredo Fierro's massive and provocative treatise The Militant Gospel, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1977). Fierro's "critical introduction to political theologies" opens up a vast number of themes for reflection leading up to a proposal for a "historical materialist" theology. Unfortunately, as we shall see in later chapters, this "negative" theology, resting as it does on a "death of God" bias and an Althusserian ideology of antihumanism, is at least as problematical as the positions which Fierro so vigorously rejects.
57. Emilio Castro, "A Call To Action", in Thomas Quigley, ed., Freedom and Unfreedom in the Americas, p. 43.
58. Message to the sixth world congress of Catholic jurists, December 6, 1968, (in PL).
59. See the documentation on the symposium in PL: viz., the article by Gregory Bergman from The Way, San Francisco, 30:3, April 1974, pp. 6-12.
60. Church and Colonialism, pp. 101-102.
61. Revolution Through Peace, pp. 14-15.
62. Ibid., p. 9.
63. Church and Colonialism, pp. 104-105. Like Marcuse Dom Helder tends to place a great deal of confidence -- at times, perhaps, an inordinate amount -- in the role of youthful enthusiasm.
64. See Spiral of Violence, (Denville, N.J.: Dimension Books, 1971), chp. 1 "A Threat to Humanity".
65. Any "science" which treats history as a given -- i.e., classlessness as necessarily an extrapolation from the known logic of class struggle -- effectively denies future historical initiative and is therefore as profoundly anti-scientific as bourgeois positivism.
66. "Transfiguration" goes beyond the transformation of the past and the transvaluation of the present to seek a new order based on the future: the only true peace and truly human order is a revolutionary one. (Cf. Lehmann, The Transfiguration of Politics, esp. chp. 6.)

67. "Liberation: A Recurring Prophetic Cry in the Americas", in Quigley, op.cit., p. 35.
68. Church and Colonialism, p. 109.
69. Cited in de Rosb, op.cit., p. 17.
70. For a 'post-critical' alternative to the objectivist "science" of progress see Michael Polanyi, Personal Knowledge, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964).
71. Church and Colonialism, p. 111.
72. Ibid.
73. Revolution Through Peace, pp. 55-56. "Conscientization" and 'conscientização' can be interchanged, although the latter is more faithful to the specific, Brazilian origins.
74. Ibid., pp. 56-57.
75. Ibid., p. 59.
76. Ibid., p. 60.
77. Church and Colonialism, pp. 166-167.
78. Cited in de Broucker, op.cit. Ironically, it might be said that the task of the working class is to universalize the ideals of bourgeois democracy -- the "liberty, equality, fraternity" of the French Revolution. Dom Helder once related the following incident:

One day a European who manages a steel mill in my country invited me to visit the plant, giving me leave to open all the doors, all the desk drawers, all the books. Afterward he asked me what I thought of the mill. In answer, I said: "I think I've seen everything good about your factory: safety measures; salaries; provision for education, health, recreation. The only thing I don't understand is the reason for the invisible warnings all over the mill that say: 'Worker, all will be given you in exchange for the bourgeois luxuries of freedom and intelligence.'" (Revolution Through Peace, p. 101.)
79. See "Hope in the World Community", address by Dom Helder, Winnipeg, Canada, January 1970 (in PL).
80. Church and Colonialism, p. 111.
81. Cited in Cliff Foster, "Woe to those content with texts, documents", The Prairie Messenger, (Muenster, Canada),

55:8, July 24, 1977, p. 1.

82. For example, with respect to Marxist science, if one were to base one's belief in a classless society on the inevitability of classlessness as the outcome of class struggle one could arrive at the absurd conclusion of basing the grounds for belief in history on the total irrelevance for history of belief itself.
83. Cited in Foster, op.cit.
84. "Liberté et Justice Pour Tous", Conference at the University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada, February 1, 1975, author's transcript, p. 11.
85. "Cultural Action for Freedom", in Paulo Freire, LADOC 'Keyhole' Series no. 1, (Washington: USCC, n.d.), p. 49.
86. Ibid., p. 50.
87. Ibid.
88. José de Luca, Situación Social y Liberación, (Cuernavaca: CIDOC Sondeos no. 49, 1969), p. 157.
89. Cf. Harrington, "Religion and Revolution", Commonweal, vol. 91, November 14, 1969, pp. 203-204.

PART THREE

BASIC THEMES AND ISSUES IN THE PROBLEMATIC OF REVOLUTIONARY PEACE

Christianity and the Question of Revolution

What is "Christian" about revolution? For almost two millenia Christians have had no difficulty in answering the opposite question of what is "Christian" about "law and order". Man's universe was architectonic: based on divinely-ordained natural and eternal principles of order. It was one's duty not to question the "why" of things but to obey God and all duly-constituted authority under God. Revolution might be countenanced, if at all, only in the case of a manifest tyranny. But even then there was no question of a social revolution bringing about a new order of things, but rather of a revolt or rebellion against an extreme abuse of the old order -- that is, a corrective action based on the past not the future. Today, however, divine justifications of the legitimacy of the state are becoming both less relevant and less credible. In many areas of the Third World, such as those represented by Helder Câmara, large numbers of Christians are arguing that it is their duty, not to submit to the present order, but to overthrow it. Are they answering our opening question by claiming divine justification for revolution itself?

Jacques Ellul in his book Violence thinks so. He is contemptuous of Christians who make themselves out to be

"true" revolutionaries as if Christianity existed only to consecrate the revolutionary act. Unfortunately the transition from an establishment Christianity obsessed with questions of legitimacy, to an iconoclastic Christianity, equally obsessed with questions of justice and freedom, is so great that it is easier to set straw men alight than to engage in serious analysis. Radical Christian intellectuals, too, have played into the hands of their critics by indulging in loose rhetoric. For example, in a generally excellent series of articles on Christianity and revolution in La Revue Nouvelle /-28:4, pp. 393-428, the opening subtitle translates as "Revolution: a new idea in the Christian world". What then are we to make of the long history of messianic anarcho-communism among millennial sects, or Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch's characterization of Thomas Münzer as a "theologian of revolution"? To be sure, Christianity, as an official institution has long had a fetish for security, power, and prestige. Bloch himself notes how Luther, having inspired Münzer and his peasant army, later turns against them with remarkable viciousness. By contrast, today it is the established churches, notably the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America, which are leading the way in calling for radical social and political change. The issue, therefore, is not of the novelty of the idea of revolution in the Christian tradition, but of a change in the basic Christian attitude toward revolution.

In Latin America such a change was signalled in 1963

in an important group of articles on "Revolution in Latin America" in the Chilean Jesuit monthly Mensaje. The accompanying editorial outlined the movement from the notion of a moral and spiritual "revolution" wrought by Christian righteousness, to that of a "Christianization" of the revolutionary process (e.g., the social gospel of "applied Christianity"), to, finally, a definition of Christian mission as including within it an orientation toward revolution. Resistance to the "forces of darkness" and the "powers and principalities" of the world has always been a fundamental part of Christian teaching. However, this resistance was almost totally spiritualized and privatized by a pervasive neo-platonist theological dualism (body/spirit, natural/supernatural) in the churches.

In chapter one I pointed to the significance of Bonhoeffer's act of martyrdom as a prelude to a political theology. In Hitler's Germany it was Bonhoeffer's prophetic vision that the time had come to proclaim the mature Christian as he who would assume responsibility for his modern, secular world, even in the face of seemingly omnipresent evil: as he who would not retreat into the transcendentalism or solipsism, but struggle realistically against sin and death, and every negation of the human. As Christians began to rediscover the social and structural dimensions of evil (e.g., systemic injustice and oppression) they also became aware of the radical insufficiency of personal conversion. It has been in this sense, and this sense alone, that the Christian mission to the world could

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come to be conceived as a call to revolutionary change -- social and political, as well as personal, conversion -- within the world.

Our opening question was therefore improper. There is nothing Christian about revolution because Christianity has no blueprint for revolution, nor does it sanctify revolution in general or any revolution in particular. It is rather a question of what is revolutionary about Christianity. Still, Christians must deal with the world as it is, and revolutionary movements as they are. The practical necessity for ideological choices leads Ellul to retort: "For a Christian to say that it is love of justice or love of the poor that prompts him to participate in such movements /e.g. Christians For Socialism in Chile under Allende/ is hypocrisy. The first rule for a Christian is truthfulness. If he freely admits that his participation is based not on Christian but on purely humane considerations, then I am content and have no more to say." /Violence, p. 69./ It would appear from the above that love of justice and of the poor are not humane considerations, or that Christian love and ordinary human love are mutually exclusive! The Christian qua Christian is reduced to loving his neighbor only "spiritually".

I have introduced Ellul's dogmatic and absurd objections to Christians identifying with revolutionary politics at this point only because he, like Dom Helder, speaks of a "spiritual violence" of Christians oriented toward peace. But Dom Helder, in diametrical opposition to

Ellul, bases his concept of peace, not on dualistic fallacies, (e.g., "spiritual" versus "humane" love) but on a call to structural revolution. It is important therefore that such fallacies be laid to rest at the outset so that the serious issues of Christian involvement in modern revolution can be examined with a minimum of prior misconceptions.

I have divided the discussion into three parts: the way, the logic, and the ends of revolution. In the first part I consider the question of violence versus non-violence in terms of the relation of revolutionary ends to revolutionary means. In the second I acknowledge the belief of almost all contemporary Christian radicals, including Dom Helder, that Marxism is still the most important secular philosophy of revolution and vehicle for revolutionary change. This belief raises a number of thorny questions both at the theoretical level and having to do with the grounds for a Christian-Marxist praxis. Finally, I approach the ultimate ends of the revolutionary process bearing in mind the tension between, on the one hand, development as a 'building up' and the church as in fact an established institution within existing social systems, and, on the other hand, liberation as a 'breaking down' and the church as in theory a critico-prophetic community. Moreover, if revolution, whether violent or nonviolent, is a liberation from sinful social structures, does this imply, conversely, the development of social structures of salvation? The question of the meaning of Christian salvation for political

liberation must be squarely faced if the integral political and religious imperative of "revolution through peace" is to be understood as more than simply a return to an outdated messianic ideal.

SECTION 3.1 THE WAY OF REVOLUTION

CHAPTER SIX

FAITH AND RESISTANCE: WHAT FORM THE STRUGGLE?

The most common criticism of nonviolent movements is that they are not sufficiently "realistic". But what of the implied assumption about the realism of violence? Dom Helder constantly warns against being naive as to what the resort to violence can achieve.¹ To put one's faith in violence is to indicate one's lack of faith in the capacity of human beings to change. And he insists: "Violence cannot plant roots, it doesn't change mentalities."² Dom Helder does not resent being called quixotic for his unshakeable stand in favor of a peaceful path to revolution. Any authentic revolution, he argues, must begin first in the hearts and minds of the masses: that is, it must overcome their spiritual underdevelopment (i.e., fatalism, resignation) through politicization and 'conscientization'. Moreover, as Rosemary Ruether points out: "For him, the violence of the ruling class and its North American supporters is so harsh and terrible that any use of it by the revolutionaries will bring a blood bath far greater than the good that the revolutionaries could hope to achieve."³ So it is not radical nonviolence, but 'focismo' and the creation of "many Vietnams" which is the romantic illusion --

"... I have no interest at all in causing a war to break out, even a war of liberation, if I am convinced that it would be immediately crushed.

And I have another reason. The revolution will not be fought either by the students or the

priests or the artists or the intellectuals; it will be fought by the masses, the oppressed, and they will be the victims of that repressive action of the powers.

... Very often in Latin America the masses have risen in revolt only to die and cause others to die They have no real reasons to live.

It seems to me that in the next ten or fifteen years there will be no possibility of mobilizing the masses for a war of liberation.⁴

Dom Helder is adamant in rejecting any New Left cult of violent revolution or Fanonian pseudo-logic whereby violence 'per se' can become a redeeming force in the lives of men. He disputes the naive realism of the former in which violence is a structural necessity,⁵ and the faith of the latter in which it is also a psychic necessity. Violence is neither a necessary evil nor a necessary good because of itself it can achieve nothing except more violence -- 'As you sow, so shall you reap'. What is important therefore is to seek the 'conscientization' of men rather than their destruction. Fanon, of course, might respond that violence itself can be an instrument of 'conscientization' -- i.e., that the redemptive power of violence lies not in destruction as such but in the concomitant capacity for creation and even education:

At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect

Violence alone, violence committed by the people, violence organized and educated by its leaders, makes it possible for the masses to understand social truths and gives the key to them.⁶

Dom Helder clearly does not accept such a psychology or pedagogy of the masses. Freire himself, however, is more

ambiguous in his elaboration of the theory of 'conscientization'. Although his references to revolutionary violence are extremely rare and resolutely abstract, they do not appear to rule out the possibility of a liberating, humanizing violence:

Violence is initiated by those who oppress, who exploit, who fail to recognize others as persons -- not by those who are oppressed, exploited and unrecognized And yet, paradoxical though it may seem, it is precisely in the response of the oppressed to the violence of their oppressors that a gesture of love may be found. Consciously or unconsciously, the act of rebellion by the oppressed (an act that is always, or nearly always, just as violent as the initial violence of the oppressors) can lead to love As the oppressed, fighting to be human, take away the oppressors' power to dominate, they restore to the oppressors the humanity these latter had lost in the exercise of oppression.⁷

Dom Helder, like Freire, does not condemn the violence of the oppressed and beyond that expresses admiration for the example of Che Guevara and Camilo Torres. Freire is perhaps less sanguine about the prospects for a peaceful change of structures, although he too remains generally skeptical about the consequences of violent action. Where there is a significant break between Freire and Dom Helder is in the exclusive means apparently demanded by the latter's paradigm of humanization. This wholesale rejection of violence by Dom Helder raises questions about his concept of violence as discriminating among its various forms with respect to source and intention (e.g. revolutionary/counter-revolutionary), but apparently refusing to discriminate with respect to consequences. Is violence being convicted on circumstantial evidence -- i.e., that a war of liberation

would be crushed -- or is it being disallowed on 'a priori' philosophical grounds?

There is an unresolved tension in Dom Helder's thought at this point. In an interview published in 1970 he indicated that guerilla warfare was "legitimate but impossible". He went on to explain that: "My position in this regard is not based on religious motives, but on tactical ones. It isn't based on any idealism, but on a realistic, purely political sense I never have said that using weapons against oppressors is immoral or un-Christian. But that is not my way, not my choice."⁸ However, in a clarification "My Exact Position Concerning Violence" circulated in Recife in the same year he was emphatic that the choice for nonviolence must involve more than tactics, and he has since maintained that "the only possible and valid violence is the violence of the peacemakers."⁹ (This latter expression comes from the book of Roger Schutz, Prior of Taizé; Violence des Pacifiques.) "I call it violence," says Dom Helder, "because it won't settle for trivial reforms but calls for a complete revolution of the present structures, on socialist bases and without the shedding of blood."¹⁰ Nonetheless, it remains unclear whether the "violence of the peaceful" is only the best means to this end or whether it is in principle tied to a philosophical pacifism.

When I asked Dom Helder about this he simply responded that oppressive structures based on established violence can never be changed by using the same methods as the oppressors: "Is it tactics? It is. It is a question

for me of intelligence. I believe in the force of love, in the force of justice; of ideas,"¹¹ Yet what if the oppressors do not use arms, but rather propaganda and political means to maintain themselves in power? Dom Helder seems to argue that any means used for oppression become thereby instruments of violence (the end is determinative), but he does not acknowledge the logical inference that any means used for liberation should become in the same way nonviolent, insofar as liberation seeks an end to the injustice which Dom Helder himself defines as the root of all violence. We shall return to this implicit contradiction later. As for nonviolence as a Christian imperative Dom Helder replies: "I do not have the right to say 'this is the real interpretation of the gospel, the only interpretation of the gospel'. But more and more as I am reading the gospel it becomes evident that the great force of the gospel is the force of love."¹² Again, however, this formulation does not acknowledge the question of whether love is simply an end or whether it is also necessarily an exclusive means. In sum, Dom Helder's approach to violence is a unique mixture of realism and a particular philosophy of moral action, in which the former is introduced not on its own terms, but in order to complement, or more precisely, to defend the latter. This is well-illustrated in the following remarks from his famous 1968 address "Violence - The Only Way?";

... We christians are on the side of non-violence, which is by no means a choice of weakness or passivity. Non-violence means believing more passionately in the force of truth, justice and love than in the force of wars, murder and hatred.

If this appears to be mere moralising, be patient a moment. If the option for non-violence has its roots in the gospel, it is also based on reality. You ask me to be realistic? Here is my answer: If an explosion of violence should occur anywhere in the world, and especially in Latin America, you may be sure that the great powers would be immediately on the spot -- even without a declaration of war -- the super-powers would arrive and we would have another Vietnam. You ask for more realism? Precisely because we have to achieve a structural revolution it is essential to plan in advance a 'cultural revolution' -- but in a new sense. For if mentalities do not undergo a radical change then structural reforms, reforms from the base, will remain at the theoretical stage, ineffective.¹³

Dom Helder makes a strong case for regarding the results of violence as frequently counter-productive. However his equation of ends such as "cultural revolution" with non-violent means is suspect. For example, as he himself admits in Spiral of Violence, it might be virtually impossible to carry out a programme of 'conscientization' in a police state. Would political revolution -- violence directed against the repressive power of the regime -- not then be a necessary pre-requisite for popular education to take place? At the very least there are not adequate grounds for drawing the conclusion that violent means can never be effectively revolutionary, even accepting that such means inherently include certain negative aspects, a point on which Dom Helder is unequivocal. Clearly it is more difficult to establish the superiority of nonviolent to violent means on the grounds of efficacy than on purely moral grounds. What, therefore, are Dom Helder's reasons for believing the way of peace to be the more realistic path to authentic revolution?

Asked whether nonviolence is really not rather ineffectual, Dom Helder usually responds: "On the contrary, I think of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. I am convinced that they were both subjected to violent deaths precisely because of the success of their nonviolent leadership. Nonviolence is in the long run strong. Violence is weak."¹⁴ Nonviolence, therefore, must be judged within the context of concrete engagement in a political struggle. It must go beyond a mere philosophical aversion to violence to become a strategy for action aimed at radical change. As William Sloane Coffin put it: "Non-violence has nothing to do with passivity; it has everything to do with resistance."¹⁵ Speaking of his own movement of "liberating moral pressure" launched across Brazil in 1968 Dom Helder warned: "If Action for Justice and Peace does not set itself up as a sign of contradiction, if it does not sow doubts, if it does not arouse great devotion and provoke hatred, then it is preparing its funeral."¹⁶ But there is a "catch 22" in this, of which Dom Helder is agonizingly aware. Nonviolent movements may well mobilize popular discontent, but they have no recourse when repression sets in. The movement in question died a quick death precisely because it did all of the above things! Given that its birth coincided with the most turbulent and also most extreme phase of the dictatorship, was it not only academic as to which would survive?

Dom Helder is intensely conscious of the difficulties which official censorship and abrogation or suspension of civil rights poses for the viability of nonviolent forms of

resistance. In fact, in Spiral of Violence he does not spare the reader a long list of seemingly impossible obstacles to be overcome.¹⁷ Such obstacles are particularly severe with respect to the military regimes of South America, since any sort of public education campaign is liable to be labelled as "subversive". However, it is also difficult to imagine truly fundamental changes occurring in a peaceful manner in authoritarian societies or even so-called liberal capitalist ones. Dom Helder is especially concerned about the manipulative technocratic systems of multinational enterprises with their ready access to state bureaucracies, the mass media, and electoral processes. He does not claim to have any answers, but only suggestions. These encompass for the most part techniques of citizen advocacy and the organization of basic communities ('comunidades de base') to carry on the struggle for human rights. He gives the example of small groups of young people buying shares in large corporations in order to have a platform from which to force both managers and shareholders to face issues of profit-making at the expense of the crushing of human beings. However, as a recent Canadian example demonstrated,¹⁸ moral appeals will inevitably fall by the wayside to the extent that it is not "bad people" as such, but basic politico-economic structures, which govern investment policies in the Third World.

The populist strategy of the "abrahamic minorities" to 'conscientize' both elites and masses seems to be caught between the Scylla of reform and the Charybdis of repression

-- embourgeoisement on the one hand and censorship on the other.¹⁹ Still Dom Helder refuses to give up his overriding faith in moral force, because he believes so strongly in the latent power of ideas. His strategy of education for justice and peace rests in the final analysis on the premise that truth is liberating in itself in that it compels acceptance by reasonable men. As Pat Leonard correctly notes: "He has always held a Thomistic faith in the persuasive power of rational argument."²⁰ The most salient weakness of this approach is that in not taking account of structural conditioning it affords no non-subjective ground for elaborating a revolutionary political strategy. In fairness though, short of a new clericalism, it could never be the role of the church to transform itself into a surrogate party. As a man of the church Dom Helder would agree that the proper "catholic" realm of action for the church is the "superstructural", para-political one of a mass-oriented 'conscientization'.

The theory of nonviolence stands in radical opposition to deterministic views of action. It posits an autonomy of the will, a sphere of personal responsibility and ethical action in which the public assertion of truth becomes in itself a revolutionary act. Man can break with natural and social conditioning because knowledge can be a subversive force. In an address entitled "The Violence of Technique and the Technique of Non-Violence" Dom Helder argues that the use of knowledge as a form of power in the interests of the powerful can be countered by the courageous

exposure of the manipulation of knowledge for power.²¹ In this sense the leaking of the Pentagon papers by Daniel Ellsberg -- who becomes part of an "abrahamic minority" within the system -- has had more far-reaching effects than all the acts of violence committed by the Weathermen.

The appropriate response to propaganda in the service of oppression is education in the service of liberation. Freire in Pedagogy of the Oppressed sets up a dialogical praxis in which the word of truth becomes the "practice of freedom" in much the same way as in the religious sphere, the liberating Word of God sets man free from the power of sin and death. Knowing, defined as a human praxis -- that is, defined as an act of will, as including personal interaction with the object to be known, in contrast to empiricist and positivist theories of knowledge -- means that dialectical-critical knowing constitutes a revolutionary praxis. The consequences of a conversion to truth are revolutionary.

It is on the above basis that a dialogue even with the oppressors should be theoretically possible. "For," as Michel de Certeau points out, "the police and the military themselves need to believe, or to believe that they believe, in the meaningfulness (order, the fatherland, etc.) of the repression which they carry out in the service of a power. In touching this nerve-point, nonviolent strategies become also, what is more important, laboratories in which to experiment with the means by which a group is motivated in order to control the systems of power."²² To the extent

that the 'conscientizing' technique of nonviolence challenges the consciences of the oppressors and undermines their belief systems it may perhaps sow doubts and anxieties which will later bear fruit in change without bloodshed. By contrast, direct counter-violence by the oppressed can only elicit one response: repressive violence. If, however, non-violent methods also meet only with this reaction we are back to the problem of whether 'conscientization' is not a precondition for political revolution, but rather vice versa.

One of the major difficulties with nonviolence conceived as 'conscientization' is that it is often too abstract to serve as a guide to specific political action. For example, Freire's "motor of history" seldom descends below the poetic images of a negative dialectic of being and becoming in which the 'not yet' is existentially affirmed by its absence. He writes: "... while both humanization and dehumanization are real alternatives, only the first is man's vocation. This vocation is constantly negated, yet it is affirmed by that very negation. It is thwarted by injustice, exploitation, oppression, and the violence of the oppressors; it is affirmed by the yearning of the oppressed for freedom and justice, and by their struggle to recover their lost humanity."²³ The dialectical purity of this diehard conviction may strengthen the souls of the revolutionaries, but it is likely to be cold comfort for the victims of oppression who can see no tangible prospects for shaking off their powerless condition. A number of French writers have explored the usefulness of nonviolent techniques within a

more orthodox context of class struggle and combatting class enemies,²⁴ but in principle the theory of nonviolence seems to be given to a more symbolic than pragmatic approach to political struggle.

This is particularly evident in Dom Helder's perspective of nonviolence in which the intervention of religious symbols is of decisive importance to the viability of the proposed strategies for change. Responding to criticisms such as those outlined above he writes: "Very vague? Too vague? God, who loves peace and knows that it is the fruit of justice, will help men of good will. His Spirit will breathe over the earth as he breathed over the waters at the beginning of creation."²⁵ In one of his radio addresses he asserts: "By the power received from God, there is no impossible, or never for Man".²⁶ Total faith in God engenders total faith in man such that he who renounces himself by making of himself a receptacle for God's will, becomes thereby an agent of revolutionary transformation among his fellow men. It is important to note that in this conception of the principle of revolution as selfless love, the efficiency of obtaining "results" bears no relation to any actual capture of power. Indeed, in Resistance and Contemplation James Douglass argues that the full strength of liberating truth can only be expressed through nonviolent action precisely because liberation (in its authentic, Christian sense) is not the violent transfer of power but the nonviolent liberation from power itself, or rather, from all power that is not power for man but power over man.²⁷

The first step in the revolutionary process is therefore the personal one of self-purification which forces a break with the world of necessity and its ways of violence and revenge. This is also the burden of the following series of questions posed by Thomas Merton in Faith and Violence:

Is faith a narcotic dream in a world of heavily-armed robbers, or is it an awakening?

Is faith a convenient nightmare in which we are attacked and obliged to destroy our attackers?

What if we awaken to discover that we are the robbers, and our destruction comes from the root of hate in ourselves?

Merton's close friends, the Berrigan brothers, exemplify the symbolic politics of nonviolence which combines a neo-Augustinian view of the present state of affairs as "inexpressibly evil" (the phrases of Mounier and Dom Helder such as "reign of force", "established disorder", and "institutionalized violence" could also be placed in this category), with a view of revolution as political love -- the acting out of sacrificial love in the public arena -- which stands Augustine on his head. Augustine accepted the human condition as violent and concluded that the civic virtue was obedience; the Berrigans confront that condition and for them political virtue lies in resistance. But for both freedom, that elusive object of all revolutions, is not fundamentally something political: for Augustine it is apolitical; for the Berrigans it is in fact antipolitical -- as much liberation from the world of politics and necessity as anything else. The Berrigans would often berate their sympathizers for their "hang-ups" about efficiency. As Daniel Berrigan once explained:

"The New Left suffers from American pragmatism. It fights violence with the tools of violence. I fight it with the Ghandian and Christian dimensions of non-violence. They measure effectiveness by pragmatic results, I see it as immeasurable, as the impact of symbolic action. The New Left only stresses political activity, I would like to be more classical and Greek, I am like Socrates choosing jail, choosing the ideal."30

For the Berrigans the 'ideal' is operationalized not through politics or philosophy, but through faith -- the faith which demands of sinful men that they become "fools for Christ". When asked whether an act of resistance with no direct political consequences was not in fact counter-productive (in that it simply attracted more repression without ever attacking its source), typically their reply would be:

"Of course it had not been a useful act, a political act. Too many people were hung up on usefulness these days. If you're useful, you know, you become disposable How useful were the acts of the Martyrs? How many martyrs ever had any political programs for reforming society? Since politics weren't working anyway, one had to find an act beyond politics: a religious act, a liturgical act, an act of witness. If only a small number of men / Dom Helder's "abrahamic minorities"? / would offer this kind of witness, it would purify the world."31

The political naiveté of faith becomes in a sense the incorruptible strength of the Christian approach to revolution. Moreover, political freedom is not an externally-determined state (as, for example, in structuralist Marxism) but a personalized act of revolutionary (anti-political) catharsis which has its source in the inner potency of human will. Revolution, itself, is transmogrified into an almost mystical, one is tempted to say liturgical, event. This

supremely unorthodox and humanistic character of the 'modus operandi' of nonviolent revolution is summed up by James Douglass:

The Way, however, is not effective. It is free. Jesus lived and died for no self-determined end but to fulfill the Father's will at the center of his being The Way is free because it is a way not of technique and self but of openness and Being Being is one. Those who live in its Way are radically free through the gift of themselves in Being's fundamental act of self-emptying love Those who live in the Way are the givers and receivers of freedom because they realize the self-denying, self-fulfilling truth that the purpose of freedom is to create it for others.³²

To the extent that Dom Helder is a "symbolic man" and the "embodiment of prophetism" he echoes many of the above themes. Consequently, in the final analysis it is difficult to assess his defense of the realism of nonviolence because he founds his criterion of revolutionary efficacy ultimately not on measurable political change, but on religious faith. So far, therefore, we have no clear empirical grounds for choosing nonviolence over violence. Dom Helder's argument that violence can never produce anything good ends up as no more than an unproved philosophical axiom. Violent means simply by definition lead only to violent ends. But he also speaks of a "violence of the peacemakers" which bears at least a strong superficial resemblance to the spiritualistic violence advocated by Ellul. Ellul, however, as noted in the introduction to this section, bases his conception on a traditional theological dualism and a dogmatic political conservatism. The semantical similarities are obviously belied by contradictory theological

and political philosophies.

The problem with Dom Helder's perspective on violence becomes more apparent when contrasted with that of Ellul. Ellul begins with the neo-Augustinian, Christian "realist" view of violence as an intrinsic part of the human condition and of the exercise of political power. He outlines a number of laws of violence whereby it is declared to be monolithic, capable of producing only more violence, amoral, always intense, given to self-justification and hypocrisy.³³ By the same token violence in politics cannot be avoided so the Christian is obliged not to fight against human "nature", but to suffer with and comfort poor mortal men as they make their way in the earthly city. For Ellul as for Dom Helder, seeking peace is the definitive form of Christian radicalism, but there is a huge difference between a pacifism which resigns itself to the fact of violence and one which acknowledges that fact in order to resist it. Ellul's spiritual violence is pure opium. Eventually he concludes: "Violence and revolution -- let them continue! But without the presence and justification of Christians"; adding ritualistically: "This does not mean, however, that Christians are permitted to execrate or judge those who do take part in violence and revolution."³⁴

This incredible assertion is clearly directly opposed to the position of Dom Helder. Ellul appears not to discriminate between violence and revolution, but in fact he does so in a way which is totally the reverse of that to be found in Dom Helder. Ellul, with his Weberian-Augustinian

view of the state (the territorial "monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force") is only prepared to grant a measure of legitimacy to the violence of the established order. Revolutionary counter-violence is therefore never justified because institutionalized violence is in the nature of things. On the contrary, Dom Helder asserts that the "violence number one" is the historical outcome of structural injustice. It is this established, structural violence, not revolutionary violence, which must not only be subject to moral judgement on the part of Christians, but publicly condemned and resisted.³⁵

For Dom Helder the object of Christian peace is the overthrow, not the tolerance, of false orders based on violence. Peace is "violent" because it seeks a structural revolution on socialist bases. Dom Helder's Christian political philosophy of "revolution through peace" enunciates a transition from the unjust pseudo-order in which politics has become extraneous to the legitimate (sic) violence of the status quo (i.e., the function of the state is to maintain the stability of the social system, with political participation, or, if necessary, without it), to the just order of a socialist society in which violence has become extraneous to politics.³⁶ In short, nonviolent revolution is fundamentally an end and not a means, because it refers to a struggle against established violence rather than a doctrinaire disavowal of the use of violence. Moreover, it is the end which determines the means, not vice versa; any means, when used for violent ends (e.g., injustice,

exploitation) cannot be said to be truly nonviolent, and conversely, when, in exceptional or extreme circumstances the use of violence may be the only way to achieve a non-violent end, it can be said to constitute a means of nonviolence.

This is the logical conclusion of Dom Helder's own position, and his failure to acknowledge it as such leads to a basic problematic in his concept of revolutionary peace -- namely, the tying of peace defined as a revolutionary end to peace defined as an exclusive means. Most of the contentious or unresolved points in Dom Helder's remarks on the subject of violence are related to this problematic. To begin, it is simply not true that violence never begets anything good. If this were the case, notes J.G. Davies, Christians would be at a loss to interpret the crucifixion!³⁷ However, this is not the most important fact about the ambivalence of violence. The crucial point is that violence as a means has a potential for both good and evil, and therefore it is only when it becomes a selfish end in itself -- as when one seeks to "do violence" to others out of hatred or greed -- that it stands under absolute judgement. Violence becomes sin, as Ignacio Ellacuría points out, in the context of injustice, and this injustice may be so grave as to require extreme remedies including the use of force.³⁸ So, paradoxically, the redemption of a situation of violence may require, if necessary, resort to force. In effect, force is only a potency which, although it may by its very nature involve risks and dangers, cannot in itself be good or evil.

until directed toward a nonviolent or a violent end.

A similar position is implied by Rubem Alves' definition of violence as the "power of defuturization" which objectifies and dehistoricizes man.³⁹ Again, as so often occurs in contemporary Christian radicalism, Alves uses the resources of Christian realism -- in this case Augustine and Niebuhr on self-love and the will to power -- to arrive at startlingly different conclusions. Realism means for Alves that the self-aggrandizing politics of the "reign of force" is an objective fact of man's history, but not, inherently, of his "nature". This politics is "the politics of fear of the future, the politics of the preservation of the yesterday and of the abortion of the future."⁴⁰ But it is not the politics of Christians because they know that "fallen" nature (and implicitly its politics of violence and egoism) has been redeemed by the cross of Christ and thereby freed for a new history. If the sin of violence is the "negative in history" then "God's politics" is the "negation of the negative": "... peace with God means a 'sword' for the world -- the permanent judgement and rejection of the untruth of what is, for the sake of a new tomorrow of reconciliation and liberation."⁴¹ The important thing is not that violence be avoided but that it be resisted, by whatever means which the situation demands.

That such an approach is often mistakenly regarded as a form of "situation ethics" is attributed by Juan Luis Segundo to simplistic Christian phenomenologies of violence which falsely assume a strict dichotomy between love and the use of force. To set up a dualism between the force of love and the

force of arms (i.e., physical coercion), as Dom Helder appears to do, is as suspect as to set up an absolute disjunction between spirit and matter, creation and destruction. Insofar as love must realize itself in the real historical world it cannot be spiritualized into impotence. Violence -- understood in the psychological sense of an elemental natural force or 'daimonic',⁴² -- is an integral part of all life and all love.⁴³ As Rollo May explains in Love and Will, the relation of love to the daimonic is that of a dialectical union of good and evil, creativity and destructiveness.⁴⁴ Indeed, if the Christian virtues of 'agape' and compassion are not regarded as manichean absolutes, it is extremely likely that they will express themselves in daimonic forms. (On the social significance of this point Hannah Arendt makes a perceptive comment in On Revolution: "As a rule, it is not compassion which sets out to change worldly conditions in order to ease human suffering, but if it does, it will shun the drawn-out wearisome processes of persuasion, negotiation, and compromise, which are the processes of law and politics, and lend its voice to the suffering itself, which must claim for swift and direct action, that is for action with the means of violence."⁴⁵)

Violence in the sense of the aggressive power of the daimonic can be of great positive value in counteracting the socio-historical institutionalization of violence -- Dom Helder's "violence number one" -- because structural violence is in fact a repression of the daimonic: it is the violence

of "defuturization", of alienation, and of domination leading to a situation of powerlessness. The daimonic, therefore, cannot be left out of any discussion of "revolution through peace", understanding that as the real-life struggle for a liberation from violence. This is how Leonard Biallas sees May's contribution:

Rollo May, in addition to alleviating violence and evil through recognition of the daimonic, emphasized the positive role of the rebel in channelling daimonic forces in constructive directions and the need for a fusion of power and love in compassion

Perhaps the rebel will have to be violent. In a society where many are powerless, violence or aggression performs the constructive function of redistributing and sharing the power for self-affirmation and self-assertion. It can be life-giving rather than life-destroying.⁴⁶

The circumstances of oppression and unfreedom dictate that the union of love and the daimonic is historically necessary, even though it remains volatile and dangerous. Ellacuría warns that when aggressiveness is "hominized but not humanized" it leads to diabolical power. This means that the established violence of injustice is always evil, that is diabolical.. But it does not follow that the counter-violence of righteousness is absolutely good, because it retains within it the moral ambiguity of humanized aggressiveness, that is, the daimonic.⁴⁷ The nature of violence is such that its use always entails grave risks. That is undoubtedly why Dom Helder's search for revolution through peace is predicated on the ideal of a politics without violence, and of a society in which the motivation to resort to violence has been minimized if not eliminated. But, and this is the crucial point, as long as such a society of

perfect love (presumably without classes, egoism, law, etc.) does not exist, violence as a means of redress cannot be ruled out.

Segundo, in Evolution and Guilt, offers the following perspective: "In the last analysis violence is a simplistic form of social synthesis that fits in with primitive situations. But such situations can be maintained and even re-created by man's poor handling of evolution. To say that violence does not construct anything durable is a monumental historical error -- as is the notion that violence suffices to solve human problems at every stage."⁴⁸ Man, in other words, is neither naturally depraved (condemned to violence and necessity) nor naturally good (condemned to perfection and the ideal!), but a fallible being who has the capacity to learn from failures, and is enjoined to constantly strive for higher levels of existence. Man is a historical, sinful creature, who, precisely because he seeks new possibilities to replace violence with love, must be mindful of the fact that "the most efficacious love is not a love that avoids occasions of harming others; it is a love that moves evolution forward and leads it toward more human forms and structures of life."⁴⁹ To be realistic about the liberation from violence is therefore to be realistic about love.

"Violence is neither Christian nor evangelical." It is the inevitable remnant of the hominization /evolutionary/ process which makes love possible; and which, insofar as is possible, desires to be replaced slowly and gradually by love. Once again: God does not dictate from outside of history in terms of some love-hate dichotomy.

He lived both, indissolubly tied together in his incarnation. And he taught to give us life, so that love might guide and correct and eventually overcome violence. When the God who is Love became man, he revealed himself as love in history. And, like any and all love in history, it sought fulfillment in the best possible proportion between its two inescapable components: violence and personal acknowledgement.⁵⁰

Segundo's insights about "efficacious love" can be integrated profitably into our earlier discussion of the relation of means to ends. It should now be clear that historical love cannot be realistically separated from the means whereby history may have to be created, that is, from the use of force. Violence is un-Christian, not because it is an immoral means, but because the ultimate end of Christianity is to replace violence with love. Christian morality has always been a morality of ends.⁵¹ (Stealing to prevent starvation and killing in self-defense⁵² are two classic examples of the justification of violence against property and against persons.) Means, in themselves, can have only instrumental value. The morality of means is contingent on the morality of the ends in view. Therefore, Segundo states bluntly, the end must justify the means! This is not a "situation ethics" but a "contextual ethics" in which means become moral or immoral only in relation to the total circumstances governing their employment.⁵³ There is no question of any end justifying any means or of any opening for Machiavellism or revenge.⁵⁴ Moreover, a good end does not justify any means, only whatever means necessary. It would be as wrong to absolutize ends (as in the sort of rationalistic historicism which justifies any and every

atrocities) as to absolutize means.⁵⁵ With respect to the latter we have already seen that: "By falsely assuming that love possesses its own exclusive means, real-life love ties its own hands and stops up the very source of its energy."⁵⁶ In other words, the imperative of love demands a relativity of means. With respect to the former, moral judgements about ends must be conditioned by total circumstances -- that is, how an end may be achieved is not indifferent to the final ethical valuation of the course of action in which it is inscribed -- bearing in mind the time-honored proviso of Christian morality that "necessity knows no law".⁵⁷

The ethical and theological discussion of necessary or permissible grounds for a recourse to violence must not, however, be the occasion for a reversion to the rarefied casuistry of the past, as in the debates on the "just war", but rather situated in the concrete context of the urgency of defending human dignity at a time when exploitation is taking place on a massive, systemic scale. Self-justification is less important than resisting evil, and the anti-human; equivocation over the "how" of resistance can never be an excuse for inaction.

This sense of the necessity of immediate, decisive action is characteristic of all recent radical analyses of violence and revolution, and is especially pronounced among those originating in Latin America. Indeed, it is claimed that the situation of Latin America is itself one of necessity, thereby opening the door to extreme responses.

Moreover, this necessity is not "natural" -- that is, the conjunction of violence and necessity being referred to is not at all that supposed by post-Malthusian ideologies of scarcity. Rather, necessity is conceived as operating on primarily two levels, both of which are structural and historical (and therefore redeemable): the more general one is the "institutionalized violence" defined by Dom Helder as characterizing the global context in which the Third World finds itself; the specific, and far more controversial one, is the class struggle. The question being posed at both levels is how does the force of love become efficacious love -- that is, realize itself concretely under these acute conditions? Let us begin with the more specific context.

Gustavo Gutierrez in his seminal Theology of Liberation provides a basic reference point for the radical re-evaluation of the relation of Christian love to class conflict:

The universality of Christian love is only an abstraction unless it becomes concrete history, process, conflict; it is arrived at only through particularity. To love all men does not mean ... preserving a fictitious harmony. Universal love is that which in solidarity with the oppressed seeks also to liberate the oppressors from their own powers, One loves the oppressors by liberating them from their inhuman condition as oppressors, by liberating them from themselves In the context of the class struggle today, to love one's enemies presupposes recognizing and accepting that one has class enemies and that it is necessary to combat them To participate in class struggle not only is not opposed to universal love; this commitment is today the necessary and inescapable means of making this love concrete.⁵⁸

Love of enemies, therefore, means that an objective situation of evil must exist to be proclaimed, resisted and ultimately

redeemed.⁵⁹ But does this imply violence against the structural evil embodied by the class structure, even to the point of killing members of the oppressing class? The response would seem to have to be in the affirmative in that reconciliation at the level of classes inevitably involves a dialectic between power and powerlessness which is objective not subjective.

The oppressors are as unfree as their victims, but it is only the latter, by virtue of their objective class position, who are really historically capable of creating new possibilities for freedom. John Seeley remarks that: "Power in the absence of deep and well-grounded conviction as to its proper use [e.g. in the service of man rather than for his enslavement] is probably more productive of the sense of impotence than is lack of power itself."⁶⁰ The power of the oppressors is impotent; it is not free for history. This impotence, as noted earlier, is the suppression and repression of the daimonic which leads to social violence. Liberation from such violence means a liberation of the daimonic: the power which has become impotent to create must be destroyed by the daimonic in order that its power to create be restored. It is difficult to imagine this occurring without power being taken away from the oppressors by force.

The inescapable contradiction is that although the power and dialectic in question are not personal but structural, the destruction of oppressive power may entail the destruction of persons. The dilemma for Christians is that the exigencies of efficacious love may require them to

participate in that destruction. Revolutionaries, unlike martyrs and mercenaries, are intent only on destroying structures of injustice, not themselves or others. But in a world of violence revolutionary love cannot escape the tragedy of its historical situation. If it is true that: "All killing is by definition de-humanizing";⁶¹ in the circumstances of the real world, never to kill may be even more so. History has never been made in accordance with abstract, ethical definitions.⁶² Not only must the conventional biblical admonition "hate evil but love the evildoer" be amended to read "love the evildoer by hating evil"; but hating an evil which has become objectified in history demands in turn the historical embodiment of love in concrete form --

... real hatred of objectified sin can lead to an active rather than a merely passive clash with those who hold power by virtue of this sinful state. The battle to the death with sin cannot offer any possible limits to love as it engages in the struggle. But the possible identification of the human being with this sin complicates Christian activity to some extent. In the abstract one must seek the conversion of the unjust usurper of power and the restoration of his status as a child of God. But in the concrete one must take due account of the fact that in history the problem is more structural than personal, more tied up with class relationships than interpersonal relationships. In itself class confrontation is not interpersonal confrontation.⁶³

Even though this is true, the antagonisms generated by structural evil do not involve only structures, but also personal choices and personal fates. This is the agonizing fact which honesty demands be faced in any actual revolutionary struggle. As Régis Debray summed up at his trial:

Each one has to decide which side he is on -- on the side of violence that represses or violence that liberates. Crimes in the face of crimes. Which ones do we choose to be jointly responsible for, accomplices or accessories to? You chose certain ones, I chose others, that's all Naturally the tragedy is that we do not kill objects, numbers, abstract or interchangeable instruments, but, precisely, on both sides, irreplaceable individuals, essentially innocent, unique for those who have loved, bred, esteemed them. This is the tragedy of history, of any revolution. It is not individuals that are placed face to face in these battles, but class interests and ideas; but those who fall in them, those who die, are persons, are men. We cannot avoid this contradiction, escape from this pain.⁶⁴

In effect, it is class conflict as a situation of historical necessity which conditions individual responses to injustice and oppression. As Ellacuría notes: "Classes do not exist because there is a conflict; the conflict exists because there are classes."⁶⁵ The Christian task as always is reconciliation: the overcoming and redemption of conflict. Christians then have no choice but to engage in class struggle, because of, not in spite of, the commandment to love all men. This is the conclusion to which the concretization of love leads in the particular context of necessity.

Moving to the global context of "institutionalized violence", the first thing to note is that the transition in scope does not cancel out any of the above considerations. The two levels of necessity are complementary. To speak of "rich nations" and "poor nations" or "rich centres" and "poor peripheries" does not obviate in the least the primary fact of socio-economic exploitation as bound up with the existence of classes. And, moreover, the plane of universal

solidarity, as Gutierrez argues, is created through the reconciling of the particular forces to work in each situation of unjust social division.

Dom Helder's approach, as noted previously, is weak in this regard. Although he places the Christian option unequivocally on the side of the oppressed, his mediating position in the church and his inveterate populism and inordinate faith in the power of education incline his concepts -- whether of nonviolence, the force of love, or 'conscientization' -- to become too abstractly universalistic. In effect, for a variety of personal and ecclesiastical reasons, sincere though they be, he does not sufficiently draw out the conclusions implicit in his own stands. For if "institutionalized violence" necessarily requires a structural revolution, 'conscientization' as a revolutionary means must be a structural as well as a personal dialectic. Class struggle, far from being an alternative to the principles of 'conscientization' and selfless love, is in fact an inevitable part of the total process whereby these principles become historically operational. The universal command of personal conversion to the 'other' must be integrated with an efficacious liberation from egoism at the level of classes and nations. Historical reality -- whether in regard to the necessary conditions for overcoming class domination or the "proletarianization" of the Third World -- means that the conversion of the oppressors may have to be violent. As Ellacuria puts it:

Only by doing radical violence to themselves will those who wield unjust power be able to undergo

conversion and fashion themselves into the new man of Christianity Unfortunately history shows us that if this conversion is difficult on the individual level, it is collectively impossible unless it is forced by the weight of circumstances. The violence of the cross is almost intolerable.

So we are presented with the necessity of exerting force against the unjust will of those who hold power in the oppressive structural setup which crucifies the weak and does not leave room for a truly personal or Christian life.⁶⁶

Dom Helder, it must be remembered, never claims that the sincere use of violence for authentically revolutionary ends is morally wrong or theologically impermissible. Yet he tends to draw an unrealistic dichotomy between the force of love and the use of force, implying that the former is the definitive Christian means. As Segundo makes clear, however, there is no such thing, and, moreover the essential criterion of the imperative of love is that it become historically efficacious. The rejection of violence -- that is, nonviolence -- insofar as it is Christian, is an end not a means. Here Ellacuría introduces the core category of the "redemption of violence". Since violence cannot be avoided it must be confronted at every level.⁶⁷ What is Christian about participation in revolution or class struggle is not any legalistic commitment to nonviolent means -- because, after all, at the level of means nonviolence only proscribes certain courses of action without imposing any creative obligations -- but rather a historical commitment to nonviolent ends, something which is actually far more demanding.⁶⁸

Dom Helder's position is ambiguous because his statements about nonviolent revolution as an absolute

Christian imperative -- i.e., the necessity of redeeming, in love, the sin of "institutionalized violence" as a fact of historical structural injustice -- conflict with other statements which appear to suggest that nonviolent revolution is an exclusive and specifically Christian way of revolution. As a general rule "revolution through peace" cannot be both an absolute imperative and an absolute means, because instances of the former, such as "love your neighbor" or "do justice", demand that the means for their realization be chosen in accord with historical circumstances or exigencies, not 'a priori'.

The apparent conflation of ends and means in Dom Helder's philosophy of nonviolence can be interpreted in different ways. Although some simply categorize Dom Helder as a pacifist,⁶⁹ we have already seen that this does not stand up since he does not say that all violence is wrong or that Christians never have a right to use it. Strict pacifism would have ruled out taking up arms against the Nazis. Dom Helder, in acknowledging a wave of neo-Nazism in Latin America, argues that the example of Camilo Torres and Che Guevara must be respected, and that it is the "violence number one" which is alone culpable. In fact, his descriptions of the enormity of "institutionalized violence" would seem to call for drastic measures. This has been the interpretation given them by the Argentine "Priests for the Third World" movement, which blossomed in response to the seminal 1967 pastoral "Letter to the Peoples of the Third World", of which Dom Helder was both principal signatory.

) and prime mover. In a letter to the Medellín Conference of bishops in 1968, over 900 priests, including 400 from Argentina, concluded:

Let us forthrightly and firmly urge the Christians of this continent to opt for anything and everything that will contribute to the authentic liberation of the Latin American, and to the establishment of a more just and fraternal society in collaboration with all men of good will These suggestions, we feel, do not put us in favor of indiscriminate violence. On the contrary, we grieve to think that we may have to accept the fact of the use of force in the re-establishment of justice. But we feel obliged to assume the responsibilities that are forced on us by the present hour.⁷⁰

Dom Helder agrees that the present situation of "institutionalized violence" involves historical necessity. But, in contrast to the above, he seems to argue that, because this demands a revolution which is a liberation from the realm of necessity, the use of force is compromised because it is a means of necessity --part of the vicious circle of the "spiral of violence". However, non-coercive means may also be compromised by being used by the oppressors for violent ends, and the force of love in history may have to act with the means of violence. Most importantly, if a real concrete revolution is to be not only contemplated but historically realized, it will have to use the means which history affords, within, however, as Segundo points out, the evolutionary context of a redemption of history.

In sum, the major problem with Dom Helder's perspective is that he does not adequately distinguish between nonviolence as an end (revolutionary peace) and the avoidance of the use of force as a means. As Ellacuría

stresses: "What ought to be done and the actual doing are two different things; confusing the two would be catastrophic."⁷¹ The reason is that:

The prevailing violence ... is strictly unjust in character. The injustice of it calls for extreme remedies. Any moral evaluation of these remedies cannot start from the assumption that the situation is normal, that it is not violent. The use of force will always be dangerous. It should be reduced to the minimum so long as we are not faced with a grave injustice. Under normal circumstances, however grave they may be, we ought to avoid any force that coerces, compels, or wounds. But in cases of established violence, whatever form it may take, we may be not only permitted but even required to use the force that is necessary to redeem the established violence. The good being sought does not justify the evil entailed in the means to achieve it. But if evil is an achieved and concrete fact already, it must be reduced and eventually eliminated. The obligation to reduce and eliminate evil compels us to use all those means that will help to reduce evil in the world.⁷²

Injustice and the evil violence it produces are not "normal" -- the "facts of nature" to which humankind must resign itself. Rather, man's fate is historical. Furthermore, true peace can only be brought about by justice, which in turn demands a structural revolution. That is why, as I concluded in the previous chapter, peaceful change is the only form of change which is always revolutionary. But peaceful change does not mean total abstention from the use of force; it means literally change that is peace-ful -- i.e., that helps to achieve justice as the condition for peace. To repeat, this is the only general rule of "revolution through peace" that is historically realistic.

Of course, it must be borne in mind, that this is not Dom Helder's personal rule of action. He has said he "would prefer a thousand times to be killed than to kill".⁷³

But, in the final analysis, there need not be any contradiction or inconsistency between these two rules. Here again Ellacuría's comments, based on the example of Jesus, are extremely incisive:

The use of violence by followers of Jesus is admissible, but Jesus himself is not going to take that tack. This does not mean that the Gospel is supposed to be proclaimed with the sword in the manner of a crusade. It means that sin must be resisted, even by violence, when sin itself is violence; and this violent resistance to sin may go as far as the shedding of blood: Jesus himself does not seem to sense any such vocation, and his violence will be of a different sort.⁷⁴

What we learn from Dom Helder is that the force of arms is not the only way to revolution, and that, what is more, it is an inherently dangerous and defective one which ought therefore to be avoided if at all possible. This being so, his decision is to channel all of his energies into a non-coercive "violence". This is his "violence of the peacemakers". But it is not the only "violence of the peacemakers", because it is the end of peace not the means of obtaining it which must be overriding. The choice of means for Christians is personal and pluralistic; the choice of ends is not. If, as a general guide to action, force was to be avoided at any and all costs, peace and justice might have to be sacrificed. We would end up with the etherealized and politically-reactionary "spiritual violence" of Ellul. But Dom Helder, in complete contrast to Ellul, sees revolution, not as part of the order of necessity -- as nothing more than the perpetuation of violence in a new guise -- but, on the contrary, as the necessity of an end to

that order, which is in fact a false disorder. Revolution means the historical project of an end to violence: it is the liberating, 'conscientizing' peace which overcomes the world of injustice and deceit. The inescapable paradox is that, because violence is not the way of revolution but the way of oppression, the path to revolution -- that is, the struggle to put an end to oppressive violence -- may itself have to be violent.

The essential core of Dom Helder's philosophy of violence notwithstanding its serious ambiguities and lack of coherent strategy, is that to be for true peace in today's world is also necessarily to be for a revolution in its social and political structures. Put simply, peaceful action must lead to revolution, and revolutionary action must lead to peace. How this is to come about is an open question to which Dom Helder does not pretend to have all the answers. For him, the most important thing is to recognize that, because true revolution is that which brings about peace through justice, it is the peacemakers who will make the revolution.

NOTES

1. See, for example, "Dom Helder Camara: entre la violencia y la justicia", interview publishes by Agencia EFE, 1968, (in PL).
2. Church and Colonialism, p. 86.
3. Rosemary Ruether, Liberation Theology, (New York: Paulist Press, 1972), p. 186.
4. Cited in de Broucker, Dom Helder Camara: The Violence of a Peacemaker, chp. 3 "Don Quixote Rides Forth", p. 75.
5. John Gerassi exemplifies this strangely pragmatic (typically American perhaps?) celebration of the mystique of violence:

What is man-made can be destroyed by man. Our society -- better than those of the past -- has run its course. A new one must replace it. A new one will replace it. It will be done through violence, because those who will build the new society must use violence to destroy the old. Those who destroy today will be building tomorrow, or in twenty years. By destroying today they will learn how to build tomorrow.

Violence is creative, and therefore good, because it is destructive. Gerassi carries this transvaluation of utilitarian ethics to the point of asserting: "Only one who has never been politically irrelevant could condemn Robespierre. Only one who has never been hungry would condemn Lenin." ("A Letter to Christians: Violence, Revolution, and Morality", Appendix D, in Gerassi, ed., Revolutionary Priest, pp. 463, 450.)

6. Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, (New York: Grove Press, 1968), p. 94.
7. Freire cited in Paulo Freire, LADOC 'Keyhole' Series no. 1, p. 46.
8. Interview with Oriana Fallaci, in Helder Camara, LADOC 'Keyhole' Series no. 12, pp. 5, 7.
9. Interview in Cooperation Canada, May/June 1975, p. 9.
10. Interview with Fallaci, op.cit., p. 6.
11. Interview with the author, Recife, March 25, 1977.
12. Ibid.
13. Church and Colonialism, p. 110.

14. Cited in "Church's work for justice labelled 'Communist' -- Camara", The Prairie Messenger, 54:46 May 15, 1977, p. 2.
15. "Militant Non-Violence", in Edward Guinan, ed., Peace and Non-Violence, (New York: Paulist Press, 1973), p. 45.
16. Spiral of Violence, p. 76.
17. See especially chp. 2 "A Valid Solution".
18. In 1976 church and labor groups were prominent, some as shareholders, in a pressure campaign against massive investments proposed by a Canadian multinational, Noranda, in Chilean copper mines, under an agreement with that country's fascist military regime. This intervention attracted considerable publicity, but had no visible effect on company policy.
19. I have adapted this conundrum of reform/repression from Ralph Miliband, who, despite his brave and hopeful language, seems to sketch a similar scenario of paralysis with respect to the Marxist theory of the revolutionary party. See his The State in Capitalist Society, (London: Quartet Books, 1973), esp. chp. 9.
20. Pat Leonard, "Dom Helder Camara: A Study in Polarity", p. 373.
21. "La Violence de la Technique et la Technique de la Non-Violence", Holland, April 5, 1972, (in PL).
22. Michel de Certeau, "Mystiques Violentes et Stratégie Non-Violente", Le Monde Diplomatique, May 1976, p. 17.
23. Pedagogy of the Oppressed, (New York: Seabury Press, 1970), p. 28.
24. See Jean-Marie Muller, Stratégie de l'action non-violente, (Paris: Fayard, 1972); also Muller, L'Evangile de la Non-Violence, (Paris: Fayard, 1969), and the review Alternatives non violentes.
25. Spiral of Violence, p. 59.
26. Um Olhar Sobre a Cidade, p. 109.
27. See Resistance and Contemplation, (Garden City: Doubleday, 1972), pp. 35-43.
28. Thomas Merton, Faith and Violence, (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1968), preface, p. x.
29. For the best account of their exploits see Francine du Plessix Gray, Divine Disobedience, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970).

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30. Cited in ibid., p. 140.
31. Ibid., pp. 56-57.
32. Douglass, Resistance and Contemplation, pp. 179-180. The pronounced influence of Eastern philosophy in this passage is also found in the writings of Thomas Merton. The emphasis on non-rationalistic criteria involving personal sacrifice seems to be a basic element of theories of nonviolence. Moreover, freedom from alienation in the sense of conquering self-love has nothing to do with a struggle for political power. The sacrifice of the Christ-figure is the paradigmatic revolutionary act without being overtly political. Cf. also Douglass, The Non-Violent Cross, (New York: Macmillan, 1969); S.G.F. Brandon, Jesus and the Zealots, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967); Oskar Cullmann, Jesus and the Revolutionaries, (New York: Harper and Row, 1970); George Edwards, Jesus and the Politics of Violence, (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).
33. See Jacques Ellul, Violence, (New York: Seabury, 1969), chp. 5.
34. Ibid., p. 174.
35. For an excellent critique of Ellul and defense of the concept of structural violence see J.G. Davies, Christians, Politics, and Violent Revolution, (London: SCM, 1976), esp. pp. 127-137.
36. On the nature of the nonviolent political society see also Douglass, The Non-Violent Cross, pp. 257-282.
37. Davies, op.cit., pp. 158 ff. In Freedom Made Flesh Ignacio Ellacuria writes:

The case of Christ and of many others reveals the underlying dynamic of much history and the tremendous effectiveness of established violence. As the letter to the Hebrews puts it: "Indeed, according to the Law, it might almost be said, everything is cleansed by blood and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness". (Heb 9:22). [p. 216.]

38. As he explains it:

All injustice is violent, and it is injustice that points up the true gravity of violence. When such injustice is not present, we cannot speak about violence in any strict sense, although we may be able to speak about force, or coercive force, or painful force. Viewed in the context of injustice, violence must always be regarded as sin

The Christian response to the sin of violence must take a specific form, i.e., the redemption of violence. This redemption must be understood in Christian terms, but it must also take on flesh and blood in the very realities and at the very levels where the sin of violence itself is present. (Ellacuría, ibid., p. 228.)

Even Mounier accepted the use of violence to overthrow the violence of an inhuman capitalist system. (See the discussion in René Laurentin, Liberation, Development, and Salvation, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1972), pp. 151 ff. Of course Dom Helder does not condemn all violence as morally wrong, but his "violence of the peacemakers" seems to pre-empt any possibility for force to be part of a revolutionary course of action.

39. Rubem Alves, A Theology of Human Hope, pp. 106-114.
40. Ibid., p. 113.
41. Ibid., p. 22. A similar viewpoint was expressed to me by Bishop Sergio Mendez Arceo during an interview at Cuernavaca, Mexico, January 13, 1977. Violence, he insisted, is part of the gospel. Christ did not come to bring peace in the sense of tranquility, but rather "rupturas" -- divisions and antagonisms which are signs of the struggle to witness for justice and truth.
42. Recognizing the existence of the daimonic must be distinguished from arguments that man is "naturally" a violent animal, as in the anthropological studies of Lorenz, Ardrey, Morris, et.al. (In any event recent findings, viz. those of Sir Richard Leakey, do not support their hypotheses.) Violence, as a social fact, is not "innate" to the species (as seems to be suggested by Freud), but rooted in historical, structural injustice. The daimonic as part of the natural life-force is morally neutral although as the tendency for one function to usurp all others it is volatile and unpredictable.
43. Cf. Laurentin, op.cit., pp. 160-163.
44. Rollo May, Love and Will, (New York: Dell Publishing, 1969), chp. 5 "Love and the Daimonic".
45. Hannah Arendt, On Revolution, (New York: The Viking Press, 1965), p. 82.
46. Leonard J. Baillas, "The Psychological Origins of Violence and Revolution", in Thomas McFadden, ed., Liberation, Revolution, and Freedom; pp. 166-167. See also May, Power and Innocence (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972); and Pierre Furter, L'Imagination Créatrice, la

Violence, et le Changement Social, (Cuernavaca: CIDOC Cuaderno no. 14, 1968), Pt. 4, "le bon usage de la violence".

47. Ellacuría, op.cit., chps. 6 and 7.
48. Juan Luis Segundo, Evolution and Guilt, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1974), p. 112.
49. Ibid., p. 122.
50. Segundo, Our Idea of God, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1974), p. 169. The personal acknowledgement refers to the need for a redemption of the violence in every man.
51. Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1976), pp. 170-175.
52. Ironically, it is this most traditional principle of moral philosophy which is most frequently invoked as a modern revolutionary ethic in the Third World. As a frustrated former Latin American missionary once declared to an American antiwar crowd celebrating pacifist resistance: "Non-violence is an imperialist solution! Only guerilla warfare will alleviate the misery of the masses in underdeveloped countries the peasants do not start violence ... it is inflicted upon them and they have a Christian right to retaliate." (Fr. Blase Bonpane cited in du Plessix Gray, Divine Disobedience, p. 164; see also many similar sentiments expressed in the anthology of Alain Gheerbrant, The Rebel Church in Latin America.)
53. Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, pp. 171 ff. See also Segundo, Evolution and Guilt, pp. 118-121.
54. Cf. Davies, op.cit.; also, on the ethics of the recourse to violence, Richard McCormick, "The Theology of Revolution", Theological Studies, 29:4, December 1968, pp. 685-697.
55. Davies, ibid., p. 163. Cf. also the critique of Douglass's position in Stephen Casey, "Nonviolence -- A Christian Absolute?", in McFadden, op.cit.
56. Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, p. 158.
57. No end (i.e., justice) could be considered "good" if it were never capable of being realized without the good effects exceeding the bad. To say that something is good is to take account of the means ordinarily used to achieve it. But, in cases of extreme necessity, extreme measures may be justified to achieve the good. There is, however, some question as to the adequacy of this rather traditional ethical exegesis in the modern context of

social revolution, when "change itself is an ethical category" and moral values are themselves being revolutionized. (See the critical remarks in Alfredo Fierro, The Militant Gospel, pp. 201-207.)

58. Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, pp. 275-276.
59. See Giulio Girardi, "Amore cristiano e violenza rivoluzionaria", in La Violenza dei Cristiani, (Assisi, Italy: Cittadella, 1969); also José Miguez Bonino, Christians and Marxists, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), chp. VII, and Davies, op.cit., pp. 158 ff.
60. John Seeley, "Powerlessness in Contemporary Society", in Thomas Quigley, ed., Freedom and Unfreedom in the Americas, p. 66.
61. David Caute, Fanon, (London: Fontana/Collins, 1970), p. 66.
62. The great error of a dogmatic pacifism is that as a set of proscriptions rather than prescriptions it makes itself impotent in the face of the worst evils. Would Hitler have been stopped with sweet reasonableness?
63. Ellacuría, op.cit., p. 121.
64. Régis Debray, Strategy for Revolution, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), pp. 203, 207 (pp. 244, 249 in the Penguin edition, 1973).
65. Ellacuría, op.cit., p. 122.
66. Ibid., pp. 208-209.
67. Ellacuría outlines three levels of sin and violence: original, personal, and historical. The first is redeemed by humanizing and channeling the daimonic in the evolutionary process, the second by 'conscientization' with respect to personal consciousness and responsibility, the third by structural revolution, (Freedom Made Flesh, p. 209 f.).
68. It is demanding, not only because the revolution which must be made is one of peace, but because the Christian must engage in revolution out of faith, hope and love, not out of revenge, scientific inevitability, or proletarian "will to power".
69. This is probably the most frequent criticism of him, and particularly of his emphasis on a liberating "moral pressure".
70. "Latin America: A Continent of Violence", in Between Honesty and Hope, p. 84.
71. Ellacuría, op.cit., p. 228.

72. Ibid., p. 229.

73. "Violence -- The Only Way?", in Church and Colonialism,
p. 109.

74. Ellacuría, op.cit., p. 62.

SECTION 3.2 THE LOGIC OF REVOLUTION

CHAPTER SEVEN

CHRISTIANITY AND MARXISM: THEORY

No contemporary ideal which styles itself as revolutionary could overlook the system of thought which, more than any other, has shaped our understanding of revolution, and indeed man himself, as historical process and project. Dom Helder's is no exception. His attempt to come to grips with Marxism is often incomplete, and not always satisfactory, but it would be impossible to appreciate its true import without acknowledging and exploring the current willingness of many Christians, particularly Catholic intellectuals in Latin America, to adopt, or at least experiment with, Marxian analytical categories. Accordingly, this chapter deals with some of the basic theoretical questions raised by such a 'rapprochement' of ideas. And since Marx is pre-eminently, in Gramsci's ingenious phrase, the "philosopher of praxis", it must also be seen whether the theoretical praxis of dialogue can provide the basis for a common revolutionary praxis. In other words, is Helder Câmara correct in suggesting that Christian and Marxist paradigms of peace and revolution, while remaining distinct, can, and must, become complementary in the joint struggle for a new heaven and a new earth? This will be the subject of chapter eight.

Any attempt to "reconcile" two seemingly opposed ideological systems will, of course, be greeted with

hostility and skepticism on all sides, and not undeservedly so. However, 'rapprochement', in the sense which it is used, for example, by Roger Garaudy, has nothing to do with assimilation. It means rather a dialectical process -- a genuine dialogue oriented toward the development of each other's truth, not capitulation. In effect, the Christian should want to understand Marx in order to become a better Christian, and vice versa. Unfortunately, insofar as Christianity and Marxism have come to be regarded as separate, self-enclosed repositories of dogma, rather than as practical-critical approaches to the world, even dialogue can be considered impossible. Dialogue threatens such integralism which, as Giulio Girardi shows in his classic study Marxism and Christianity, is the very negation and degeneration of the search for truth,¹ yet also an established fact encountered all too often in adverse evaluations of the growing debate among Christians and Marxists.

A recent case in point is political scientist Dale Vree's On Synthesizing Christianity and Marxism, which purports to debunk the enterprise of "dialogical Christianity" by demonstrating, "objectively" of course, that a linguistic analysis of the belief systems involved reveals them to be intrinsically in radical opposition to one another. Not surprisingly Vree first pleads for a return to neo-orthodoxy, following Eric Voegelin in inveighing against the supposed sins of modern gnosticism and secular religion. But Vree does not resurrect the traditionalist concept of orthodoxy as a transcendent, ahistorical platonic essence, although he

seems to be confident, nonetheless, that the orthodox is a knowledge of something which he can and does possess. For him orthodoxy is simply convention. In this view the distinction between true and false religion can only be admitted as a positivist distinction between the conventional and the unconventional. But the result is the same as for the neo-platonists: truth in history is mere preponderance of opinion.² 'Orthopraxis', the central tenet of political theology, is 'a priori' excluded because it conceives truth not as an object of subjective knowledge, but as an ongoing process of verification which can only be realized through active historical engagement.³ Vree writes:

The most fruitful distinctions to be made are between orthodoxy and heresy (or heterodoxy) in the case of Christianity and between official ideology and revisionism in the case of Marxism. It is these distinctions that yield the greatest insight into what is at stake in synthetic dialogue. Orthodoxy or officiality are simply the marks of authority that are earned by habitual and consensual usage; they are the standards of internal norms that historically come to govern what may "legitimately" be said within the linguistic contexts known as Christianity and Marxism, respectively.⁴ [emphasis in original]

Because Christians and Marxists have historically misunderstood each other, they must continue to do so! Moreover, Vree seems incapable of apprehending that, for both Marxists and radical Christians, philosophical belief takes the form of critical praxis in direct contradistinction to the speculative 'gnosis' of deductive, ontological world-views. Vree envisages orthodoxy solely in terms of self-contained, self-sufficient doctrinal systems which, paradoxically, have no means of historical verification other than that of

subjective legitimation. His objectivity turns out to be a complete capitulation to subjectivist orthodoxy. He does not even provide independent criteria of what is or is not convention (Is it what most nominal Christians are thinking at any given moment? Is it the teaching of the magisterium of the Catholic church?), and instead simply operates with an interpretation of Christian "orthodoxy" at least as idiosyncratic as, and far more superficial than, that of the eminent theologians who are his opponents.

This leads to a final prefatory remark. Vree singles out the American Harvey Cox and the German Jürgen Moltmann as the objects of his fire, virtually ignoring the major field of Christian-Marxist praxis, namely, Latin America. (Only Rubem Alves and Gustavo Gutierrez even rate a mention in the bibliography.) Vree rationalizes: "One cannot fully appreciate liberation theology without understanding its roots in the thought of Cox and Moltmann -- roots this book explores."⁵ This is pure nonsense. For one thing neither Moltmann nor Cox have ever claimed to be Marxists. For another both are Protestants with no direct experience of the Third World whereas liberation theology is predominantly Catholic and intensely conscious of its genesis in the struggles of underdeveloped peoples. Finally, both men, Cox in particular, have been extensively criticized by the Latin American theologians. This is not the place for a review of the differences between western political theology and the theology of liberation. The point is that they are of utterly no consequence to Vree's argument since his conclusions

are implicit in his premises about the nature of orthodoxy.

I have introduced Vree's objections at the outset in order to indicate the approach which will not be followed in this chapter. I have no interest in tautological rejections of Christian-Marxist dialogue as such. And, to repeat, dialogue is a dialectical process, not a synthetic one, as Vree rather disingenuously suggests. It also follows, therefore, that authentic dialogue has little to do with cataloguing superficial similarities and parallels between Christianity and Marxism.⁶ What is necessary, rather, is an attempt to discover to what extent the truths of each can be complementary (not compromised), and to what extent mutual constructive criticism can sharpen and deepen the genuinely revolutionary thrust of each other's praxis. In short, substantive inquiry presupposes, as Leslie Dewart puts it, "an openness to the possibility of development of one's own truth."⁷

Such an openness has been a chief characteristic of Dom Helder's approach to life in general, and it is this continuing receptivity to new ideas which largely explains the searching attitude that runs through all his scattered references to Marxism. There may be a danger here of eclecticism, but Dom Helder is unperturbed. The church, he argues, must not become tied to any one particular set of ideas or political programme. It must not try to baptize Marx 'ex post facto', but at the same time it must take extremely seriously the challenges which Marxism poses to its message of inspiration and critical hope. Christianity

must digest the immense contribution of Marxism to the contemporary understanding of human historical reality just as it came to grips with the great philosophical systems of the past. Precisely because Christianity is not itself an ideology -- that is, in essence it is neither a metaphysical ontology, nor does it offer preconceived answers to social problems -- it must be pluralistic and adaptive in the ongoing socio-historical determination of its language of faith. This is how Dom Helder sums up his position on the encounter with Marxism:

We need the light of truth ... And it is very inspiring to discover truths among the different philosophies. Sometimes the truths are almost crushed; it is necessary to liberate them When Aristotle's ideas were first presented in the Middle Ages they were forbidden because he was seen as a materialistic thinker. But St. Thomas Aquinas had the audacity to try to liberate the truths that were inside the Aristotelian philosophy. The same thing is possible with Marxism But for me it would be naive to cut up Marx, as it would be to cut up Freud. If I respect the intuitions of Freud that is not synonymous with adopting the whole system of Freud

Marx was respectful of reality. I am sure he would be the first to make deep changes in his philosophy. His critique of capitalism remains very serious and one can give concrete examples Moreover, when we are examining the relations between religion and alienation, it is true that not only in the past but also today there are some religious persons presenting a religious vision from a very alienating position But today there are also many religious groups, not solely Christian but inside all the great religions, decided to live and to apply religion not as an alien force but as an engaged force, a force of hope, a liberating rather than alienating force. And Marx would be the first to respect that reality. If he could have seen that it is possible for religious groups to live an engaged not alien religion, a liberating religion, evidently he would be the first to deny a necessary link between religion and alienation. And as for

the bond between socialism and dialectical materialism ... there are communities trying to live a humanistic socialism, a spiritual socialism.⁸

There are four underlying and interrelated themes which can be identified within Dom Helder's perspective. The first revolves around the Marxian critique of religion, and the question of its original philosophical and continuing empirical validity. A second focusses more specifically on the application of the Marxist theory of alienation to Christian practice. A third deals with the relations between Marxism and Christianity as contrasting humanistic value systems. The final theme has to do with the rejection of integrism, and the possibility of separating Marxist methodology and the socialist ideal from the atheistic philosophy in which it is embedded.

Dom Helder's first thoughts on the connection between Marxism and militant atheism were obviously strongly conditioned by the circumstances in which they were expressed. In order to identify with the humanistic impulse within Marxism he had to assuage his fellow bishops' and fellow Brazilians' fear of communism by stressing that this impulse was in no way bound up with a materialist metaphysics. As he said in Rome in 1965: "The great mass of communists will be happy when they realise that it is not necessary to deny God and eternal life in order to love man and fight for justice on earth."⁹ Of course, Marxism claims to be far more than an ethical ideal or imperative, but at this point Dom Helder was less interested in assessing its scientific value than in the more basic task of rehabilitating the term

'socialism' within the church. Marxism would have to be shown to be pluralistic and the goal of a socialist society disassociated from the absolute rejection of religious belief --

We must stimulate the efforts of those communist thinkers who do not consider marxism to be an untouchable system. They are opposed to catechisms like that of Stalin; they rebel against a dogmatic, monolithic marxism,

Why can we not recognize that there is more than one type of socialism, and so liberate the term from a necessary bond with materialism? Socialism is not necessarily a system which destroys the human person or the community. It can mean 'a system at the service of the community and of man'.¹⁰

The question which must be examined is whether the denial of religion in Marxism is based solely on empirical grounds (i.e., that religion has always shown itself to be counter-revolutionary) or also on certain 'a priori' premises about the nature of reality. Initially Dom Helder suggests rather uncritically that the former is the case. In 1966 he told the general assembly of CELAM:

If Marx had seen around him a Church incarnate, sprung from Christ's incarnation; if he had lived among Christians who expressed, by their deeds and the truths they lived by, a love of mankind as the highest expression of their love of God; if he had lived in the days of Vatican II, which has embraced the best savings and teachings of Marx's theology of earthly reality, he would not have condemned religion as the opiate of the people and the Church as an alienated and alienating force.¹¹

In fact, the social teaching of the church is still non-socialist and anti-Marxist. The phrase "theology of earthly reality" is also an unfortunate expression since Dom Helder simply means it to refer to the necessary material basis of humanistic ideals. But to the extent that Marx's

comments on religion are humanistic rather than scientific they are grounded in a Feuerbachian atheology which is highly problematical for Christians. As Dom Helder later put it:

Marx's main critique of religion is not that it has always chosen to ally itself with oppressors, or that it makes slavery acceptable by giving men the vain hope of an afterlife. Rather, in Marx's judgement, accepting God's existence means, automatically, leaving all initiatives to the Creator and seeing man as a slave, an object. Any authentic humanism, therefore, should eliminate the notion of God and belief in another life. Man is only man, the shaper of history, the builder of a world in which there is no place for slavery.

It is understandable that Christian philosophers worry, when faced with this doubly atheistic philosophy that eliminates God and puts man in his place.¹²

In short, Marxists, must be challenged to make the study of religion and religious alienation an empirical one. The question of whether Christian faith can be a revolutionary praxis cannot be decided on a predetermined or epiphenomenalist basis. The dualism between transcendence and immanence -- either God or Man -- must be confronted head on. Dom Helder declares: "How deeply I desire to say to these people / Marxists who conceive God as an all-powerful entity destroying man's independence / that, for a Christian, man is not born to be a slave to God, and even less a slave of other men."¹³ But Dom Helder readily acknowledges that the actions and theories of many Christians have tended to prove Marx right. Therefore, the first step in an overall evaluation of the Marxian critique is to use it as an instrument of self-criticism.

Beginning with the concept of God, we can see that

conventional Christianity has largely falsified the biblical image. As José Miranda points out, God in the bible is always joined to a command rather than to a 'cultus'. (Indeed, the prohibition of graven images is the First Commandment.) To know God is to obey His historical injunction to seek interhuman justice and love. In the words of Miguez Bonino: "There is no separate noetic moment in our relationship to God We do not know God in the abstract and then deduce from his essence some consequences. We know God in the synthetic act of responding to his demands."¹⁴ Transcendence lies in an ethical imperative which is historical and existential; it is not an essence which can be contained within a theistic ontology. Observes Miranda:

The relationship which is established between the God of the Bible and man has this special characteristic: Man enters into it only insofar as he himself effectuates it. If man breaks off the relationship, if in any way he neutralizes his being-commanded, it is no longer God whom he worships, it is no longer Yahweh. According to ontology, God first exists and then later enjoins his imperative; but I wonder if the ontological viewpoint is adequate for understanding the central message of revelation. This imperative, nonneutralizable relationship is essential to the God of the Bible; it is his way of existence, in contrast to the other gods. He is the only nonobjectifiable God.¹⁵

Man, however, constantly seeks to transform God into an object of worship, an idol, because it is much easier to believe in an image of one's own definition than to subject oneself to the permanent challenge of a transcendent imperative. Man wants divine sanctification for his values, condemnation for those of his enemies, and comfort in times

of distress. In this sense Marx was quite right in asserting that alienated man creates his own idols. In class societies the dominant concept of God will reflect the interests of the ruling class and therefore serve as a force of resistance to change. As Segundo puts it: "... by deforming God we protect our own egotism. Our falsified and inauthentic ways of dealing with our fellow man are allied to our falsifications of the idea of God. Our unjust society and our ~~perverted~~ idea of God are in close and terrible alliance."¹⁶ Recovering the true idea of God, therefore, requires a process of secularization which seeks, not the "death of God", but the "death of idols" based on a political theology.

The problem with "God-is-dead" theology is that it did not succeed in breaking down the traditional, dualistic ontological categories in which the question of God was being posed. To have God "die" as an externally transcendent being was to solve a false problem by creating a new one: instead of secularization eliminating all objectifiable absolutes, whether transcendent or immanentist, -- i.e., situating transcendence in what Rubem Alves calls the "holy insecurity" of a truly secular world -- it turns itself into an "ism" and creates new secular absolutes, secular idols.¹⁷ By making modern, pragmatic, secular man the measure of God (or, more precisely, of what can still rationally be believed about God) this theology became a religion of the secular, perpetuating the Feuerbachian dualism in which one is forced to choose between God as an

external object of knowledge and the divinization of subjective self-knowledge.¹⁸ Gnostic manicheism is not overcome but inverted: transcendence and immanence in the order of being remain mutually exclusive and in opposition.

By contrast, political theology perceives God solely in terms of active relationship or transforming praxis. Indeed, Enrique Dussel goes so far as to say that, from a Christian standpoint: "If I do not commit myself to the liberation of my fellow man, then I am an atheist."¹⁹ And as J.L. Segundo succinctly puts it: "When we contemplate a force, a profundity, a being that transcends everything else, it is quite possible that we are not contemplating the Christian God at all. On the other hand, when we or other people dedicate our effort and our lives to the work of fostering mutual respect and love and unity among men, the end product of all the justice, love and solidarity created by our world relates us infallibly to the Christian God whether we are aware of it or not."²⁰

It should now be clear how for political theology, as for Marx in the "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right", the criticism of theology must turn into the criticism of politics. But for the Christian, this criticism is a negative theology; it is not the negation of theology.

Segundo sums up brilliantly:

When a new social structure appears as a possible substitute for the prevailing one, one must assume that the first task will be to "desacralize" the existing order. On the mass level the existing order is defended, not by comparing it intellectually and critically with other possible models, but by the irrational mechanism of vertically

declaring that the existing structures and values are sacred.

This self-defence put up by the existing political and social structure then leads to a religious devaluation of the intellectual function ... the capacity not to take the habitual for granted, the capacity to stay open to critical questioning from the Absolute which summons us from within the mixed, ambiguous realities of history.

Now this critical capacity, directed toward the social structure, is not subjected to criticism in turn. Instead it is considered irreligious a priori. And because the new plans for society clash with this type of motivation and justification, they explicitly attack the religious foundation of the conservative mentality. In reality they are attacking a distorted form of Christianity.

Authentic and orthodox Christianity goes directly against any such Manichaeism. It values man's intelligence applied to history because it is there, and nowhere else, that the definitive revelation of God took place; and because it is there, and nowhere else, that this revelation will continue to penetrate deeper and grow clearer.²¹

In short, Christian faith is in essence subversive of all civil religions. (Historically, during the Roman persecution Christians were often considered to be atheists: because they did not worship idols they were "irreligious". And as Joseph Comblin shows, Jesus himself was not religious in any conventional sense.²²). Like Socratic philosophy, therefore, Christianity has needed its apologies. Marxism, as a historical science, is the great modern solvent of these apologies.²³ It is in this critico-scientific sense, and not as an ontological denial of the supernatural, that "atheism is a necessary element" of Christian faith. The critical intelligence through which transcendence operates in history is the only valid principle of atheism. To the extent that Marxism becomes an absolute philosophical system, or falls back into a Feuerbachian self-divinization of man,

its principle of religious criticism is less revolutionary than that of radical Christianity. And it is precisely because the latter does not pre-judge the question of the existence of God on ontological grounds that it is capable of asserting a transcendence that is both radically historical and radically 'other'. Authentic faith, therefore, can never become enclosed within an "ism", whether natural or cosmological, religious or irreligious.²⁴ Because such faith is not knowledge of a thing "out there", but only a personal experience of transcendent "otherness", the ontological argument is no longer required 'a priori'.

Marx as Garaudy has realized, was a victim of the theological dualism of his time. In order to affirm Man it was necessary to deny God. But the Christian incarnation of transcendence in history means that: "When God deigned to become man the astounding possibility of human divinization was revealed to us."²⁵ As Dom Helder constantly stresses, man is the co-creator. The Christian is not forced to choose between God and the world, but is able to acknowledge a dialectical relationship of God in the world: "It is not a matter of either God or man, but of finding God by loving man, and discovering the true meaning of man in our love of God. Neither is possible without the other."²⁶ Note that this has nothing to do with self-divinization or self-transcendence. The Christian critique of religion starts from an opposite premise to that of the Marxist critique. As Bonino points out: "... in the Bible it is God who de-mystifies man; for Marx it is man who de-mystifies God."²⁷

Marxist humanism offers no solution here insofar as it grounds its critical absolute solely in a subjective principle of self-criticism. Garaudy states that: "Transcendence is the interior conflict of immanence. It belongs not to the order of being but of doing."²⁸ The Christian can agree with the second sentence but not with the first. Transcendence can be apprehended only within immanence, but it is not 'in itself' the experience or process of self-introspection. It is rather, as Segundo puts it, the expression of a language of love -- human, historical personal love -- which, Feuerbach's protestations to the contrary, requires the separate identity of "I" and "Thou".²⁹

The debate over transcendence is the clue to the most important weakness of the Marxian critique of religion, which is its inability to distinguish among true and false uses of religion, civil religion and the authentic experience of faith. For radical Christians, as well as for Marxists, conventional religion is highly ideological, and indeed, following Mannheim, it can be said that any confession of faith must be determined socio-historically. But faith, as an active irreducible relationship, means that "something has happened which compels our faith and which requires us to seek rationality and unity in the whole of history". The relativity of the faith standpoint simply means that theological language is historical expression subject, like any other, to verification through critico-historical praxis.³⁰ It does not mean that transcendence has been subsumed under immanence or that revelation has been exposed

for all time as an invention either of the alienated consciousness or of the utopian imagination. Here the Christian parts ways with both Marx and Ernst Bloch.

Bloch's work has had an extremely salutary effect on Christian theology in the sense of stripping away some of its alienated forms and recovering the revolutionary faith and hope latent in its complex of symbols. He has tried to do for religion what Marx did for philosophy. As Pierre Furter puts it: "The Blochian dialectic is the rational transformation of religious experience into a creative praxis."³¹ But in Christianity the dialectic of faith -- which is a dialectical unity of transcendence and immanence -- is not only that of critical reason and the historical 'not yet', but also that of love of the 'other' and the love which transcends history in order to redeem it. Faith, therefore, requires a relationship between an "I" and a "Thou", not simply a conscience of the 'not yet' which sketches the infinite possibilities of man's future self-orientation. Bloch's "principle of hope" does not really break with the abstract, rationalist logic of left-wing Hegelianism. In order to assert that "where there is hope there is religion" and still remain faithful to Marx, he would first have to reduce mystical experience to mythical experience.³²

In Atheism in Christianity Bloch writes: "Implicit in Marxism -- as the leap from the Kingdom of Necessity to that of Freedom -- there lies the whole so subversive and un-static heritage of the Bible: a heritage which, in the exodus from the static order, showed itself far more as pure protest, as

the archetype of the Kingdom of Freedom itself. As the abolition of every On-high which has no place for man, as a transcending with revolt and equally a revolt with transcending -- but without 'transcendence'."³³ But is not "transcending without transcendence" just the sort of (unsuccessful) word-play into which Marx lapses in the afterword to the second edition of Capital when he speaks of inverting Hegel in order to free "the rational kernel from within the mystical shell"? Just as for Hegel philosophy replaces religion, for Bloch dialectical science replaces both. In each case Christianity is seen as a mythical prefiguration of Marxist truth. But, in fact, that is precisely what Marxist science must not do if it is to decisively overcome, not perpetuate, the dualisms between science and philosophy, materialism and idealism. Only to the extent that Marx's philosophy of science does not break with the spell of Hegel is it necessary to deny philosophy in order to affirm science, God in order to affirm man, the parts in order to affirm the whole.³⁴

For the radical theologians of today the "atheistic" impulse in Christianity is not only a relic of pre-scientific biblical myth, but, more importantly, is continually historically manifest in a loving transcendence which, because it posits a non-objectifiable 'other', is neither wholly provable nor disprovable. Transcendence, like love, is a mystical experience which is not rational or positive, but no less real for all that. It does not need to be explained, that is, objectified, nor therefore to be explained

away. To assert the reality of the Christian mystery in no way challenges historical materialism insofar as that remains a scientific hypothesis and does not pretend to be the source of all truth and therefore a substitute for religion. (It is interesting to note in this regard that although Bloch attempts to assimilate the Christian experience of transcendence to a scientific principle of "transcendence", he pays less attention to a class analysis of the historical expression of that experience.³⁵) Unfortunately Marx never applied the historical science he developed in Capital to the study of religious phenomena. Herein lies the crux of the problem, for his earlier philosophical criticisms of religion are so bound up with the naturalism and rationalism of neo-Hegelianism as to be little attuned to the task of generating actual empirical propositions.

As Segundo points out in The Liberation of Theology Marx's critique of religion does not go as far as Weber's sociology in inferring the spiritualized forms of the social relations of production. This is not the fault of Marx's critical method but:

... because he goes against his own principles. Instead of examining the specific concrete and historical possibilities of religion and theology, he takes the easy out of disqualifying religion in general insofar as he views it as an autonomous and ahistorical monolith religion is not viewed as belonging to an ambiguous superstructure. Instead it is viewed as belonging to a purely spiritual plane or, even worse, as being a merely ideal refutation of historical materialism.

At one point Marx writes: "Religious suffering is at the same time an expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering." Now if this is the case, one would assume that Marx would proceed to infer the exact nature of the concrete

spiritualized form of this protest against real suffering in every age. But instead he goes on to say: "Religion ... is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion, as the illusory happiness of men, is a demand for their real happiness." Instead of "abolition," one would expect Marx to have talked about "changing" religion so that it might accentuate and eventually correct the situation being protested against.

... somehow Marx does not seem to have ever entertained the suspicion that ideology could have warped the thinking of the theologians and the interpreters of Scripture so that they ended up unwittingly interpreting it in a sense that served the interests of the ruling classes. Marx does not seem to have shown any interest in trying to find out whether distortion had crept into the Christian message and whether a new interpretation favoring the class struggle of the proletariat might be possible or even necessary.³⁶

If religion has no real place in the ideological superstructure and therefore in the process of "overdetermination", there can be no basis whatsoever for a critical theology. Nor does positivistic religious sociology offer any alternative since, in perpetrating the fallacy of "value-free" objectivity (e.g., Weber), it completely circumvents the possibility of an objective criterion (e.g., the "hermeneutic circle" of political theology) for determining the authenticity of biblical interpretation. The fact that there are as yet no universally accepted canons for the validation of religious concepts and ideas does not mean that such validation is in principle impossible. And one thing is clear: as with any other aspect of human social expression, there can be no theological truth without a prior commitment and engagement which has its roots in a liberative political and historical praxis.³⁷

All this bears directly on the question of whether

religion, specifically Christianity, is necessarily tied to alienation, and whether, therefore, Dom Helder can be successful in posing his challenge to Marxism. Marx himself, as we have seen, is not particularly helpful. At times he seems to deny any causal agency to religion, as though it were a mere effect or by-product of alienated reality, an effect which will disappear automatically once that reality has been definitively transcended. At other times, as in the "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right", he accuses religion of producing alienation, and argues, therefore, the necessity of abolishing religion as a pre-condition for the overcoming of alienation. But in neither case does he allow for the possibility of religion being a revolutionary force. His conception of religion is not empirically clear or sufficiently discriminating. Weber's approach is more consistently scientific and flexible, but it too offers no grounds for distinguishing between authentic and inauthentic religion. A third approach which tries to remain faithful to Marx's genuine insights while rejecting his conclusions, is suggested by Gregory Baum in Religion and Alienation. Following Mannheim, he proposes a distinction between ideological and utopian religion.³⁸ In other words, to the extent that the utopian consciousness is capable of penetrating the religious totality, religious expression can become a subversive as well as a justificatory cultural form. However, it is well to recall that Mannheim never resolves the problematic of the sociology of knowledge and ends up searching in vain, like Weber, for an ideologically "neutral" ground of critical

detachment. The attempt to discard ideology in favor of utopia must therefore be suspect, in that it seems to claim for the latter a purity above ideological distortion and criticism.

The elements of a solution, I think, are those suggested by Segundo at the end of the preceding paragraph. Mannheim is trapped by his rigid application of the Marxist concept of ideology. But for utopia to become, in Bloch's phrase, "concrete utopia" requires both an objective, historical and material context, and a subjective context -- prior ideological engagement³⁹ -- for revolutionary hope. In short, the search for truth demands a commitment to a revolutionary process which is both objective and subjective. In this way the truth of revolutionary ideology is not a matter for mere conjecture, but is inextricably bound up with a concrete revolutionary praxis. In the same way, to ascertain the truth of a religious message requires both an ideological commitment which relates it to a revolutionary ideal, and a determination that it is possible to realize this ideal concretely through social praxis.

In my view the above approach provides the best basis for evaluating whether religious faith can be both authentic and objectively revolutionary while accepting historical materialism as a useful scientific hypothesis. If subjectively "faith and militancy are sisters", as Garaudy exclaims, and if historically faith can in fact produce revolutionary consequences, as Bloch shows in his study of Thomas Mnzer, then Marxists are compelled by their own logic

to revise Marx's philosophical indictment of religion. Dom Helder puts it as follows:

This fact /-that faith can motivate and is motivating concrete revolutionary engagement/should compel those whose Marxism is not just a blindly accepted dogmatism to take a new look at religion. Because nothing is more contrary to the spirit of Marx than a servile attachment to the letter of what he said, or to a mechanical repetition of what he did -- rather than an attempt to say and do what he would have said and done when faced with new situations.

Even were we to concede that those who follow a faith are still alienated and alienating, there is no necessary connection between religion and such alienation. We all know many people who believe in God and whose lives are devoted to remaking history, not by stealing God's power, but by following his wish -- indeed, his command. ⁴⁰
/emphasis mine/

* In other words, affirming a liberating, transcendent imperative does not necessarily conflict with the validity of a historical materialist analysis of social reality. On the contrary, if Christianity leads men to seek the overcoming of all alienation up to the victory over sin and even death, then it will welcome any authentically scientific contribution to man's understanding of the origins of alienation. ⁴¹ It must also be noted that the Judaeo-Christian tradition stands out among the major world religions in that, despite many historical deviations, it is highly materialistic at its core. It is, as Miranda shows, fundamentally an 'anticultus', so much so that Bishop Mendez Arceo insists that Christianity is not a religion, in the sense that it is not part of man's eternal search for God -- the hypothetical God which, following Laplace and Voltaire, is both necessary and unnecessary --, but rather God's search for man. ⁴² Christians do not celebrate a Platonic God of pure essence, or an

Aristotelian God of pure causality, but a crucified God-incarnate, a historical person who embodies a love for the world so total that it suffers and renounces itself in order to proclaim the divine victory over sin and death -- in short, over all alienation.⁴³

Marxist science makes a decisive contribution to a critically-aware Christianity by returning it to an authentically biblical understanding of man as doer, creator, actor, -- an understanding lost under the mystifications of Greek idealist science. As Bonino puts it: "A Christianity which has given up the mediation of work and the world as a constituent core of faith and can only reintroduce it later at a secondary, derivative level, can only falsify both the gospel and man's most authentic experience. It can only lead to reducing redemption to a parody lived out in the realm of ideas (doctrine) or of subjectivity (intention or feeling) instead of the real world of creation; it can only be an opiate of the people!"⁴⁴ But when it comes to the question of the totality of alienation, of objectification and of estrangement, Christianity can be far more demanding than Marxism, because it affirms as an absolute referent faith in a selfless, absolutely non-objectifiable power of love which it calls "transcendence". This prompts Bonino to add that the Christian "out of the justification by faith alone, ... will have to ask whether alienation does not have deeper roots than the distortions of capitalist society, even in the mysterious original alienation [e.g., the paradigm of the "Fall" and Augustine's 'amor sui']⁷, in man's denial of his

humanity ... which we call sin."⁴⁵

Christianity takes the critique of the "fetishism of commodities" to its logical conclusion. It therefore goes beyond Marxism in that it breaks absolutely with all objectified absolutes, including purely secular and historical ones. It does not matter that the 'classless society' may end up as Hegel's Prussian state, because, as Moltmann says, "even in the 'classless society' Christians will be aliens and homeless."⁴⁶ Christian transcendence resists any and every final cultural captivity.⁴⁷ Christianity asserts that there is a permanent positive value to the 'alien' force of God's love for man. (This in no way conflicts with our argument in chapter six that man's reciprocation of this love may demand participation in purely secular struggles as a condition of historical concretization.) Of course, Marx would be able to appreciate that alienation may be linked to a critical consciousness of oppression, in that:

Alienation prevents people from being totally identified with their society; they are thus able to transcend the given social order and overcome the false consciousness the society induces in its members. Prophecy is possible only among the alienated. To be estranged, to be marginalized, to be deeply hurt by the system offers the possibility of analyzing more correctly the discrepancies and inequities of the social order.⁴⁸

But, as Rubem Alves hastens to add: "For political humanism /i.e., Marxism/ it is not a promise and a hope from a transcendent realm that make man aware of the pain of his situation."⁴⁹ Rather it is physical, material contradictions felt most deeply by the proletariat. But, Alves would again

interject, what happens in the case of the embourgeoisement of the working classes? What if material abundance and the means of creating it (the technological forces of production) do not in fact become the instrumentality for the achievement of socialist ends, but themselves an opiate of the people? No amount of purely immanent dialectics will help in this eventuality. A purely materialist humanism such as Marxism "stands or falls with the transcending powers of man. These are the powers, the only powers available for human liberation By the powers of man alone man hopes without confidence: 'nothing indicates that the end will be a good end'. There is no promise that freedom will succeed in its painful dialectical movement towards man's liberation."⁵⁰ But in Christianity the historical fact of human redemption can never be cancelled out: "Messianic humanism, on the contrary, believes, from its historical experience, in the humanizing determination of the transcendent."⁵¹ In other words, Christianity believes in the transcending power of conscience (through the mediating intercession of Christ), and therefore affirms a freedom for history which is simply inconceivable within a purely materialist determination of critical consciousness.

In sum, the conception of alienation which is possible within the Marxist system of thought is perceived by Christians as being seriously deficient on two principal grounds. We have already covered the empirical inadequacy of Marx's critique of religion as alienation. The second ground, concerned as it is with the motivating power of

selfless love, is that of ethics. Christians can agree wholeheartedly with Che Guevara that: "To build communism, a new man must be created simultaneously with the material base."⁵² But what is the source of the ethic of revolutionary love which Guevara posits as necessary for the transformation of the human personality? Undoubtedly historical materialism makes an immense contribution to our understanding of the conditions under which the force of love must become efficacious in capitalist society. Yet the human animal, including the proletarian, would appear to possess a character more complex and less rational than is supposed by Marx.⁵³ How precisely does proletarian solidarity solve the problematic of egoism and the satisfaction of non-material ('spiritual') as well as material needs? Moreover, Marx seems to follow monistic German philosophy in his rejection of any mediation (i.e., the state in Hegel's civil society, or grace in Christianity) between man and his self-realization. Man, not God, divinizes man, and transforms himself into communist man. "Productive", "solidary" love is self-love stripped of its privatistic relations. But in Christianity the source of the ethic of solidary love, "love of neighbor", is radically different. As Bonino argues:

Neither a self-contained materialism nor a self-contained idealism can really say that 'solidarity is better than egoism' solidarity is based on differentiation, on the existence of a real 'other' whom I do not absorb into myself or use instrumentally for my own self-realization Dialectical materialism as usually understood, as a self-contained system, does not offer a place for any 'exteriority', for anything that genuinely remains outside its power, for anything which claims a freedom which I can neither give nor take away, in short, for a

real 'other' Marx struggled to destroy bourgeois solipsism and egoism. But it seems to me that he retained the philosophy of identity, of self-containment, which is the objectification of the bourgeois spirit.⁵⁴

This is not at all to suggest that the Christian ethic of love of the 'other' and fraternal justice is a reversion to an idealist metaphysic, an abstract legalism, or a syrupy, sentimental humanitarianism. As Bonino maintains, in the bible "ethical criteria are not defined a-temporally but in relation to the concrete conditions of men historically located. These facts taken together do represent a direction -- the Kingdom of God -- in terms of which one may speak of worthy or unworthy actions. But this direction cannot be translated into a universal principal -- reason, order, liberty, conflict."⁵⁵ If one were to substitute 'socialism' for 'Kingdom of God' in the above it could function equally well as a description of a Marxian ethics. Unfortunately, Marx's understandable desire to avoid ahistorical ethical categories leads him often to treat such abstraction as though it were inherent to ethics and morality.⁵⁶ It is at this crucial point, therefore, that he is found wanting by Christians.

The Christian conception of alienation rebels against everything, including secularism, which actually or potentially threatens to deform and objectify the human spirit. This conception has two faces -- the rejection of idealism and the rejection of materialism -- but without falling into the sort of extrinsicist dualism which sets up a false opposition between spirit and matter. At the same

time, the integral humanism posited by an authentic Christianity requires, as fundamental to its very identity, the existence of a transcendent 'Other'. The incarnation of this transcendence in history as a dialectical unity finds its supreme human expression in selfless love. In Revolution Through Peace Dom Helder sums up brilliantly this Christian perspective of the humanization process:

The Church must concern itself with the new man who is about to be born and with the meaning of social evolution. It is just here that the Christian idea of man may help us to find a solution. The new man cannot be merely a glorified producer-consumer, a cog in a mechanistic society, though he gain dominion over all of nature external to himself. The goal to strive for is a free and conscious being, progressively freed from a thousand kinds of servitude so that his inalienable freedom can flourish and he will be truly free, free even from himself, free to give himself to others. Thus a society of free men with respect for one another will be perfected through the selfless giving of ourselves to our neighbours.⁵⁷

A radical Christian theory of alienation "must not stop at the social involvement of man but must push right through to his innermost anthropological dimensions."⁵⁸ As Teilhard de Chardin argues in his critique of Marxist "anthropogenesis", without a "supreme centre of personalization" there can be no escape from the totality of alienation ending in death. The Marxian dialectic is not radical enough because it encloses itself within a purely immanent current of hominization.⁵⁹ Individual Marxists of course have shown themselves to be capable of selfless devotion. But if physical death is truly the ultimate negation, then is not the sacrifice of oneself to the cause of "metaphysical rebellion", as Camus describes it in L'Homme Révolté, an

irrational fanaticism from an individual point of view?

There is an even more serious point here which has nothing to do with the denial of the transcendent as a 'deus ex machina', for Christians a straw man in any case, but with the concomitant denial of the inviolability of the individual conscience. If the individual is only a 'determinate species-being' (or even worse, if we are to believe Althusser, a mere vector of willing activity attached to the internal relations of structural totalities); and if it is only the final victory of the species which ultimately counts, is there not a very real danger of objectifying individuals into mere instrumental values?

The question just raised goes to the very heart of the conflicting genesis of authentic human values in Christianity and Marxism. This is not to resurrect the image of two antagonistic irreconcilable humanisms. In a certain obvious sense neither Marxism nor Christianity can be called humanisms: the former purports to be a science of social history not a phenomenology of human nature; the latter purports to be a faith in a transcendent imperative not a metaphysics of hypostatized nature prescinding from social praxis.⁶⁰ However, it would be highly fallacious to conclude that revolutionary 'humanistic' values could be derived from scientific activity or historical praxis considered in the pure abstract, even presuming such a state were conceivable. Even if I agree that there is no universal essential 'man' in Christianity or Marxism from which to deduce a set, predetermined ethics, it is not to say that

they are not tied to distinctive humanistic value systems, and that the only alternative is to adopt a nominalist or objectivist epistemology.⁶¹

As Giulio Girardi points out, Marxism taken as a whole is a coherent philosophy of praxis, not simply an abstracted, perfectly scientific methodology of "dialectical totalities", to use Fierro's phrase. It is the nature of praxis that it cannot logically determine its own object, any more than it is possible to commit oneself to a revolutionary act prior to any understanding or recognition of what does or does not constitute revolutionary behavior (see footnote 39). That there is no explicit, developed revolutionary ethics in Marxism does not at all mean that it is a mere science of "objectively" revolutionary "brute" facts which are "value-free" in themselves. It would be the height of the objectivist fallacy to claim that concepts such as 'class' and 'proletariat' as employed in Marxism are morally neutral, as though Marxist analysis were pure technique and nothing more.⁶² No more than scientific method can establish the truth of the scientific enterprise itself (which is a pre-theoretical value in the western cultural system), can revolutionary praxis be the source of its own value -- namely, the revolution. Praxis is the medium not the standard -- necessarily "pre-scientific" and "ideological" -- of verification. Girardi explains:

An action is successful if it reaches that towards which it is tending. This presupposes a value to which it is orientated, a value to be realized, an ideal. The concept of praxis is defined in relation to an ideal of humanity, namely

liberty in the ethical and economic sense. This is really the ultimate criterion of value and truth, and the key to the whole system.

Finally, the same criterion of praxis cannot be adequately justified from praxis itself, nor from experience in general. It implies, in fact, a faith in the final success of history, in the realizability of the ideal, which experience may confirm and verify, but which remains anterior to experience. Its validity is grasped in the concreteness of history, but more by intuition than by induction. At the root of the Marxist system, therefore, lies an axiological affirmation that lays hold, simultaneously, of man's ideal and its attainability through the medium of praxis. This faith in man, in an ideal, in history, is the soul of the system, and, at the same time, the cause of its active and revolutionary commitment.⁶³

Marxism as a science is first and foremost revolutionary science. It would be entirely specious to reject the ideals of the classless society and the achievement of socialism and still claim to be offering a "Marxist" analysis of reality. The problem for Christianity is that so-called "scientific" Marxism has historically exhibited strong tendencies toward an objectivist and integralist view of knowledge. It is precisely when "scientific" praxis usurps its role to become a 'de facto' situation ethics, when a supposed "historical necessity" becomes the exclusive criterion of value, that there is the greatest danger that individual persons will be devalued and become expendable. And to return to our earlier question, Marxism is inherently susceptible in this regard because of its totalization of the communal vocation.

By "totalization" I mean that for Marx: "The self-realization of the single individual can only mean his absorption without remainder in the process of the realization of the species."⁶⁴ There is no basis in Marxism for affirming

the independent value of the individual person within historical praxis. In the Theses on Feuerbach Marx writes: "The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionizing practice Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the human essence. But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations"⁶⁵ Fromm insists that this is consistent with the fact that "Marx never gave up his concept of man's nature".⁶⁶ But what is this "nature"? Fromm tells us that it is the dialectically unfolding (pre-determined?) historical nature of "species-being" which can be inferred from its manifestations in the corresponding stage of social praxis. In another context Fromm states:

The alienated man is not only alienated from other men; he is alienated from the essence of humanity, from his "species-being", both in his natural and spiritual qualities. This alienation from the human essence leads to an existential egotism, described by Marx as man's human essence becoming "a means for his individual existence. It /alienated labor/ alienates from man his own body, external nature, his mental life and his human life."

Marx's concept touches here the Kantian principle that man must always be an end in himself, and never a means to an end. But he amplifies this principle by stating that man's human essence must never become a means for individual existence.⁶⁷

I find this line of argument extremely curious. Kant's principle applies to man as individual transcendent subject, not man as a collectivity. Such Christian values as the "dignity of the moral conscience" minimally require some notion of the human individual as autonomous subject. But

Fromm resolves the human essence entirely into species-being: for Marx man qua individual has no human life (as opposed to animal existence); no residue of transcendence remains in the criterion of 'humanness' conceived solely as socialized nature, or, more particularly, productive activity. Moreover, stating Marx's anthropology in this way confuses a second issue because for Marx there is no "essence of humanity" which exists independently of the "ensemble of social relations". There is no question of inviting the sort of ontological 'holism' which re-appears in Althusser as an objectivist science of structured wholes. The essence of Marxism is not that classes replace individuals as the subjects of history, but that truth lies in 'wholes' which cannot be grasped apart from their internal relational qualities -- that is to say, human reality has no existence as Kantian 'things-in-themselves' but can be known to the human mind only in the form of social praxis. Classes do not exist 'in themselves', but only as supraindividual relations of production. There is an identity of nature, history, and man in which it is only the relation, dialectically-conceived, which has any ontological foundation.⁶⁸

The problem for Christianity is to what extent this philosophy of identity and internal relations which Marx retains from Hegel is incompatible with the Christian understanding of man as both a personal relation -- in traditional theological language the individual as a "child of God" -- and a social relation -- man as 'zoön politikon'.⁶⁹ With respect to the problem of alienation it is clear that for Christians

the questions of death and of the ultimate meaning of human existence are personal as well as social. Girardi sums up: "The community is certainly essential for individual fulfillment, but it cannot be substituted for it. In the measure in which the communal ideal, communal happiness and communal immortality must replace those of individuals /i.e., Fromm: individual existence insofar as it is 'human' can never be an end in itself/, they would become an illusory consolation, a projecting of the self outside of-self /i.e., selfhood conceived only as a social relation/, an alienation that would distract man from the solution of his personal problem. For Marxism, in a word, the absolute is not man /i.e., the human individual as a person/, but humanity."⁷⁰

Arturo Paoli puts the whole problematic in perspective:

The autonomy of the person as asserted by Marxism becomes the creation of a person without eschatology, a person who is totally fulfilled in the completion of his earthly vocation. In the strict sense of the term, however, this morality cannot be called autonomous because it is in search of a model that is beyond alienations. To find a motive for what must be done, this morality is obliged to establish a metaphysics of the phenomenon toward which the whole historical process tends, seen as a process of liberation. All of this is to be found in nature and in man. No residue of transcendence remains. It is curious how, when speaking of morality, the Marxists at every moment abjure the metaphysical dimension of the person which is at the basis of political liberation. This dimension attracts them as a hope and frightens them like a spectre. Perhaps Christian moralists could learn something from this fear and avoid falling into too facile a transcendence, which can become an alienation. And in the face of this severity, more than one Marxist could be exorcized from the fear of transcendence by discovering in it its dynamic of personal liberation and creation. Indeed, with a few variations, this constitutes the hypothesis of a dialogue between the two groups.⁷¹ /emphasis added/

Recall, however, that at the beginning of this chapter I explicitly ruled out the question of dialogue conceived, as for Vree, as a synthesis of value systems.. (Christianity clearly requires a transcendence beyond secular history for the genesis of its values, whereas Marxism just as clearly affirms a purely immanent absolute. As we shall see, however, this contradiction, although not fully resolvable, is not nearly as intractable as it first seems.) Of course, the integralist conception of Marxism and Christianity as mutually exclusive conceptual systems is not thereby disposed of. This brings us to our final theme. Before we can even formulate a hypothesis of Christian-Marxist cooperation in a revolutionary praxis (the subject of the next chapter), we must first find a real not simply eclectic basis for a Christian-Marxist theoretical praxis, one which Marx's critique of religion, theory of alienation, and "humanism" have so far failed to yield. That basis, I suggest, is that the Christianity must accept Marxism, not as a philosophy of human reality, but only insofar as it is valid as a revolutionary science. This means, of course, challenging the integralist conception of science and philosophy as it applies to Marxism.

Dom Helder puts us on the right track. He argues that Marxism is a coherent system of thought which it would be naive to cut up. Why? Because Marxism is obviously both a science and a philosophy; not one or the other. But the question is whether the scientific analysis can be dissociated from the philosophical presuppositions considered in toto.

This is an extremely complex issue, but I must insist that the question is not whether Marx saw things this way (as he clearly did not if we are to take his remarks about simply standing Hegel on his head at face-value; we should not see footnote 34), but whether such a separation is possible in principle. Dom Helder suggests that it is in the following remarks on Chinese Marxism:

... it seems to me that Mao has retained, from Marxism, only the method of analyzing reality. ... Maybe in that respect we can learn something from China. I think we might profit by the Marxist analytical method, which is still viable today. If we leave aside the materialistic concept of life and history bound up with that method in the beginning, we could complete the Marxist analysis with a true vision of Christianity, which presents no obstacle to human advancement, but quite the contrary.⁷²

Irrespective of whether the above assessment of Maoism is accurate, what Dom Helder is essentially saying is that Christians can use Marx's dialectical approach to the study of empirical reality without accepting as dogma all of the pre-scientific judgements which he held about the nature of man and the world. By "pre-scientific" I do not mean with Althusser that these judgements are "pre-Marxist". Rather I have in mind that Marx held an atheistic outlook on the world which is neither replaced by his scientific method nor entailed by it, but logically prior to it and therefore not itself subject to scientific proof. Let me clarify this with reference to a statement by Jesuit philosopher Juan Carlos Zaffaroni:

I have always believed ... that Marxism is not a philosophy, but a science. I cannot share Marxism as a philosophy, because it is atheist and material-

ist, and presents a vision of man and of the origin of the world contrary to the Christian one. But Marxism is basically a science of social relationships and a technique which provides the necessary tools to transform society. I accept Marxism as a science and a technique.⁷³

The instrumental understanding of Marxism implied above is the source of no small confusion. To set up a choice between Marxism-as-philosophy and Marxism-as-science is to create a false problem which can easily degenerate into a scholastic debate opposing the "mature" and the "young" Marx. Both philosophy and science co-exist in Marxism as they must in any integrated system of thought. Marx never argues, as Althusser supposes, that only scientific activity or theory can be accorded cognitive status; rather he simply says that all thinking, to be capable of producing 'objective' knowledge, must be oriented toward praxis.⁷⁴ The transition is from speculative philosophy to 'praxiology', and from a positivist science to a dialectical science which probes beneath the surface of things to reveal them as relations not as discrete phenomena. Philosophy as applied to science establishes the method and conditions of scientific activity, that is, the laws of the dialectic. A scientific understanding of history in turn "corrects" revolutionary praxis, but such an understanding cannot by itself determine the object of praxis, even though science is undoubtedly necessary to uncover the relations whereby the ideal of the whole of history (human liberation, freedom from alienation, the Kingdom of Freedom: in short, the end of socialism as the total emancipation of mankind) must be realized.

Let us be very careful and precise about this "must".

Insofar as it is scientific it does not predict a dogmatic inevitability, but rather simply elucidates the internal dynamic of particular historical processes. In commenting on Marx's characterization of the development of capitalist production as the "negation of the negation" Engels writes in the Anti-Duhring: "Marx does not dream of attempting to prove by this that the process was historically necessary. On the contrary: after he has proved from history that in fact the process has partially already occurred, and partially must occur in the future, he then also characterizes it as a process which develops in accordance with a definite dialectical law. That is all."⁷⁵ Marx is certainly not so crude as to attempt to deduce values from the "facts" of history, the ideal from "historical necessity". Rather he disavows the fact-value dichotomy altogether. There is no such thing as "value-free" scientific neutrality: evaluation is an inextricable part of all selection, description, accreditation, and explanation.⁷⁶ An interpretation of historical reality is persuasive insofar as it successfully accounts for the relations to be explained. As Ollmann puts it: "Because everything we know ... bears some relation to our needs and purposes, there is nothing we know toward which we do not have attitudes, either for, against or indifferent Marx's concept 'proletariat', for example, contains as part of its meaning the same degradation and other 'moral' qualities which he uncovered in his analysis of the Relation, proletariat. The truth value of this concept, therefore, depends on the validity of this analysis."⁷⁷

Knowing for Marx is never passive as in empiricism, but presupposes an active willing relationship with the object to be known. (See the first thesis on Feuerbach.) Truth must become praxis. Moreover, the 'object' in question is not a 'thing-in-itself' in an order of being but a relation in a process of 'becoming'. Truth like history is not a given, but must be made. To know a historical relation is to discover something about what history is becoming, and therefore can, but not necessarily will, become. To truly know the historical situation of the proletariat is to know its potential role in bringing about the ideal of human liberation. History, Marx believes by intuition, following Hegel, is a dialectics of freedom: it is the field of man's self-affirmation, of his entry into the realm of Freedom. This is Marx's act of faith in man, his "secularized eschatology", as Berdyaev puts it, his belief that man is what he potentially can become. But Marx is not satisfied with this. He demands that his intuition be borne out in experience, that faith be capable of realizing itself historically. The praxis of faith requires a scientific understanding of history. This is the meaning of "scientific socialism": it is the science of the possible not the inevitable. And one knows the possible not in the abstract contemplation of what historically is, but in the act of trying to achieve what historically can become, that is, in revolutionary praxis. Girardi sums up what he calls the "solidarity of stages" in Marxism as follows:

In the 'axiological' stage, Marxism elaborates a model of man and of the community, a model which can

be summarized by the term 'liberty'. In the 'ontological' stage, it elaborates a vision of reality and of human history in particular, which renders the ideal attainable. In the 'critico-historical' stage, it analyses past and present historical situations in the light of the ideal These three stages are essentially directed towards praxis. Nevertheless, in order that praxis should be possible and scientific, they require that a 'methodology' be worked out that can proximately regulate this liberating action.⁷⁸

This can be summarized another way: 1) man is a social and historical animal made for freedom, meaning the freedom of the species; 2) history is a more or less rational process of man's immanent self-realization; 3) socialism must replace capitalism; 4) a realistic praxis requires a scientific methodology of "historical initiative". I will examine these stages from a Christian perspective later. For the moment, I want to emphasize the absolute primacy of praxis in this conception of human reality -- the ideal, if it is to have any truth value, must become the real. Revolutionary truth cannot exist independently of revolutionary praxis. Knowledge of history is not a knowledge of a given, but a knowing process of man becoming free. Everyone is aware of the famous passage in The Holy Family: "History does nothing, possesses no great riches, liberates not one class from its struggles; what does all that, possesses and struggles, is man himself -- real, living man. It is not History which uses man as a tool to reach a goal, as though History were a being apart, for History is nothing but the action of man following his objectives."⁷⁹ But what are these "objectives" and how are they to be determined if they are not to be mere subjective whims?

Here we come to the source of much confusion and objectivist deviation in Marxist theory. Engels tells us in the Anti-Dühring that: "Nature is the touchstone of dialectics." This is true, but, unfortunately not in the sense in which Engels (and implicitly Marx) has often been interpreted. Several things must be noted at the outset. Marx occasionally uses the term "historical materialism" but never "dialectical materialism". Man is not made for mere animal existence but for conscious, purposive, productive activity: "the 'essence' of man's life activity in communism is 'freedom'."⁸⁰ Nature, as it applies to man, is always historical nature: that is, it cannot be deduced from what is scientifically proven to exist, but must be partially intuited and partially inferred from the historical relations of its parts. Nature is the touchstone of dialectics for Marx only in the sense of real, material human praxis, not as an entelechy of pre-existing substance or structure.⁸¹ Man's nature is not an essence but a dynamic relation -- "the ensemble of social relations". Man creates his nature and his history, albeit within the conditions directly given by material nature and the past; history and nature do not create man.

Marx's science of human reality is not naturalistic but historical. Marx, paradoxically, overcomes the dichotomy between "utopian" and "scientific" socialism by making science the partner of the authentically utopian spirit. To be truly utopian, -- that is, to break with ideology -- one must be scientific. Gutierrez notes in A Theology of Liberation

that Althusser distinguishes only between ideology and science: the former is the pre-critical, experiential ground of conscious activity; the latter the theoretical praxis for understanding the development of "structured wholes". This results in a greatly impoverished view of revolutionary praxis.⁸² For Marx, the language of the science of history does not stand by itself as a logic of the given; it entails also a language of faith, of critical knowing as revolutionary praxis.⁸³ Marxist science requires, in Bloch's phrase, "concrete utopia". As Gutierrez explains discussing a similar viewpoint by Paul Blanquart:

Utopias emerge with renewed energy at times of transition and crisis, when science has reached its limits in its explanation of social reality, and when new paths open up for historical praxis. Utopia, so understood, is neither opposed to nor outside science. On the contrary, it constitutes the essence of its creativity and dynamism. It is the prelude of science, its annunciation. The theoretical construct which allows us to know social reality and which makes political action efficacious demands the mediation of the creative imagination: "The transition from the empirical to the theoretical presupposes a jump, a break: the intervention of the imagination." And Blanquart points out that imagination in politics is called utopia.⁸⁴

We now have sufficient clues to properly delineate the points of convergence and divergence between Christian faith and Marxist science, understanding the latter as revolutionary 'practical-critical' science. Marxist science, as we have said, entails a language of faith. Marcuse puts it nicely when he argues that the road to be travelled -- the politics which frees man for the future -- may have to be from science to utopia rather than from utopia to science. But the Marxist faith is based on a faith in man which must

deny God, in immanence which must deny transcendence. Why 'must'? Because Marx thinks, for ideological and philosophical reasons, that as part of the truly scientific mentality, the secular must be affirmed as an absolute and self-sufficient value. Note that this purely secular faith, although Marx believes it to be necessary for science, is logically prior to the enterprise of science itself, neither part of science nor its product. Such a faith could only be rationally "proved" in the eventuality of the "absolute future" -- i.e., if man were indeed to become perfect.

The Christian has several things to say in response. First, Marx, because of his ideological acceptance of a monistic philosophy of immanence, provides an inadequate ground for his language of faith, of utopian critical knowing, which therefore carries within it an inherent tendency toward integralism and objectivism. The following passage from Rubem Alves is instructive:

Because its /the language of faith's / object is the future, as with science, only the future is the field of verification. The difference between the language of science and the language of faith does not lie in the fact that one can be proved whereas the other cannot, but rather in the fact that science is verified by the power of its language to put together the given pieces of a game. It operates exclusively within the limits of the given. The language of faith, on the contrary, is radically critical. It does not accept facts as values. It wants to destroy the facts that enslave man and to create new facts, now absent that could make man free.⁸⁵

Christianity, as Alves puts it in another context, believes that the critical Absolute must be free from history in order to be free for history. Christianity asserts that it is the "religion of the absolute future".⁸⁶ The danger in

Marxism is that by totally secularizing and immanentizing the 'eschaton', there will be an ever-present temptation (Hegel is a perfect example!) to claim that the "absolute future" has arrived. In Christianity, on the contrary, the real existence of an absolutely non-objectifiable transcendent power of love incarnate within history prevents man's becoming perfect from ever being objectified into his being perfect. This is the proper relation between grace and the human condition. Radically denying grace Marx must situate his principle of 'transcending' entirely within the immanence of material nature. / No amount of fudging can reconcile Christianity and Marxism on this point. Christian transcendence is not "the interior conflict of immanence" (Garaudy), "transcending without 'transcendence'" (Bloch) or the immanent dialectic of 'natural' and 'historical' reason, as opposed to idealist and positivist reason (Miranda).⁸⁷ 7

But this is precisely what, as Segundo argues, nature and evolution cannot do alone. Nature, as we saw in our discussion of the "new man", is historically more complex and ambiguous and less rational than Marx supposes. It is only on the unprovable hypothesis of philosophical materialism (which refuses to even allow the ontological question of an existence transcending nature) that it would be possible for man to construct utopia entirely on the basis of scientific knowledge. The irresolvable dilemma is that to achieve perfection would be to shut off future 'transcending', future 'becoming': perfection once objectified would be its own negation, the end of history rather than its beginning.

Ségundo quotes Milan Machovec:

Once the more complicated social problems are solved, we will be left with this movement molded by an atheistic tradition However difficult the task may be, it will be forced to explore all existing human dimensions and all conceivable human dimensions. Radically abandoning God, Marxism will sooner or later be forced to pick up the heritage of the 'human mystery'.⁸⁸

In Christianity the 'human mystery' is conceived in terms of the redeeming power of a crucified God. Marx denies this possibility because he believes that for man to realize himself in the fullness of history he must be his own supreme being, his own redeemer; the problem of theodicy must be inverted. But consider the following remarks of Girardi which would fit just as well on the lips of Dom Helder:

The Christian universe is such that every person in it has the opportunity of fulfilling himself as end; salvation is offered to all. The master-slave dialectic is superseded by the dialectic of love

.... So far is God from wishing to enter into competition with man that all his action is directed towards divinizing man by uniting man to himself. Man can become God only if God exists. The foolhardy dream that man hoped would come true if he denied God will really come true only because of the love of God. From this moment onwards the ways of salvation, of liberation and of the divinization of man coincide with the ways of unity and love.⁸⁹

The problem of a theoretical basis for a Christian-Marxist praxis is not so intractable after all. Both want the same thing for man! Marx denies God but the Marxist ideal of social justice does not exclude God, because for man to fully and continually realize himself may require the positing of a real transcendent 'Other'. Marx is incapable of conceiving this 'Other' dialectically. But it is precisely

because authentic transcendence in Christianity can be grasped only as a relation (as a process of 'becoming' conceived in love) that 'transcending' requires a transcendence which is by definition incapable of total objectification -- in short, a real 'eschaton'. This does not mean that Christianity needs to posit a God who orchestrates man's every move in history. Come what may, faith in man's freely chosen future has already been assured by the simple fact of Christ's death and resurrection. Ironically, it is Marx who feels compelled to discover an immanent 'deus ex machina' in order to similarly assure his secular language of faith. Hence the dangerous tendencies of "scientific socialism", of trying to prove by science what can only be justified by faith.

Returning to Girardi's four stages we can say that there is no reason why Christians should not accept Marx's ideal of human liberation and, insofar as it is empirically valid, his scientific study of the means whereby this ideal must realize itself concretely and historically through revolutionary social praxis directed toward the construction of socialism. Dom Helder sees no problem for Christians accepting the truth of "his judgement that the relationships of production generate class struggle, exploitation, tensions, rebellion, ideologies, and superstructures". He adds: "Why should it astonish us Christians that Marx dreams of the utopia of a classless society, brotherly and happy, when the prophet Isaiah goes much further, foreseeing weapons turned into plowshares, and the lion and the lamb eating side by

side in peace?"⁹⁰ Christians do not find the Marxian ideal or science of history objectionable. Christian love possesses no exclusive ideology, science, or means: to become concrete it must be joined to a revolutionary ideology and a realistic praxis. But what Christians do find objectionable is the monistic, atheistic world-view in which the valid elements of Marxism are inscribed, giving rise to objectivist (individuals have no 'real' existence) and amoral (History is the sole source of human values) interpretations, and which is actually, but not logically, entailed by these elements.

As Girardi puts it, the nexus between atheistic philosophy and the Marxist system as a whole is an essential correlate of historical Marxism, but it is not fundamental, that is, not in fact demanded by Marxism as a science of revolutionary theory and practice.⁹¹ Marx is simply mistaken in his a-critical intuition (or, less kindly, philosophical bias) that any residue of transcendence within materialism must be anti-revolutionary and anti-scientific. Christians, therefore, are in no way obliged to accept Marx's mistakes in order to struggle for the establishment of socialism or to utilize historical materialism as an empirical hypothesis. As Spanish theologian Gonzalez-Ruiz states, adapting the work of the Italian Marxist Lucio Lombardo-Radice, scientific theory is logically distinct from its source in the working hypotheses generated first by philosophy and ideology. Accordingly he concludes: "The scientific principle, despite its strictly secular character, of course, cannot but continue

to be related to the philosophical hypothesis from which it emerged, but its validity in no way requires acceptance of the philosophical intuition."⁹²

The above by no means implies that the relationship between Christianity and Marxism is now unproblematical, that the two systems of thought are essentially compatible, or that Christians should become Marxists and Marxists, Christians. Rather it indicates first, that dialogue as a dialectical process is capable of yielding much common ground, fresh insight, and constructive criticism, and second, that confessionalism must not be allowed to stand in the way of a more unified, more authentically revolutionary praxis.⁹³ There is nothing naive about this whatsoever. Christians as well as Marxists are painfully aware that judging from past praxis both groups can be found woefully wanting, and that the members of each group never seem to be able to agree on common standards much less specifics even among themselves! Dialogue has nothing to do with appeasement. No more than Dom Helder would let his own church off lightly, does he minimize the obstacles to mutual understanding:

It might seem futile to urge dialogue between Christians and Marxists. For how can Marxism be humanistic or liberating, when in Marxist-dominated countries those who will not accept scientific materialism are repudiated and marginalized and the human person thwarted? ...

A dialogue with Marxists? But with which Marxists? In little more than fifty years, the Marxist regimes have split up into factions that bicker and excommunicate each other with extreme violence. It would be interesting to see a dialogue inside Marxism itself, among the disciples of Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Rosa Luxembourg, Lukacs, Pennehook, Otto

Bauer, Gramsci, Wilhelm Reich, Lefèvre, Althusser
and Mao Tse-tung.⁹⁴

The problem of interpretation in both Christianity and Marxism remains extremely serious. For the former the concept of 'orthopraxis' which is emerging through political theology represents a major advance but is still relatively undeveloped and untried.⁹⁵ As for Marxism consider the following remarks of Fidel Castro: "There are sometimes paradoxes in history. How, as we see sectors of the clergy becoming revolutionary forces, can we be resigned to seeing sectors of Marxism becoming 'ecclesiastical' forces?"⁹⁶ How indeed! Christians too must resist the temptation to 'baptize' Marxism or overlook its flaws and inconsistencies. But the stakes are too high not to take risks, not to act. Dialogue must ultimately be 'verified' by bearing fruit in the realm of revolutionary praxis, and it is to issues associated with this arduous process that I turn in the next chapter. José Miguez Bonino points the way:

When we /Christians/ speak of assuming Marxist analysis and ideology at this point, there is therefore no sacralization of an ideology, no desire to "theologize" sociological, economic, or political categories. We move totally and solely in the area of human rationality -- in the realm where God has invited man to be on his own. The only legitimate question is therefore whether this analysis and this projection do in fact correspond to the facts of human history. If they do, or to the extent that they do, they become the unavoidable historical mediation of Christian obedience.⁹⁷
/emphasis in original/

NOTES

1. Giulio Girardi, Marxism and Christianity, (New York: Macmillan, 1968), chp. 3. "Marxism and Integralism". Integralism refers to any belief system which as an organic, monolithic whole does not admit the autonomous generation of values. Consequently, its values are exclusivist and systemic, incapable of translation into the language of any other system.
2. This allows Vree to simply ignore the social origins of ideology and critical responses such as Segundo's "hermeneutic circle". For example, Vree, quoting Voegelin, takes the Augustinian philosophy of history as a pure receptacle of orthodox tradition and therefore as transhistorically normative for Christianity. / See On Synthesizing Christianity and Marxism, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1976), p. 19./
3. One does not discover the truth of a value, i.e., justice, in abstract meditation or in opinion surveys, but by making and acting on a commitment to do justice. The truth of orthodoxy lies in orthopraxy.
4. Vree, op.cit., Preface, p. xii.
5. Ibid., p. xv.
6. Cf. the "Introduction" in José Miranda, Marx and the Bible. Miranda rightly objects to the often derogatory comparison of Marxism to Judaeo-Christian messianism. It is true, nonetheless, that the mythology of modern revolutionary movements owes a great deal to the symbols of messianic expectation in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. / See Rosemary Ruether, The Radical Kingdom, (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), including an excellent chapter on Christian-Marxist dialogue; also Erich Fromm, You Shall Be As Gods, (Greenwich: Fawcett, 1966), and The Dogma of Christ, (Greenwich: Fawcett, 1963), although the radical disjunction between Christological and Hebraic salvation history in the latter is highly debatable. / Unfortunately, Miranda does not follow his own advice when he tends to identify Marxism with the moral imperatives of the bible. His exegesis takes little account of the hypothesis of historical materialism. Cf. Dorothee Sölle's review in Union Seminary Quarterly Review, xxxii:1, Fall 1976, pp. 47-53; also the critical remarks in Alfredo Fierro, The Militant Gospel, pp. 372 ff.
7. Dewart, "Introduction" to Roger Garaudy, From Anathema to Dialogue, (New York: Herder & Herder, 1966), pp. 14-15.
8. Interview with the author, Recife, March 25, 1977.
9. Church and Colonialism, p. 59.

10. Ibid., p. 64. See also "Universidade, Cristianismo e Marxismo", Caruaru, Brazil, December 19, 1966, (in PL).
11. Revolution Through Peace, p. 31.
12. "What Would Thomas Aquinas do about Karl Marx?", in Helder Camara, LADOC 'Keyhole' no. 12, p. 21.
13. "Que Peut-on Attendre d'un Christianisme et d'un Marxisme Authentiques dans l'Avenir?", in La Documentation Catholique, September 13, 1972, no. 1615.
14. Bonino, Christians and Marxists, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), p. 40.
15. Miranda, Marx and the Bible, p. 40.
16. Segundo, Our Idea of God, p. 8. Segundo argues that all God-talk is "political". He criticizes Metz for not going far enough: "He does not point up the fact that all theology, even when it is concerned with the Trinity, is political. And doubly so when it does not seek to be political." (footnote 23, p. 73.) The trinitarian idea is important because it symbolizes a loving interpersonal relationship demanding permanent openness to the 'other': "Christians evince a persistent tendency to reject, in practice, the notion of an incarnate God; and to reduce it to the notion of an inaccessible God; who is perfectly happy 'in se'. This tendency is nothing but the most blatant kind of anthropomorphism: it shifts onto God the features wherewith the individual feels he can find self-fulfillment in a society based on domination." (p. 68; see also pp. 91 ff.) Also Jürgen Moltmann, The Crucified God, (London: SCM, 1974).
17. Alves, A Theology of Human Hope, pp. 164-165. Authentic, liberating secularization, notes Alves, is neither profanization nor secularism. "Secularism," he writes, "is a change of idols: the abandonment of metaphysical, religious, ecclesiastical absolutes, and the election of historical absolutes. This absolutization of history is described by Lezek Kolakowski in the essay "The Priest and the Jester": 'A rain of gods falling from the sky on the funeral rites of the one God who has outlived himself. The atheists have their saints, and the blasphemers are erecting chapels.'" (p. 165.)
18. See Frederick Herzog, Liberation Theology, especially the critical remarks on Ogden, Dewar, and Cox in the "Introduction", and pp. 136-143 on the "death of God" school; also Segundo, op.cit., pp. 122-127. An extremely useful anthology on the secularization of the God-concept going back to the eighteenth century is William Miller, ed., The New Christianity, (New York: Delta, 1967).
19. Dussel, History and the Theology of Liberation, p. 7.

20. Segundo, op.cit., p. 57.
21. Ibid., p. 157.
22. "Jesus did not offer sacrifice, nor did he encourage his disciples to express conventional piety. He did not lead them in the temple liturgical rites. He did not visit the synagogue regularly. The gospel narratives show that when he went to the synagogue he did so to reveal himself, and not out of devotion. In this sense, neither Jesus nor the apostles were very religious." Comblin, Jesus of Nazareth, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1976), p. 95.
23. See Bonino, Christians and Marxists, chp. III. As Bonino points out, however, Marx himself never got beyond the post-Hegelian philosophy of religion to a rigorously scientific study of religion. In this respect Weber represents a greater advance in the sociology of religion.
24. See the "Conclusion" in Segundo, op.cit. The comments of Simone Weil are extraordinarily perceptive: "The errors of our time come from Christianity without the supernatural. Secularization is the cause -- and primarily humanism. Religion, insofar as it is a source of consolation, is a hindrance to true faith; in this sense atheism is a purification.... Among those men in whom the supernatural part has not been awakened, the atheists are right and the believers wrong." ("Atheism as a Purification" in Miller, op.cit., pp. 267-268.) Christian atheism is therefore the total opposite of Feuerbachian atheism. The latter was of course abandoned by Marx and Engels once they had got The Holy Family out of their systems. /Cf. Engels, "Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy", in Lewis Feuer, ed., Marx and Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy, (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1959)/ However, as Paul Tillich has pointed out: "The destruction of the ontological argument /i.e., God as an essence existing independently of man/ is not dangerous. What is dangerous is the destruction of an approach which elaborates the possibility of the question of God." (From Systematic Theology, I, in Miller, op.cit., p. 242.) It is precisely this "prohibition of questions" which occurs in Marxism to the extent that it remains a philosophical materialism. /Cf. Voegelin, Science Politics and Gnosticism, (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1968), pp. 23 ff.; also sections on Marx in G. Morel, Problèmes Actuels de la Religion, (Paris: Aubier, 1968)./
25. C. Jaime Snoek, "The Third World, Revolution, and Christianity", Concilium, vol. 15., May 1966, p. 20.
26. Thomas Merton, Faith and Violence, p. 262.
27. Bonino, Christians and Marxists, p. 73.

28. Garaudy, Alternative Future; A Vision of Christian Marxism, (New York: Simon, 1974), p. 79. Cf. also Leszek Kolakowski et.al., Toward a Marxist Humanism, (New York: Grove Press, 1969), and Milan Prucha, "Marxism as a Philosophy of Human Existence", in Paul Oestreicher, ed., The Christian Marxist Dialogue, (London: Macmillan, 1969).
29. Segundo, op.cit., pp. 84-93. Segundo's explication of the expression "God is love" is in my view unsurpassed as a negative theology of transcendence.
30. H. Richard Niebuhr cited in Raymond Dehainaut, Faith and Ideology in Latin-American Perspective, pt. 3/p. 24. Arturo Paoli goes so far as to say: "Either we accept Christ the Truth, who makes true every human endeavour, every step toward liberation, every sacrifice of man, for... or we admit that it is useless and tragic to try to give meaning to history...." (Freedom to be Free, p. 179). But, the "germinal events of the Christian faith", as Bonino calls them, are neither universally known nor accepted. There is nothing which compels Marxists, for example, to accept Christology as giving meaning to history. As Rubem Alves asks, criticizing Moltmann: "How is it possible to make room for the secular movements committed to the task of creating a new future for man if it is only the faithful hearing of the word of promise that historizes man?" (op.cit., p.66.) Ultimately faith is a wager or hope which will be verified or denied through future praxis. In the meantime the authentication of faith-language can only be affirmed negatively through ideological criticism and the "negation of the negative". (Cf. Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, pp. 99 ff.; and the concluding remarks in Alves, Fierro, and Miranda, in works cited above.)
31. Pierre Furter, L'Imagination créatrice, la violence et le changement social; une interprétation, CIDOC Cuaderno no. 14, 1968, pt. 1/p. 14; see also p. 54.
32. On the utopic conscience of the 'not yet' see the citations from Daz Princip Hoffnung in ibid., pt. 2/p. 49. See also Bloch, "Man's Increasing Entry Into Religious Mystery" in Man on His Own, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970). Bloch seems to depart from Marx in asserting that religious hope is not static myth or illusion (inverted images) but a real messianic longing and yearning for the future self-realization of the 'that-which-is-not-yet'. However, Bloch's militant optimism, like that of the young Marx, seems to rest on an almost pantheistic, teleological vision of the world-process, in which heaven on earth is inexorably realized as an immanent, dialectical 'coming-to-be'. Does this principle of hope make room for sin, and death, personal tragedy and decision? Moltmann wonders: "In Bloch's thought the hope for the new thing

of the future is linked with what men can do. But do we not need also a hope which is connected with what we must suffer in sacrifice, in pain, and in dying?" /Religion, Revolution, and the Future, (New York: Charles Scribner, 1969), p. 17, see also "Hope and Confidence" in ibid.; Josef Pieper, "Hope and History" in Kee, ed., A Reader in Political Theology; Gregory Baum, Religion and Alienation, "Heaven as Revealed Utopia", p. 278 f. / Christian transcendence would appear to affirm a mystical experience which is more than a mythical representation of a dialectics of the infinite future, but also, as Ivan Illich puts it, an "experience of co-existence", of "free interdependence in love". He adds: "In the Christian tradition there has developed a single criterion for the 'authentication' of this experience: love that is simple, humble, heroic, and chaste." /Ensayos Sobre la Transcendencia, (Cuernavaca: CIDOC Sondeos no. 77, 1971), pt. 3/pp.10-11. / If the relationship between God and man is one of love, then man is never truly "on his own" because God is a personal 'other' who is not my imagination or my own transcending.

33. Atheism in Christianity, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), p. 69.
34. When Enrique Dessel states that Marx is "a panontist, who affirms the totality as divine" (History and the Theology of Liberation, p. 134), he is simply taking Marx at his word that all he did was to "stand Hegel on his head". But, in fact, the dialectic in Hegel presupposes a concept of nature which is purely metaphysical -- i.e., 'the real is the rational and the rational is the real'. Marx must therefore establish a more fundamental break with Hegel and the rationalist notion of historical nature (whether idealist or materialist) as entelechy, in order to transform the dialectic into the principle of empirical science which corresponds to revolutionizing human praxis.
35. The difficulty, I think, lies in placing far too great an expectation in the Marxian dialectic, as though it holds the key to the solution of all human problems, including, if one is to believe Miranda, that of the resurrection of the dead. (See Marx and the Bible, chp. 5 "Faith and Dialectics", which relies heavily on Bloch.) Must Marxist science aspire to be a "meta-religion", too?
36. Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, p. 17.
37. See ibid., chp. 2 "In Search of Sociology", and chp. 3 "The Political Option".
38. See Baum, Religion and Alienation, pp. 99 ff. In the preceding pages Baum deals also with the psychoanalytic critique of religion, specifically Fromm's distinction between authoritarian and humanistic religion. (Another

notable psychological dichotomy is that of Allport between mature and immature religion, used, for example, by Eugene Kennedy in his book The People are the Church.) Freudianism and Marxism are the two great modern challenges to religious belief, but we shall be concerned here only with the latter.

39. As Segundo points out, there is no commitment to anything in the pure abstract. Commitment to revolution does not pre-suppose a 'tabula rasa' on which praxis then dictates revolutionary ideology. Segundo notes: "This would imply that there are revolutionary happenings which can be recognized independently of any doctrine that one might hold regarding revolution." (op.cit., p. 98, emphasis in original.)
40. "What Would Thomas Aquinas Do About Karl Marx", in Helder Camara, pp. 21-22.
41. In fact, as Fromm notes, the roots of the concept of alienation itself are in the biblical view of sin as idolatry. See Marx's Concept of Man, (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1966), pp. 43 ff.
42. Cf. Miranda, op.cit., esp. chp. 2; interview with Bishop Mendez Arceo, January 13, 1977.
43. Paoli writes: "The redemption Christ brought to the world always seems to me to be a return of man to being, saving him from all alienation in order that he might rediscover his original being." (Freedom to be Free, p. 5.).
44. Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, p. 110.
45. Ibid., p. 111..
46. Moltmann, The Crucified God, p. 17; cf. also J.B. Metz, Theology of the World, p. 129 f.
47. This means too that the principle of transcendence relativizes current theological movements, to the extent that they are the product of historical and socio-cultural circumstances. /Adapting Baum's discussion of Richard Niebuhr's famous archetypes in Christ and Culture, we might, for example, say that much contemporary Christian political radicalism is a mixture of the "Christ against culture" (the Kingdom of Necessity as evil), the "Christ of culture" (the celebration of the secular), and the "Christ, transformer of culture" (the social gospel). Cf. Baum, Religion and Alienation, pp. 178 ff. The point is that any language of faith is also a phenomenon of culture, and therefore there are no universal, ahistorical concepts through which transcendence can be grasped as a pure essence.
48. Baum, Religion and Alienation, p. 31.

49. Alves, A Theology of Human Hope, p. 59. There is no intention of implying any disagreement between Alves and Baum on Marx's perception of alienation. However, Alves seems to place more emphasis on the essential gratuitousness and eschatological 'otherness' of Christian "alienation", i.e., liberative grace.

50. Ibid., pp. 98, 106.

51. Ibid., p. 98.

52. Ernesto Che Guevara, "Man and Socialism in Cuba".

53. Marxism as a guide for the creation of the new man is, as Bertell Ollmann puts it, "undveloped":

Marx believed that the effect of conditions on character is invariably rational and relatively quick acting. These views have their roots in his conceptual framework, in the automatic tie between powers and needs, and -- more especially -- between needs and wants, in his conception of productive activity as purposive, of interests as objective as well as subjective and of consciousness as a reflection of one's surroundings. Though such links may initially aid our understanding of man and society, to adequately account for the rich variety of experienced behavior they require some modification. / Alienation, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 238.7

54. Bonino, Christians and Marxists, pp. 100-101. See also the citation from Marx's "On the Jewish Question", p. 72 f; chp. VI "Towards an Ethical Evolution of Marxism"; p. 166 f. on Fromm's philosophy of love. Bonino sums up: "... the search for a historically scientific way of making love efficacious is the ethos of Marxism. If this is true, the use of Marxist analysis is not something foreign for the Christian. Our real discrepancy has to do with the ultimate nature and foundation of that love." (p. 115.)

55. Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, p. 117.

56. Cf. especially the "Critique of the Gotha Program".

57. Revolution Through Peace, p. 31.

58. Oscar Shatz and Ernst Winter, "Alienation, Marxism, and Humanism", in Erich Fromm, ed., Socialist Humanism, (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), p. 316. In this respect the approach of some political theologians has been superficial in the extreme. For example, Joseph Petulla in Christian Political Theology: A Marxian Guide assures the reader that: "Marx began with the assumption that

man's essential species-life called for communal development but that economic and social structures cause alienation and prohibit human growth. Jesus' ministry rested on a similar assumption, and he foresaw the dissolution of alienation in his society through the initiation of new social relationships." (p. 164.)

59. de Chardin, The Future of Man, (London: Collins, 1964), pp. 276 ff. See also Bonino, Christians and Marxists, chp. IX "Red Heroes and Christian Martyrs".
60. Cf. Louis Althusser, For Marx, (London: Allen Lane, 1969); José María González-Ruiz, El Cristianismo no es un Humanismo, (Barcelona: Península, 1966).
61. I take strong exception to the almost indecent alacrity with which a few radical theologians are prepared to consign such principles as the 'dignity of the individual person' to the scrap heap of the history of civilization, because they are supposedly "pre-scientific" and (therefore?) superfluous. (See Fierro, The Militant Gospel, chp. 3, pt. 4, "The Disappearance of Man".) Of course Skinnerian positivism is as anathema as humanism to this para-Marxist (or is it post-Marxist?) brand of "beyond freedom and dignity". Nonetheless, how the infallibility of structuralist dialectics can be reconciled with a recognizable form of Christianity and Christian ethics is beyond me. As Polanyi shows in Personal Knowledge, objectivist theories of cognition cannot even account for the logic of scientific discovery and the "ethics" of science.
62. Cf. Ollmann, op.cit., chp. 4 "Is There a Marxian Ethic?" Marx simply by-passes the fact/value conundrum by conceiving value as lying not in things 'in themselves' but only in their relational qualities.
63. Girardi, Marxism and Christianity, pp. 14-15.
64. L. Landgrebe, in Marxismusstudien (1960) cited in Helmut Gollwitzer, The Christian Faith and the Marxist Criticism of Religion, (New York: Charles Scribner, 1970), pp. 110-111.
65. From the third and sixth theses on Feuerbach, in Feuer, op.cit., p. 244.
66. Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man, p. 78.
67. Ibid., pp. 53-54.
68. On the methodological problems of 'individuation' and 'holism' see the articles by Watkins, Mandelbaum and Lukes in Alan Ryan, ed., The Philosophy of Social Explanation. Bertell Ollmann argues persuasively that

Marx never made the sort of decisive break with Hegel's solution to the Kantian epistemological problematic in the way which Althusser supposes he must. He adds:

Althusser's fundamental error lies in misusing the concept of structure in much the same way that Hegel misused the concept of idea; that is, a generalization based on examining many particular instances (in this case, various particular structures of the whole) is treated as an independent entity, which is then used to determine the very parts that give rise to it. Althusser has in fact confused structure with complexity, so that when Marx speaks of the social whole as an 'already given concrete and living aggregate' ... (Grundrisse), Althusser paraphrases this as a 'complex, structured, already given whole' (Alienation, footnote 41, pp. 266-267.)

See also ibid., chp. 2 "Social Relations as Subject Matter" and chp. 3 "The Philosophy of Internal Relations".

69. Both Christianity (at least the Catholic tradition) and Marxism vigorously reject any form of social atomism. However Marx goes beyond the traditional Thomistic formula that 'man is a social and political animal' to assert that man's very individuality as a human being is a social product. (See the citation from the "Introduction" to the Grundrisse in ibid., p. 107.) Christian theology, of course, asserts that man has a 'soul' -- i.e., that his individual existence has meaning in itself. Even if 'soul' is not grasped in the sense of Greek metaphysics as an 'essence', but rather as a 'relation', the axis is still man-God, not man-species. On the tie-up between the personal and the social see Baum, Religion and Alienation, pp. 197-213. (However, Baum in subsequent remarks on liberation theology, is too hasty in consigning Marxism to an economic "determinist" role. In my view no such fundamentalist reading of Marx is warranted. While Marxism may tend toward a certain social "determinism", its analytical categories, as the work of the Frankfurt school has shown, have a much broader application than is generally supposed.)
70. Girardi, op.cit., p. 80.
71. Paoli, op.cit., p. 34.
72. Cited in de Broucker, Dom Helder Câmara: The Violence of a Peacemaker, p. 88.
73. Cited in Gheerbrant, The Rebel Church in Latin America, p. 300.
74. In the second thesis on Feuerbach we read: "The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human

thinking is not a question of theory, but is a practical question The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking which is isolated from practice is a purely scholastic question." (in Feuer, op.cit., p. 243.)

75. Cited in Ollmann, op.cit., p. 60.
76. See on this point ibid., p. 48 f.; also Charles Taylor, "Neutrality in Political Science", in Ryan, op.cit.
77. Ibid., p. 50.
78. Girardi, op.cit., pp. 17-18.
79. Cited by Paulo Freire in "Conscientisation and Liberation", in Documenta Ideologias/Iglesias, (Cuernavaca: CIDOC Cuaderno no. 85, 1973), pt. 396/p. 3.
80. See Arturo Gaete, "Christians and Marxism: From Pius XI to Paul VI", in Latin Americans Discuss Marxism-Socialism, LADOC 'Keyhole' no. 13, pt. 3 "Dialectical Materialism, Historical Materialism"; Ollmann, op.cit., chp. 16 "Freedom as Essence", p. 120.
81. Both Marx and Engels see the 'laws' of the dialectic as materialistic principles applying to the whole of reality. This is clearly the essence of the 'materialist conception of history'. However, this conception in no way denies that man alone possesses historical consciousness: that man is the only 'being of nature' who can create history, who can be a real 'subject'. One does not study social praxis as though one were studying the weather. Unfortunately, Engels' relative lack of subtlety in the Anti-Dühring and the Dialectics of Nature left the way open for the sort of "dialectical empiricism" (the specifically human, subjective element in history is reduced to a mere epiphenomenon of the history of material nature, matter in motion) which one encounters in Lenin's Materialism and Empiro-Criticism and Stalin's "On Dialectical Materialism and Historical Materialism". This not Marx's view of man's relation to his object. Engels himself writes: "Hegel was the first to state correctly the relation between freedom and necessity 'Necessity is blind only in so far as it is not understood.' ... Freedom therefore consists in the control over ourselves and over external nature which is founded on knowledge of natural necessity; it is therefore necessarily a product of historical development." (Anti-Dühring, in Feuer, op.cit., p. 279.) In other words, man's 'telos' is freedom. Gaete writes: "In Hegel, freedom is the touchstone of dialectics. And the inversion that Marx performs does not affect freedom as such, but its 'real basis', its material conditioning; but it is the basis and conditioning of freedom, not of nature". (op.cit., p. 55.) See also Ollmann, chps. 5 and 6, and Fierro, op.cit., chp. 6.

82. Gutierrez explains:

Althusser has vigorously and correctly indicated that what is proper to Marx is to have created a science of history But the rigidity of this position and the consignment of every utopian element to ideology prevents seeing the profound unity of the work of Marx and consequently duly understanding his capacity for inspiring a radical and permanent revolutionary praxis. (footnote 121, p. 249.)

83. In this sense Gramsci offers a solid lead for Christian-Marxist dialogue, whereas Althusser offers virtually none at all. Dom Helder can agree wholeheartedly with the former that truth in itself is revolutionary. There is a common weakness in this position, however, which has its roots in the excessively optimistic view of human rationality in both Thomas Aquinas and Karl Marx. Knowing and acting may be logically interrelated, but in practice man seldom behaves perfectly rationally. The radical theologians are essentially correct in arguing that knowing God or knowing the good must not be separated from doing God's will or doing the good. But they might also sympathize with St. Paul, who writes in the Letter to the Romans: "I cannot understand my own behavior. I fail to carry out the things I want to do, and I find myself doing the very things I hate." (7:15-16.)

84. Gutierrez, op.cit., p. 234. See also Blanquart, "A propos des rapports science-idéologie et foi-marxisme", in Lettre, nos. 144-145, August-September 1970; Furter, op.cit., pt. 3 "Les Fonctions de L'Utopie"; Freire, "Desmitificación de la conscientización", pt. 391/pp.1-23 in CIDOC Cuaderno no. 85.

85. Alves, op.cit., p. 167.

86. The phrase is that of Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner from the 1965 Salzburg Conference on Christian and Marxist humanism. (For the documentation in English see Erich Kellner, ed., Marxism and Christianity, (New York: Macmillan, 1968). See also the reference in Dom Helder's Revolution Through Peace, p. 69.) Since the hypothesis of "absolute future" is in the last analysis an eschatological construct it can never be refuted. Even though "the whole of the modern critique of religion, especially Marxist, could be summed up by saying that Christianity, like religion in general, is helpless against this primacy of the future in our understanding of the world, ... the Christian community, for whom history as a whole stands beneath the 'eschatological promise' of God, will not object to any attempt to make future as a whole the content of technological planning and hence secretly -- in a suspect ideological way -- making science and

technology the subjective content of the whole of history." (Metz, Theology of the World, pp. 148, 155.)

87. Miranda writes: "The existence of history and of the 'eschaton' is incompatible with Greek epistemology If for Greek science to understand is to reduce to the known, for dialectics to understand is to identify with what breaks with the known and transcends it." But Miranda goes on to assert a total identity of dialectical science and knowledge, spirit and matter, history and eschatology. It is history, he claims, which produces its own 'conscience' -- a conscience of the necessity of justice and love of neighbour. I fail to see how, if man's inevitable fate is to become perfect on his own anyway, Christian faith can be anything but superfluous in the last analysis. (See Marx and the Bible, pp. 267, 271, chp. 5 "Faith and Dialectics", passim.)
88. Segundo, Evolution and Guilt, p. 101. Segundo also cites the following doubt expressed in a Soviet novel of the Stalinist era: "But can you recall any deity of the past who did not have defects?" (ibid.)
89. Girardi, op.cit., pp. 81-82.
90. In Helder Camara, 'Keyhole' no. 12, p. 22.
91. See the "Conclusion" to chp. 1 of Girardi, op.cit.
92. Gonzalez-Ruiz, The New Creation: Marxist and Christian?, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1976), p. 5.
93. See Bonino, Christians and Marxists, chp. VIII, "The Promise and the Limits of the Alliance"; also the articles in the special issue of Lumière et Vie, "Chrétien Marxiste", April-August, 1974, vol. XXIII, nos. 117-118, especially the search for a "dialectical unity" in Girardi's excellent "Vers de nouveaux rapports entre marxisme et christianisme". José Marins is more cautious: "The faith is open to whatever analysis or rationality which has real scientific value, but never to use them without giving them a new dimension. So, for example, Marxist analysis has a strict relation with its philosophical categories. Therefore, to assume its valid elements it is necessary to revise all its categories." /Igreja E Conflitividade Social Na America Latina, (São Paulo: Edições Paulinas, 1976), p. 59. The broad consensus is with Dom Helder that the truly scientific and humanistic elements in Marx can be "liberated" from the ideological world-view in which they have been historically inscribed.
94. In Helder Camara, p. 23.
95. Segundo's work The Liberation of Theology represents the most important contribution to the theory of 'orthopraxis'

to date. It is interesting to note in this regard that Marx never wrote his promised work on the theory of dialectics and the ambiguities and inconsistencies in his approach have been the subject of interminable debates in Marxist circles ever since. Critics of liberation theology's unequivocal adoption of Marxist science have been quick to capitalize on such unresolved difficulties. See, for example, Alfonso Lopex Trujillo, Liberación Marxista y Liberación Cristiana, (Madrid: Editorial Católica, 1974), especially the introduction "El Marxismo, Un Problema de Interpretación". (At the time Msgr. Trujillo was Secretary General of CELAM.)

96. From a 1968 speech "Christianity and Marxism", cited in Gheerbrant, op.cit., p. 269.
97. Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, pp. 97-98.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CHRISTIANITY AND MARXISM II: PRAXIS

We ended the preceding chapter by asserting that dialogue between Christians and Marxists must be capable of translation into a joint praxis at the socio-political level. Radical Christianity (political theology) does not claim to possess its own theory or ideology of revolution, and therefore in the contemporary context it looks to Marxism as the primary source for the understanding and the initiation of revolutionary processes. There is, nonetheless, a definite positive content within the Christian tradition, which impinges on the character and scope of its praxis in a pre-revolutionary way -- that is to say, Christians could not enter into a revolutionary struggle as 'tabulae rasae' upon which the exigencies of that struggle would then dictate the course of action to be followed. Accordingly, we must ask the question whether this prior Christian element affects the validation and the operation of revolutionary praxis, and if so, to what extent. Must the Christian be a believer first and a revolutionary second, or is being a (Marxist?) revolutionary the only way to be a believer, the "unavoidable historical mediation of Christian obedience", as Bonino called it?

Helder Câmara's position on this highly complex and controversial subject remains ambiguous, but it includes an intuition which is both substantially correct and of central importance to our discussion. In Revolution Through

Peace he writes:

The Marxists test the Christians by distinguishing in each historical era between reflex and protest, opiate and illuminating guide, faith and ideology, the hour of Constantine and that of the Apocalypse, fundamental demand and alienation.

We must make the Marxists know, feel, and see, that if Christians do not arm for battle or wage guerrilla warfare it is not for lack of courage. It is because the Gospel is much more demanding, much more revolutionary than Marx.

What good will it do to replace men and governments if the same old ~~mentality~~ prevails? We must break down the structures in people's minds, stir up their consciences, engage their wills.¹

As we have seen from chapter six Dom Helder is not entirely consistent in setting up a dichotomy between 'conscientization' as the optimal Christian way of revolution, and the Marxist strategy of violent class struggle. Moreover, his ecclesiastical position obliges him to maintain a certain theological conservatism which largely exempts the doctrines of the Catholic church from a rigorous critique. Much of his hesitancy to embrace the practical as well as humanistic insights of Marxism stems from his fidelity to official Catholic social teaching -- a fidelity increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to sustain in the light of a developed political theology.² Be that as it may, Dom Helder is right in arguing that, from a Christian standpoint, not only a mechanical Marxism, but Marxism as such, is an insufficient ground for revolution as a total and unending human drama. No purely secular, rationalistic praxis could ever circumscribe the Christian message of hope.

Does this simply mean that the attempt to found a joint revolutionary praxis among Christians and Marxists is fundamentally misguided? Not at all, or at least, not

necessarily. But several issues bear close examination before any definite conclusion can be stated. The discussion which follows roughly parallels the sequence of arguments in the above citation from Revolution Through Peace. First, it is necessary to arrive at a precise understanding of the nature of political praxis in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and of the extent to which a Marxist critique can be, and is being, incorporated into the critical resources of a radical Christianity in its perception of the role of praxis. Second, this leads to an analysis of Christian responses to the Marxist challenge which focus on the former's internal resources, and therefore on the question of a specifically Christian contribution to revolutionary processes. Finally, we attempt to evaluate two possible alternative grounds for a Christian-Marxist praxis: the 'structuralist' model advocated by the Christians for Socialism movement, which originated in Chile during the Allendé regime, and the 'conscientization' model popularized by Helder Câmara.

As noted previously, the Jewish heritage of early Christianity set it off in sharp contrast to the dominant metaphysical religious ethos of Greco-Roman civilization. Christians were even accused of constituting an atheistic and subversive element in society. Why was the Hebraic element so distinctive? Ignacio Ellacuría explains that: "It is in history, in its political history, that Israel learns to transcend the naturalistic idea of God and to comprehend his salvation in historical terms."³ The God of the Israelites

is the Lord of history and this lordship is expressed politically through the activity of the "chosen people" -- it is incarnated in Zion, the Jewish state. Christianity retained the historical consciousness of Israel but rejected its theocratic political messianism. In Christianity the incarnation was situated in the universality of the human condition. Later, of course, this universality became identified with a cultural Christendom, eventually degenerating into denominationalism. The point is, however, that beyond all differences and deviations, historical praxis remains as the essential locus of divinity in the Judaeo-Christian tradition.⁴

Marx, in his famous first thesis on Feuerbach, lashes out against the latter's conception of practice "in its dirty-judaical form of appearance." Why does he use this pejorative? For one thing, Marx wants to point out the German intellectual elite's characteristic contempt for Jewish practical enterprise. But Marx nonetheless clearly agrees with Feuerbach and Hegel that Jewish religiosity, with its primitive theocratic concept of political praxis, is inferior to its universalized form in Christianity. Marx sees little of value in Jewish religious practice. As Ellacuria puts it: "The Jewish approach was to be rejected because it was not transformative in itself, because it turned the work of transformation over to God in terms of reward and punishment, We cannot flee from praxis, we must retrieve it in its specific immanent essence."⁵ In short, Marx does not allow for any potentially liberating

concept of praxis in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. The Christian contribution was a historical advance, but it also led to a shunning of practice, and a retreat into an exalted, interior realm of passive contemplation. But Ellacuría asks:

Is Marx's interpretation of Jewish praxis correct? Does he correctly interpret the anthropological secularization of Christianity when he sees it purely and simply as a process of subjective interiorization? Is there no praxis for the full realization of man other than that of a closed immanent praxis? ... Marx did not make clear the fact that he saw Jewish religious politicization, Feuerbach's interiorization, and Marxist praxis as the sole and exclusive alternatives.⁶

Recall from chapter one that contemporary political theology directs its greatest fire against, on one hand, the subjective privatization of faith (Feuerbach's "essence of Christianity"), and on the other, political religion and all forms of theological politics (political praxis in its primitive Judaic form). Yet are not these two things precisely what Marx, in a rather hasty and unscientific manner, takes to be the 'essence' of Judaeo-Christian tradition? In fairness, given the examples with which he was familiar, Marx could not have anticipated the extent to which his own critique could be assimilated by Christian theology in an attempt to rescue historical praxis as the fundamental core of that tradition.

In the perspective of political theology it is historical praxis which constitutes the necessary political horizon of faith.⁷ The problem with Jewish praxis is therefore not that it was political and historical, but that it was so in a way which ultimately remained extrinsic to man. God was conceived as a sort of demiurge who both

liberated and chastised the Hebrew nation. In Christianity, by contrast, the political focus of salvation shifts from external judgement to redemption and the inner potential of the human race. Ellacuría goes so far as to say: "Action in and on history, the salvation of social man in history, is the real pathway whereby God will ultimately deify man."⁸

The crucial point is that this Christian political praxis is not only intrinsic to human activity, but lies wholly within the realm of human rationality. Clearly, interpreted in this sense the God hypothesis does not contradict any laws of nature or of the dialectic. For example, we have already seen in chapter six that the praxis of universal love is not opposed to strategies of class struggle insofar as these are ascertained to be the necessary historical means of making such love concrete.

The central insight which political theology derives from Marxism is that of 'orthopraxis': truth must be subject to historical verification. What does it mean for theology to become a "praxiology"?⁹ Hugo Assmann begins by saying that: "Speaking the truth is no longer an acceptable substitute for doing the truth."¹⁰ By this he is implying much more than a "practise what you preach" platitude. Ultimately, what is demanded is nothing less than the total suppression of all dualism: there is no independent theological 'a priori' which is then applied to the human condition, but rather a dialectical unity of the expression of the word of God and the whole of human history. Juan Luis Segundo in his study of the sacraments agrees that the meaning of all

Christian symbols including that of truth itself must be radically historical since the activity of God or "grace" works solely through the praxis of man. He sums up the problematic of 'orthopraxis' in a nutshell:

Is it possible for truth that derives from faith to form a realm of its own, the realm of truth-in-itself, when faith and those other terms are subject to the test of historical efficacy? Must we not end up defining truth as Rubem Alves does, when he says it is "the name given by an historical community to those acts which were, are, and will be efficacious for man's liberation?"

In other words, once truth has been introduced of necessity -- by God himself -- as a dimension of historical praxis on behalf of man's liberation, then it would seem to include efficacy of its very essence. If a person accepts divine revelation, he should not be afraid to say: the only truth is efficacious truth.¹¹

It should be noted that the criterion of efficacy insisted upon by Assmann and Segundo is not that of a simplistic pragmatism, but is oriented above all toward qualitative changes in human social relations. According to Assmann: "Criteria for establishing whether or not this efficacy exists can never be purely quantitative."¹² He gives the example of Christian love which, while being efficacious must also preserve an essential gratuitousness. He also argues that there is a point at which the deepest level of human activity eludes scientific inquiry. The efficacy of selfless love (he uses Christ's death on the cross as the supreme model of dying for others out of love) is at bottom mysterious. But this does not mean that it cannot be validated historically and rationally, unless of course one falls into the narrow straits of objectivism and noncognitivism.

In sum, we can say that the truth of any praxis which calls itself Christian must be determined through a 'political' hermeneutic which posits a historical process of liberation. But the question immediately arises: which 'process of liberation'? Clearly there are Christian values which are pre-Marxist. Does this mean that these must be exchanged for Marxist ones in an authentically revolutionary process, or do Christians conceive of 'liberation', and therefore the goal of revolution, differently from Marxists? Are the gospel values revolutionary in themselves, as Helder Câmara suggests, or do they only become so when inserted into a particular historical praxis?

Here Assmann and Segundo part ways. Assmann abjures any notion of a "specifically Christian contribution" to revolution. He argues that men must first become revolutionaries, and only then will they be able to come to a truer understanding of the Christian message. To this Segundo responds:

The notion of a "specifically Christian contribution" is rejected because he /Assmann/ views it as a "doctrinal a priori" opposed to "revolutionary facts and deeds". This would imply that there are revolutionary happenings which can be recognized independently of any doctrine that one might hold regarding revolution

The fact is that dozens of groups, movements, and parties claim to possess the one key that will open the door to real revolution. No one can decide that his or her praxis is included in the unitary praxis of the one and only revolutionary process without first basing his stand on his ideology or his faith. And deciding on that basis is nothing more than what Lukács calls "voluntary idealism."¹³

Segundo contends, correctly in my view, that no commitment to a revolutionary praxis is possible without a

prior ideological perception of what constitutes revolutionary change, which may in turn be inspired by a faith which is lived out as an absolute value. This is not at all to say that such a faith escapes the requirement of mediation by historical praxis. On the contrary, 'orthopraxis' asserts that the language of faith cannot be distilled into a set of universal, ahistorical concepts or principles. Segundo obviously agrees with Gregory Baum that "as the grimace of evil changes in history, the Christian symbols of salvation take on a new meaning."¹⁴ Faith in these symbols constitutes an absolute value for Christians, but it can only be expressed through the provisional, historical medium of ideology -- that is, as a praxis. As such, faith is subject to the test of historical verification. Although faith is not an ideology, it is inseparable from ideologies. Segundo concludes:

Faith, then is not a universal, atemporal, pithy body of content summing up divine revelation once the latter has been divested of ideologies. On the contrary, it is maturity by way of ideologies, the possibility of fully and conscientiously carrying out the ideological task on which the real-life liberation of human beings depends.¹⁵

It is clear from the above that both faith and ideology must exist before there can be a revolutionary praxis, and therefore they themselves cannot be nothing more than its product. When, however, Assmann rejects "any logos which is not the logos of a praxis"¹⁶, he seems to be implying that praxis can determine its own object, and inferentially its own morality of ends and means. Consider too the following statement by Chilean José Richard Guzmán:

It is not the "gospel values" which upon incarnating themselves transform man and society, but it is rather man as historical subject who transforms social reality in the measure in which he struggles to overcome all alienation and oppression. Man is creative subject of his history and not the object of a world of values which "ought to be" incarnated. Only by taking off from praxis and not from the "gospel" will theology be able to overcome this inversion of subject-object, in which the ideological character of Christianity is rooted, and which deeply impedes Christians from taking up the social praxis of liberation."¹⁷

In this version the Christian contribution becomes purely reflexive. Faith in the gospel is considered contentless in itself, given meaning only by the working out of certain 'objective' forces in history. Christians are called upon, first to build up socialism according to a unitary praxis, and then perhaps they will be able to discover something about the gospel. The great danger in this assimilation of "scientific socialism" is that praxis tends to become not only the medium but also the standard of historical verification. When one particular, secular praxis is seen as the sole criterion or exclusive source of 'revolutionary' value, then Christian faith can have at best an instrumental value, and one is not far from a total "situation ethics". Marxism, with its rationalistic, neo-Hegelian view of history is particularly susceptible to what Bonino calls a "teleological suspension of ethics".¹⁸

But Christian faith, although it possesses no internal ideology or theory of revolution, does have a definite positive and critical content. That content is founded on what Jesus referred to as the "whole law": love of God (who reveals himself in the non-objectifiable

trinitarian relationship), and love of neighbor as oneself. The categorical imperatives which follow are respect for the relatively unconditional value of the individual person and for the operation of conscience, and the giving of self through solidary love. In the Christian view no one (and no social class) is beyond sin or beyond redemption. This critical faith in man is an absolute value which must then be made concrete and acted upon within the relativities of history. For example, if the imperative of selfless, gratuitous love were to be interpreted in such a way as to ignore the existence of class conflict, it would be rendered historically useless. The value of faith is much more than simply a motivating force for revolutionary ideology, but faith without such ideology would have no tangible value at all.

What all of this points to is that there is indeed a distinctly Christian contribution to the issues of revolutionary praxis. Helder Câmara is quite correct in stating that the gospel, with its critical, trans-historical message of hope, goes far beyond Marxism. Moreover, this message is permanently and intrinsically 'revolutionary' in that it judges the whole of history from an eschatological standpoint which is ultimately incapable of being reified by man. But make no mistake, a revolutionary faith is no substitute for a revolutionary ideology or a revolutionary science. Nor is there any question whatsoever of a Christian "third-way" between capitalism and socialism. Rather, the liberating presence of faith is seen more as a "revolution in the

revolution": it is the critical absolute which, paradoxically, reveals itself only within the relative struggles of human history. In terms of the practical relationship between Christians and Marxists, this understanding of the innate revolutionary character of faith forms the basis for a joint but not a unitary praxis.

To explicate the point further let us turn to the two concrete examples alluded to at the beginning of this chapter. In the case of Christians For Socialism movement which flourished briefly in Chile during the Allende regime, it can be seen that the line which was followed was basically that of Assmann. Christians For Socialism appeared to argue that no authentic faith was possible outside the confines of "participation of Christians in the implementation of socialism".¹⁹ More than that, the movement tended to identify socialism exclusively with Marxist socialism of the structuralist variety. This singleness of purpose and technique was apparently thought necessary to preserve the purity and intensity of the revolutionary process. In the "Final Document" of the 1972 convention we read:

Inadequate comprehension of the rationale proper to the class struggle has lead many Christians to a defective kind of political involvement. Failing to appreciate the structural mechanisms of society and the necessary contributions of a scientific theory, they try to deduce their political approach from a certain kind of humanistic conception: e.g., the "dignity of the human person", "liberty", and so forth; this is accompanied by political naiveté, activism, and voluntarism.²⁰

In fact, it was the single-minded approach chosen by Christians For Socialism which proved to be naive and prone to insuperable difficulties. The movement was open to the

charge of clericalism for the uncritical manner in which it implied that Christian faith ordained acceptance of Marxist dialectics as the one, universal key to a "scientific" comprehension of socio-political reality, and Marxist class struggle as the one, universal mode of revolutionary action.²¹ Moreover, this rested on an assumption -- namely, that there was a pure, scientific 'essence' of Marxism that could and would be grasped by all men of good faith -- which was manifestly false. Such important questions as how to accurately mediate the biblical conception of the 'poor and disinherited' and the Marxist concept of a 'proletarian class' were accordingly passed over rather superficially, prompting Jean Guichard in another context to ask: "... who absolutizes the class struggle more than the theologians who want to reduce it to a simple 'fact' of immediate experience, and refuse all 'theory'?"²²

The most serious deficiency encountered in the work of Christians For Socialism is an inability to decide whether there is a role for faith anterior to, and over and above, revolutionary praxis, or whether faith is simply to be subsumed under the canons of praxis as any other element of the 'superstructure'. To the extent that the movement opted for the latter the Chilean bishops charged, in a final declaration prohibiting the membership of priests and religious in the group, "These people refused to interpret history, the class struggle, and Marxism itself in the light of the gospel and an unconditional faith."²³ Since Marxism is not a pure science, but a mixture of empirical and

ideological elements, it cannot be accepted uncritically, much less as the apotheosis of human understanding. The bishops continued: "On the basis of a social and economic analysis, a person may decide that a particular class has an irreplaceable task in history and that this task represents a thing of moment in the earthly career of salvation history. But he cannot appeal to the authority of Christ and scripture if he wishes to make this class the sacrament instituted by God in Christ as the efficacious sign of universal reconciliation. Socio-economic analyses by a group of priests do not share in the infallibility of the Church."²⁴ Even, a friendly critic felt compelled to point out:

... I believe it is possible for a Christian to approach social reality with the instrument "for analyzing and transforming society" elaborated by Marxism: i.e., the dialectic of class struggle. But in doing, this one must be aware of two things: 1) Neither its scientific validity as a sociological method nor its separability from the overall Marxist theory are universally clear and self-evident; 2) the Marxist evaluation of the proletarian class as the exclusive bearer of humanity's future does not at all dovetail with the gospel's blessing on the poor

As I see it, it is possible for a person to opt for social transformation by way of class struggle.... But let it be said clearly that this is a political option, and that it cannot be proposed as the necessary projection of the gospel in the realm of political activity.²⁵

In a post-mortem of the movement immediately following the 1973 military coup, a leading founder, Jesuit sociologist Gonzalo Arroyo, insisted steadfastly that Christians For Socialism had never tried to derive its political stance from the faith.²⁶ Paradoxically, this may have been part of the problem in that faith, insofar as it was conceived as

merely superstructural, became dependent for its validity in the socio-political realm upon the construction of a specific kind of socialism, and socialism, insofar as it was seen as the unique means for making faith concrete in this realm, became endowed with a divine, not to mention "scientific", certitude. In effect, it was claimed not simply that Christians ought to opt for socialism (as Helder Câmara and others have done), but that faith in the gospel had literally no social or historical value apart from participation in a particular socialist project.

When one looks back to earlier Christian encounters with socialism and Marxism, such as those of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich, one finds that these were less sanguine and more clear-eyed in their perception of the prospects for common action, than was the revolutionary catechism of Christians For Socialism, with its pseudo-scientific pretensions. Tillich, for example, spoke of a historical need to "affirm the class struggle".²⁷ But in doing so he never hesitated to accept that in Christian thought the function of class struggle could not be identical to the total, immanentistic one ascribed to it by Marxism:

The Christian symbol of paradise is transhistorical; the Marxist symbol of primitive communism, historical. In Marxism a historical group, the proletariat or the avant-garde, can overcome estrangement; in Christianity every social group stands in need of redemption and is incapable of delivering itself or other groups. The power of redemption breaks into the historical process vertically and is not its product.²⁸

In other words, it does not follow that Christian faith, simply because it does not possess its own special theory or

analytical method, can thereby be assimilated completely to Marxist ideology. A Christian may certainly avail himself of the genuine insights of Marxism, but that is not to say he must become a partisan of this or that Marxist revolutionary movement.

The problem with approaches such as that of Tillich is that, as analysed in Part One, they were encased in a theological philosophy which was dominated on the one hand by existentialism, and on the other, by ontological world-views seeking to provide a religious interpretation of the 'nature of things'. With the advent of political theology the focus shifts from metaphysical and existential categories of being to historical categories of acting. Theology is challenged to become critical reflection on the historical praxis of Christian faith. In this sense the question of a practical relationship between Christianity and Marxism can no longer be 'To what extent can class struggle be an element of a religious social philosophy?', but rather, 'To the extent that the Marxist analysis of class struggle is empirically valid, how might Christians then carry out the gospel imperatives in a Christian manner?'. There is only one social reality, to be examined from the standpoint of the secular human sciences, but there are Christian and non-Christian modes of response to that reality.

This brings us to the alternative offered by Dom Helder, -- namely that of 'conscientization'. It should be noted at the outset that such a perspective in no way entails an evasion of the objective existence of class conflict. Dom

Helder has been adamant on the need for a structural revolution on socialist bases and, indeed, the originator of 'conscientization' theory, Paulo Freire, claims to have been influenced by Mao Tse-tung and Louis Althusser among others. What ultimately distinguishes the perspective of Câmara and Freire from that of Christians For Socialism is that the former do not hesitate to acknowledge that Christian faith must affect or condition one's way of acting as a revolutionary. Marxist 'science', in other words, is not to be the sole judge of revolutionary efficacy.

'Conscientization', reflecting perhaps its association with adult literacy training in Brazil, is far closer to a radical personalist philosophy such as that of Mounier than to any form, Marxist or otherwise, of epistemological scientism. In Pedagogy of the Oppressed Freire constantly reiterates that the relation between subject and object must be active and dialectal because oppression is both an objective and a subjective reality. The subjective component is crucial in that oppression can only become real (i.e., real for man) through the medium of human perception.²⁹ Social reality may be independent of the individual and his self-consciousness, but social structures, whatever their material base, are relations among human individuals. The dynamics of the infrastructure must be mediated in the activity of real flesh-and-blood human beings. Contradictions in the base must therefore be capable of being perceived subjectively as the negation of "false consciousness". Without this subjective dialectic there could be no critical consciousness, no act of

human will aimed at a transforming praxis.

In short, there is no objective knowledge of oppression which is not at the same time subjective praxis. Pure objective knowledge of the world 'in itself' is impossible, but through the struggle to transform the world man is confronted by it as an objective reality. The truth about oppression becomes known through the struggle against

it. For Freire the true word, which is the liberating word, is defined by this interdependence of knowing and acting.

Revolution as truth is based on a personal decision, a personal act of will. To affirm this is not to deny that the material product of human praxis is conditioned by an objective, internal dynamic of the material base. But both Freire and Dom Helder insist that having can never be more than a precondition for being. And moreover, one cannot possess freedom as, let us say, the automatic by-product of the victory of socialism; one can only engage in a process of becoming more free -- the cultural revolution which stands as a permanent existential imperative.

The prohibition against objectification is one of the strongest images running through the language of 'conscientization'. And, significantly, it is closely linked to the demands of solidary love and respect for personal conscience referred to earlier in the context of a specifically Christian contribution to revolution. Enrique Dussel in History and the Theology of Liberation compares the approach followed by Dom Helder to that of a dialectic between the "established totality" and the "Other". He adds:

Within that basic framework lies the dialectic between the dominator and the dominated, between the oppressor and the oppressed

If someone is master over another human being and treats that other as a slave, it means that he has reified this human being. He has taken a free Other and reduced him to his tool; the Other is merely an instrument which he uses to achieve what he wants. It is this reality which underlies the oppression of the oppressed, and it is the one and only sin love is -- allowing the Other to be free and alive as a human being. And if someone truly loves the Other in this way, then he truly loves God as well.³⁰

Note that the terms in which the oppressor-oppressed axis is couched are abstract (i.e., universal and trans-historical) and personalistic. But this does not mean that they cannot be translated into a strategy of class struggle at the level of concrete historical praxis. Indeed, such mediation is essential if they are not to be meaningless in practice. What it does mean is that a Christian perspective of class struggle cannot help but have a profound effect on its overall sense. As Segundo has shown, the two basic requirements of Christian love are that it impose a radical, personal demand from the 'outside' (i.e., it could never simply be a glorified love of humanity expressed 'objectively' as proletarian self-love), and that it be historically efficacious.³¹ We might also add the words of Giulio Girardi: "There is a classism animated by hate and a classism animated by love."³²

When Dom Helder argues that the gospel is much more revolutionary than Marx he must be understood in this light. There is no question here of re-introducing a separate Christian ideology of revolution to compete with that of Marxism. Rather, what is involved is the critical exercise

of faith in a qualitative and humanizing way upon secular, ideological struggles.³³ Faith both incarnates itself in the revolutionary challenges of history to men of good will, and resists the absolutization of any one particular historical form or goal of revolutionary action. These two aspects of the role of faith form a crucial background to any final determination of the meaning of joint praxis for Christians and Marxists.

In the first case of the historical mediation of faith one can point to the pressing need for radical political action in a world marked by exploitation and injustice on a previously unheard-of scale. In his book Marxism and Christianity Giulio Girardi considers the related questions of peace and revolution of such paramount importance to modern man that he devotes nearly one-third of his analysis to them. In a conclusion relevant to our present discussion he writes:

The synthesis of the commandments of the love of God and the love of man becomes the synthesis of religion and liberation, religion and revolution. It is the task of our time to bring into the open all the social and global implications of this challenge There is no reason, therefore, to consider the revolutionary ideal as essentially tied to atheism. The making explicit of the anthropocentric component of Christianity offers to atheism the possibility of working out a common historical project with all who, regardless of their religious perspectives, are concerned with the liberation of man.³⁴

Girardi is arguing, not that Christianity can claim a monopoly of revolutionary truth, but that the idea of revolution needs to be redeemed in Christian thought; it must be shown that Christians can, indeed must, become

revolutionaries. This is how Dom Helder addresses a similar appeal to non-believers: "If your life has taken you far from religious practice or even faith, perhaps you still love truth. Perhaps you are capable of suffering for justice. Then you will be able to help a great deal and serve as an example in difficult times."³⁵ In short, the call to revolutionary action is directed to all regardless of the faith or ideology which they presently profess.

But of course the way of answering such a call will not be the same for the person who has an unqualified Christian faith as for one who accepts Marxist ideology in an unqualified form. This is the second aspect of the critical contribution of faith. A Christian approach to revolution has no room for a "situation" ethics or motives of selfishness or revenge, and at the same time it must make room for standards of fidelity to conscience, tolerance, and a preference for non-violence. It is precisely in these areas that Marxism is seen as most clearly deficient because of its limitations as a post-Enlightenment rationalism.

To the extent that Marxism conceives of material history as a supreme logos and entelechy, it establishes a metaphysics of history, albeit a naturalistic one, which ultimately ends up as historicism. (Hegel's "cunning of reason" has shown itself to be as proficient at justifying amoral acts as Smith's "invisible hand".) History then is only a new guise for a teleology of being, since man's true or essential nature is seen as perfectible and knowable, although not, it is true, until the abolition of the realm

of necessity. In Christianity, by contrast, the conscience of faith, while summoning the "new man" from within history, in no way operates as a historical ontology of self-creation in which the contradictions of the human condition are viewed as fully resolvable. Man has been, is, and will always be free to create more and to be more. Whereas Marxism offers a politics which frees man for a particular historical future, namely, that of communist society, its materialist dialectic would seem to lose its potency beyond that point. For the Christian revolutionary there can never be any question of confusing a socialist future with the absolute future.

It may seem rather unfair to hold Marxism responsible for the weaknesses which it has inherited from the progressivist rationalism of neo-Hegelian philosophy.³⁶ Certainly Marxism has made the decisive modern contribution to revolutionary theory through its understanding of the primacy of real historical praxis. But Marxism is not fully capable of guarding against the danger of this praxis becoming reified, just as the ideal relations of Hegel became reified in the Prussian state. Neither is Christianity of course: the beneficiaries (sic) of "Christian love" throughout history have not fared noticeably better than those of the "dictatorship of the proletariat". Nevertheless, because Christianity does not demand of man that he build the perfect society, perhaps it is more than simply a pious hope to believe that it can be more sensitive to, and forgiving of, his inevitable shortcomings.

The major practical difficulty still facing the search for a joint Christian-Marxist praxis is that alluded to at the end of the preceding chapter. Dom Helder laments the fact that too often Marxists succumb to the temptation of imposing their convictions by force, -- something which has been the great error of Christians for centuries.³⁷

Lenin may have said: "Unity in this really revolutionary struggle of the oppressed class for the creation of a paradise on earth is more important to us than unity of proletarian opinion on paradise in heaven."³⁸ Unfortunately, institutionalized Marxism lost no time in exhibiting the extremes of sectarianism and ideological partisanship. On this Dom Helder put it to me in no uncertain terms: "I do not accept to work with people who have a blind obedience", adding, with a touch of irony: "I have no blind obedience to the pope and neither to God, because God does not accept blind obedience."³⁹

In sum, an attenuation of confessionalism, at least of the dogmatic sort, would seem to be a pre-requisite for broader cooperation among Christians and Marxists at the practical level. It bears repeating that Marxism, properly understood, is not a religion (nor should it become a surrogate religion), and that Christianity, properly understood, is not an ideology or a social theory, so that each should be considered as relatively autonomous in its own sphere. To the extent that both overlap and confront each other as total views, the tensions which arise will have to be faced squarely.⁴⁰ The most important thing is for both Christianity

and Marxism to continue striving to strengthen their own praxes and commitments to human liberation. In this way, for a joint revolutionary praxis to form, Christians will want to work with Marxists, without feeling compelled to work as Marxists in order to be considered truly revolutionary. On the other hand Christians will be able to seek their authentic values in a common revolutionary process without imposing a version of "Christian revolution" on everyone else.⁴¹ The words of the priest-guerrilla Camilo Torres are still valid:

I have said that as a Colombian, as a sociologist, as a Christian, and as a priest I am a revolutionary. I do not seek to proselytize my Communist brethren and induce them to accept the dogma and the rites of the church. What I strive for is that people should act according to their conscience, that they should sincerely search for the truth, and that they should truly love their fellow man.⁴² /emphasis added/

Perhaps the motto for any future Christian-Marxist praxis will have to be: "Our task is not to convert the world, but to change it."⁴³

NOTES

1. Câmara, Revolution Through Peace, pp. 71-72.
2. See Alfredo Fierro, La Imposible Ortodoxia, (Salamanca: Sigueme, 1974); also The Militant Gospel, passim.
3. Ellacuría, Freedom Made Flesh, p. 15. As Segundo points out: "... through Yahweh's intervention, the liberation which spring represented in every natural religion acquired a new meaning: i.e., liberation from slavery in Egypt. In other words, cyclic time was converted into history." (Grace and the Human Condition, pp. 119-120.)
4. J.M. Bonino supports this with evidence from both the old and the new testaments. The "faith of Israel is consistently portrayed, not as a gnosis, but as a way" (Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, p. 89). To the objection that the definition of an authentic hermeneutics in terms of liberating praxis is a capitulation to Marxist epistemology, Bonino replies: "Historical verification! When the Baptist asks from jail whether Jesus is or is not the Messiah, he is not offered a theoretical answer or an iron-clad argument. He is only confronted with facts: 'the blind receive sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised up and the poor have good news preached to them'. (Mathew 11: 4-5)". (Christians and Marxists, p. 41.)
5. Ellacuría, op.cit., p. 17.
6. Ibid.
7. Bonino sums up the fundamentally political nature of this new, hermeneutical approach: "We are not concerned with establishing through deduction the consequences of conceptual truths but with analyzing a historical praxis which claims to be Christian. This critical analysis includes a number of operations, which are totally unknown to classical theology. Historical praxis overflows the area of the subjective and private. If we are dealing with acts and not merely with ideas, feelings, or intentions, we plunge immediately into the area of politics, understood now in its broad sense of public or social." (Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, p. 93.)
8. Ellacuría, op.cit., p. 18.
9. Assmann borrows this phrase meaning "the general theory of efficient action" from T. Kotarbinski. See Assmann, Theology for a Nomad Church, pp. 74 ff.
10. Ibid., p. 74.

11. Segundo, The Sacraments Today, p. 54. This is another indication of how theology is coming to grips with Marxism. Excluding the hypothesis of divine intervention, which is accepted on faith, the teleological view of historical necessity (the relationship of true knowledge, freedom, and history) propounded by Segundo parallels in many respects that of Marx and Engels.
12. Assmann, op.cit., p. 77.
13. Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, pp. 98, 101.
14. Baum, Religion and Alienation, p. 190.
15. Segundo, op.cit., p. 122.
16. Cited in Bonino, op.cit., p. 88.
17. From "Racionalidad socialista y verificación histórica del cristianismo", in Philip Berryman, "Latin American Liberation Theology", Theological Studies, vol. 34, 1973, p. 374.
18. See Bonino, Christians and Marxists, pp. 126 ff.
19. See the "Declaration of the 80" and other documents in John Eagleson, ed., Christians and Socialism, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1975).
20. Ibid., p. 170. There were of course differences of opinion within the movement, but the intransigence of some of its public statements reflected the remarkably polemical and polarized atmosphere which then existed in Chile. For the most complete account of the life of the movement see Alfredo Fierro and R. Ruperez, eds., Cristianos Por El Socialismo; Documentación, (Spain: Editorial Verbo Divino, 1975). Since the Chilean debacle an association of Christians For Socialism has been reconstituted on an international basis. The first world congress was held in April, 1975 at Québec City. For a recent assessment of the goals of Christians For Socialism and the documents of this meeting see Giulio Girardi, Chrétien pour le Socialisme, (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1976).
21. One still finds this tendency among groups of radical Christians who are trying to be both fully Christian and fully Marxist at the same time. For example, at a conference sponsored by the Mexican Communist Party in Mexico City, a Jesuit sociologist Enrique Maza summed up one conclusion of the group (which included Bishop Mendez Arceo of Cuernavaca) as: "The class struggle is an undeniable fact which at present is becoming the only way to express Christian love" /emphasis added/ (From "El Cristianismo Coincidirá con el Marxismo", report in El Universal, Mexico City, April 25, 1977, p. 18.)

22. Jean Guichard, Eglise, Luttres de Classés, et Stratégies Politiques, (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1972), p. 15.
See also Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, pp. 111 ff.
23. Cited in Eagleson, Christians and Socialism, p. 192.
24. Ibid., pp. 210-211.
25. Ibid., pp. 9-10.
26. See the article by Arroyo, "Christians, the Church, and Revolution" in ibid.
27. From the essay "Religious Socialism" included in the collection, Paul Tillich, Political Expectation, (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 78. See also Tillich, The Socialist Decision, trans. by Franklin Sherman, (New York: Harper and Row, 1977).
28. Political Expectation, p. 91.
29. This does not mean in any sense that an oppressive reality can be "manufactured" to suit the radical activist. As Freire puts it:

Conscientization discovers a real situation, the most frequent symptoms of which are struggle and violence. To conscientize does not mean by any means to ideologize or to mouth partisan slogans. If conscientization opens the way for the expression of social dissatisfactions, it is because the latter are real components of an oppressive situation If conscientization of the popular classes leads to political radicalization, it is simply because those popular classes are already radical, even if unconsciously.

(Cited in Paulo Freire, LADOC 'Keyhole' no. 1, p. 48.)
30. Dussel, History and the Theology of Liberation, p. 145.
31. The Christian conception of love may not be "rational" or "scientific", but there is nothing ethereal about it. Segundo cites St. Augustine from De Trinitate: "God is love, the very same love with which we love." (Our Idea of God, p. 92)
32. Girardi, Marxism and Christianity, p. 247.
33. Faith cannot be simply subordinated to any so-called 'exigencies' of revolution. Even Assmann admits, in the context of a discussion on "efficacy and gratuitousness", that some Latin American Christians who have opted for radical liberating action, "in some cases ... seem to

have lost sight of the deeper human values and operate solely in accordance with ideological criteria." (Theology for a Nomad Church, p. 78.)

34. Girardi, op.cit., chp. IV "Peace and Revolution", p. 230.
35. Câmara, Spiral of Violence, pp. 62-63.
36. Cf. the reflections of J.B. Metz "On the Hiddenness of the Problem of the Future in Metaphysics", in Theology of the World, pp. 98-100.
37. See Câmara, "La violence n'est pas suffisante", (Le Nouvel Observateur, January 25, 1971, pp. 30-31. (Also in PL.)
38. Cited in Herbert Aptheker, The Urgency of the Marxist-Christian Dialogue, (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 12.
39. Interview in Recife, March 25, 1977.
40. Cf. Bonino, Christians and Marxists, pp. 118-126.
41. The very meaning of joint praxis is that Christians should not be afraid that they will have to give up or "play-down" their faith and its attendant values in order to participate fully in a secular revolutionary movement. Cf: Juan Bulnes, "El pensamiento cristiano, ¿sirve para la liberación social?", Pastoral Popular, 20:120, December 1970, pp. 47-57.
42. "Message to Communists", in Gerassi, ed., Revolutionary Priest, p. 326. See also F. Castellanos, "Camilo Torres y el diálogo entre revolucionarios", Cuadernos Americanos, 27:3, May-June 1968, p. 180.
43. Neil Middleton, The Language of Christian Revolution, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1968), p. 180.

SECTION 3:3 THE ENDS OF REVOLUTION

CHAPTER NINE

CHURCH AND SOCIETY: LIBERATION AND DEVELOPMENT?

Through our analyses of the form and nature of contemporary revolutionary commitment, we have seen that Christianity and revolution are not only not opposed to each other in principle, but may be considered, as they are in the thought of Helder Câmara, as necessarily complementary. In other words, faith in Christ, while it does not imply any separate theory or science of revolutionary action, does induce Christians to act in a revolutionary manner within modern societies. But Christianity and revolution are not metaphysical concepts, the interrelationship of which can be defined in ahistorical, generic terms. It would be the height of a fallacious idealism to simply assert that the 'essence' of Christianity is revolutionary, when its historical manifestations have so obviously been primarily antirevolutionary. Specifically, it must be asked how the new understanding of the revolutionary character of faith might be concretely mediated through the actual structures of Christianity. In the case of Latin America and the ideas of Archbishop Câmara this means focussing on institutionalized churches, in particular, the Roman Catholic church.

Similarly, revolution cannot be treated as a self-evident abstraction or as an isolated phenomenon. There are many typologies of revolution, but for our purposes it is useful to speak of technical, political, and social revolu-

tions, and of their historical interrelatedness. In a discussion of the 1966 World Council of Churches conference on the theme of "Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of Our Time", Arend van Leeuwen refers to the "opposite modes of rationality" separating the "theological technocrats" from the "theological guerrillas" -- the tradition of technological, positivistic humanism from that of revolutionary ideological humanism.¹ On one hand the spokesmen for the First World employ the jargon of modernization and developmentalism; on the other, the representatives of the Third World echo the words of Nkrumah: "Seek ye first the political kingdom ...". But van Leeuwen questions the validity of such a dichotomy. In Development Through Revolution he uses the analysis of Thomas Kuhn in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions to draw a parallel between the intractability of the physical universe and that of socio-political life. Development, even the development of science, never simply follows an orderly line of cumulative growth, but is rather a dialectical process.² Underdevelopment, therefore, will not be solved by unilinear visions of technical progress, or of social and political enlightenment, which either ignore or attempt to conceal the contradictions in any of these dimensions.

It is interesting to note that it is in Marxism that the technical and political modes of rationality are most powerfully blended. Despite the notorious passages concerning heat and mechanical motion in Engels' Anti-Dühring, Marxism is clearly not a crude technological determinism.

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The Marxian concept of revolution is directed above all toward qualitative changes in human social relations, although this is grounded upon the prior development of society's productive forces. Moreover, the historical vehicle for revolutionary change is the access to political power of an exploited class. Revolution is a global phenomenon in which the material transformation of man's relation to his object (in the realm of thought the "epistemological break" in which the old "paradigm" is destroyed) leads to an upheaval in all the orders -- moral, legal, political, etc. -- of society.

We see a similarly total concept of revolution operating in the prophetism of Helder Câmara. His call for a "structural revolution" on a world-wide scale goes beyond mere legislative reform or change of political regimes to embrace a complete catharsis of the "established disorder". As for material progress, technology must be humanized and the control over it democratized so that it can be made to serve the ends of social justice. But whereas Marxism sees the advent of a socialist mode of production as the final, definitive solution to the problem of exploitation, and implicitly of revolution, Câmara sees revolution as also the area for the critical exercise of a permanent eschatological 'not yet'. Revolution cannot be relegated to "pre-history" or to a unidirectional development series of "crises and sequences".³ Rather it is the ongoing challenge to a "cultural revolution" which calls into question the sufficiency of every socio-political order.

In this regard van Leeuwen makes an important statement: "A philosophy of history will ultimately lead into dilemmas and paradoxes which cannot be dealt with adequately except within the framework of theological categories. In the last analysis, the challenge of revolution conceals a crisis in the theological dimension."⁴ As we have seen, the Marxist philosophy of history is too much indebted to a progressivist rationalism to be able to maintain the tension between the eschatological and the historical. To the extent that Marxism conceives of the era of socialism as a post-revolutionary "heaven on earth", it reveals itself to be insufficiently dialectical, at least from the Christian point of view. In the next chapter the boundary between material social development (whether explained in evolutionary or revolutionary terms) and salvation will be explored further. Suffice it to say at this point that 'liberation' is the term which has been adopted by the Latin Americans in order to bridge these two realities without conflating both or denying one in order to serve the other. The end of revolution is liberation, which cannot be defined as a state of being or having, but only as a process of becoming. There is, in short, no possibility of a fully "liberated" social order which would thereby also outgrow the need for salvation.

When one speaks of the prospects for the Christian church performing a revolutionary role within society, it is essential that the above considerations be borne in mind. Revolutionary in this sense, and as used by Dom Helder, implies both a particular liberationist view of salvation

and a particular liberationist view of development. Leaving aside the former for the proceeding chapter, it is the object of the present discussion to assess the implications of such a perspective for the politics of the church.

To begin, it is obvious that a shift to liberation as the chief measure of development enormously complicates any analysis of church participation in social affairs. When North American functionalists such as Ivan Vallier have written about church "development" they have used the term as referring to "major institutional changes brought about by change-oriented elites to increase the overall capacities of a system to meet and deal with its salient environments."⁵ /emphasis added/ This definition could as well fit on the lips of a modern-day Grand Inquisitor, but it has the dubious merit of providing a range of relatively accessible and self-explanatory indicators. (I say dubious because Vallier's perspective of "modernization" allows him to bring together a mass of rather disconnected data on the Latin American churches in the form of profiles which evince virtually no understanding of the momentous historical discontinuity of many recent occurrences within these churches. Radicalism is simply shunted aside into the catch-all category of the "deviance" or turbulence which usually accompanies a period of rapid adjustment.)

By contrast, the Latin Americans insist that authentic development be viewed, not in terms of cumulative change and adaptation, but rather in terms of confrontation with a series of internal and external mechanisms of domination.

loosely grouped under the heading of "neocolonialism".⁶

Human advancement is now linked to an uncertain process of struggle, and not just to statistical averages or the growth and differentiation of institutions. In the evaluation of liberative development the emphasis shifts from the quantitative to the qualitative, insofar as the former becomes relevant only in relation to the latter. As Denis Goulet explains: "Visible benefits are no doubt sought, but the decisive test of success is that, in obtaining them, a society will have fostered greater popular autonomy in a non-elitist mode, social creativity instead of imitation, and control over forces of change instead of mere adjustment to them."⁷ The operative variables are "social justice", "popular determination", "cultural autonomy", and so forth, rather than efficiency and stability, although the latter may be seen as part of the necessary means for the achievement of desired social goals.

A methodology of liberation clearly poses insurmountable problems for any social science which claims to be "value-free". But this does not mean that the content of such a methodology is purely a matter of subjective preference, or that it lacks either critical rigor or empirical grounding. A liberation approach has analytical power to the extent that it unmasks the ideological basis of conventional developmentalism (with its vocabulary derived from metaphysics and meta-biology), and lays bare the structures of domination behind a Parsonsian jargon of power maintenance and societal integration. A liberation approach has

explanatory value to the extent that it searches out the root causes of cultural phenomena. For example, it will make it increasingly difficult to argue that the poverty and sense of impotence of the Latin American masses is simply due to tropical lethargy or lack of western "achievement drive". Finally, a liberation approach has predictive capacity to the extent that it becomes a "daring calculus of possibility": i.e., that as an instrument of hope and raised critical consciousness it frees collective energies and makes possible future mobilization for change.⁸

The language of liberation returns us to questions of democratic participation from those of managerialism, questions of purpose from those of function, of dialectical reason and revolution from mere technical reason and "piece-meal engineering". In doing so the pandora's box of ideological politics may be opened. But it is the ideological politics which assumes that the great issues of political philosophy are still relevant, not that which has become synonymous with demagoguery and extremism. A liberation idiom, if it is honest, does not hold out the promise of grand solutions. What it does is to combine the utopian imagination (into which faith enters as one critical element⁹) with 'realpolitik'. There is no escape sought from concrete, practical matters. As René Laurentin states soberly in Liberation, Development and Salvation: "Liberation will not be brought on stage 'Deus ex machina' fashion, but through the action of human freedoms enlightened by the rationality of the intelligence and immersed in the realisms of political

policy a purely anarchical notion of the word 'liberation' without any viable development project would merely reinforce the established disorder."¹⁰

Liberation is not simply about destroying old orders; it is about building the order of the future through a conscious break with the past. In Latin America, a liberation perspective may in fact be the most pragmatic and positive form of discourse since it does not shy away from the urgency of a violent wrenching of social structures and social priorities. The "theologies of development" of the mid 1960s proved inadequate for the Latin American situation, not because they refused to ask critical questions, but because they tended to look at global solutions and processes of change through rose-tinted glasses.¹¹ In Harvey Cox's celebrated book, The Secular City, one finds a chapter with the snappy title "The Church as God's Avant-garde". But "avant-garde of what? Cox's frequently brilliant efforts to reclaim the Weberian images of secularization and rationalization for Christianity end up as a hymn to secular (western?) pragmatism and the definition of revolutionary social change in terms of liberal-progressive ideology.¹² On the basis of these same images one might as easily turn to the pessimism of a Reinhold Niebuhr or lament the approach of the "iron cage", as opt for the glad tidings of the "secular city".

The near apotheosis of modernization syndromes by some North Americans, or for that matter, of socialist revolution by some Latin Americans, raises a number of

questions about the critical distance between the church and contemporary society. Is the church an area of prophetic liberty within society, or is its social posture limited to the performance (or non-performance) of various legitimization functions? Most North American social scientists have argued the latter. The choice of roles in Latin America, therefore, is presented straightforwardly as between the institution as a feudal remnant, and the institution as a cautious harbinger of western-style development. Religious concerns are viewed as strictly apolitical, but the church, as a long-standing moral authority, is still thought to be potentially socially useful in creating a climate of opinion for accepting and facilitating change-oriented strategies proposed by other elites. When the church oversteps these bounds to undergo a radical internal politicization, it is immediately chastised for being "utopian" and dangerously out of its element.¹³

It is clear that neither the arguments of a political theology about the critical role of the church, nor therefore the position of Dom Helder Câmara, have been anticipated or appreciated by these researchers. If it is pre-judged that the church's response to its external environment is restricted to reflex actions of a positive or negative type, then no hypothesis can ever arise which is predicated on the institution being able to exercise critical autonomy. Rather, any forays of the church into the socio-political arena are automatically assumed to be the result of circumstantial pressures. Often this is subtly insinuated by

otherwise matter-of-fact statements. Karl Schmitt in an introduction to The Roman Catholic Church in Modern Latin America writes: "Some kind of political role cannot be avoided if the Church is again to become a meaningful factor in Latin America. Involvement entails risks, but non-involvement means institutional marginality if not death."¹⁴ Two implications, both false, are that: 1) the church can choose political neutrality, and indeed was non-political during the time when it constituted a massive, reactionary, but carefully sacralized presence within Latin American political culture, and 2) if the church now takes up a political role (which is in truth only a different political role) it must be out of an instinct for self-preservation.

By contrast, Dom Helder insists that it is precisely the sins of the past, particularly a fixation with maintaining power and prestige, which now compel the church to overt political action in a radically new key. As he once put it: "Let's get rid of the idea that the Church, after having committed so many atrocities, can now afford to sit back. It is our duty to offer leadership, yes, but without any pride, because we Christians are the most guilty."¹⁵ The church's public stance must be based, not on power and authority, as in a throw-back to the Christendom ideal, but on service and solidarity in the work of liberation.¹⁶ The church must stand up for the just and equitable treatment of every human being without exception. It must exert every bit of moral force it can muster in the defense of human rights, and this responsibility of service cannot be

abdicated even when it is scorned or rejected by the rest of society, or when it threatens certain traditional structures.¹⁷

In Dom Helder's view the church is called upon to make concrete political choices, but only from a position of official powerlessness. "The mission of the Church is a prophetic one, and its power is therefore the power of the word (it announces, denounces, exhorts, teaches, but 'it has not been given the task of exercising political power').¹⁸

It is not the business of the church to produce development or liberation. There are no five-year plans for the operation of divine grace! Nonetheless, the church must define itself as an indispensable catalyst or 'conscientizing' agent within humanity's efforts to throw off oppressive and alienating structures and put on the "new man". The church must therefore also be prepared to suffer the consequences of being called to proclaim a message which of its very essence resists any final captivity as a civil religion. Dom Helder sums up:

The church as a whole has the responsibility of promoting justice as the condition for peace, of supporting human rights. This is not only a possibility; it is a duty

It is not our mission to create a Christian party, a Catholic party The statistics show that more and more people are living in a less than human condition. It is incredible! So we have a prophetic role, a prophetic mission. But sometimes we hear: "Yes, you are denouncing and fighting injustices, but you are not able to show a solution, to establish the solution." But we are not a super-government We are only the living presence of Christ

The problem for us is not one of prestige -- it is not that we want to obtain the support of the great mass. Our problem is not to be served, but to serve

When you see great portions of mankind crushed it is a great charity to help liberate them. The great poverty for the church is to be wrongly judged -- to be called "subversive", "communist", when as a consequence and duty of the gospel it is denouncing injustice

It is the hour for the church to assume a courageous position, a prophetic mission, and to help to construct a more human world.¹⁹

The first and perhaps most important thing to note about the above is the primacy which it gives to liberation as a concrete, material reality in defining the essential nature of the church's mission to the world. The church does not exist to offer its own special brand of spiritualized liberation as an opium to the masses, but rather to witness to the "word made flesh" in the face of the common problems of mankind. Evangelization and humanization do not operate on two separate planes, but are parts of one and the same historical process. To 'do Christ's work on earth' has literally nothing to do with piling up grace "in heaven" or treating truth and orthodoxy as private, exclusive possessions, because the only horizon upon which the liberative action of the Christian community can be played out is one that is temporal, political, and historical. This is in fact in line with many New Testament passages.²⁰

But if the church's work of liberation is to fashion a new humanity within history, this raises complex issues, the responses to which are only hinted at by Dom Helder. Why is the church necessary at all for human liberation, or even for faith? What is the relationship between the church as an eschatological community and as a social institution? Is it possible to be prophetic without becoming ideological?

How should the church perform its mission of service? How must it be constituted in order to do so?

In The Community Called Church Segundo points out that the Christian tradition conceives of God's grace -- the 'freedom to be and to stay human in the world'²¹ -- as freely available to all. Moreover, both Christians and non-Christians are to be judged by the same criterion, 'love of neighbor'. (See especially Mathew²⁵:31-46.) But this universal law of mutual love did not become incarnate in human history until the birth of the man, Jesus Christ:

... The redemptive work of Christ, carried out within history, goes beyond the limits of time and dominates the whole unfolding development of the universe -- both its past and its future.

But there is something that begins with Christ and that moves out solely toward the future: namely, the revelation of this plan that suffuses all time. The Christian is not the only one to enter into this plan. But he is the one who knows it. He knows the plan because he has received not only redemption but also revelation.²²

In this conception, Christ is the 'homo revelatus', the logos-liberator,²³ who has been made known to a "chosen people". This people is of course the 'church'. Those who have recognized Christ as the universal instrument of salvation have been thereby entrusted with a special mission to the world and with special responsibilities toward forming among themselves a living community of faith. The catholicity of the church is never a question of numbers (although it tended to be under Christendom), but rather of the universality of the message to which the church, as a particular, historical community, has been called to witness. For the same reason, the church is never to be a ghetto of the self-satisfied

"elect", because the message, of which Christians are only the bearers, belongs to all men and to their real-life historical situation, not to some "spiritual", quasi-magical realm whose mysteries are the private preserve of an elite few. Moreover:

Those who do not know "the breadth and length and height and depth" (Eph. 3:18) of the love with which God loves us and we love other men do not walk in total darkness along the pathway of salvation. They too do know God, but not precisely through the religious structures that man has created as a surrogate for God, nor even in the conscious plenitude of faith. They know him by giving assent to the deepest dynamism that God has placed in man: love of one's fellow men.²⁴

Any number of examples from both the Old and the New Testament could be adduced to show that in the Judaeo-Christian perspective love of God is predicated on love of neighbor and not the other way around. The church is to help men to discover how to love their neighbor and thereby to love God, but it does not have a monopoly on either. In other words, the medium is definitely not the message. If the church has a unique role in history, it is only to the extent that as a "sign-community" it is able to mediate, in a public, concrete, and critical (i.e., prophetic) way, the liberating revelation of faith to the basic experiences shared by all men. To say that the church has a role to play in secular processes of liberation and development, is to say that Christians as a whole are to act in solidarity with all those who are striving for human betterment, and at the same time to discern a universal and transhistorical sense or meaning within the particular events involved, -- nothing

more and nothing less.

It is the eschatological element in the above which is the source of the major controversies over church participation in political affairs. This element must "become flesh" in concrete, historical situations -- in an often ambiguous and complex political praxis --, but how requires hard decisions. Dom Helder and the liberation theologians are adamant that the Christian message is not to be promoted through the instrumentality of a separate Christian ideology or Christian political party. Yet the 'critical liberty' of faith is not something which is free-floating, abstract, or merely individual. To be efficacious at all it must be expressed by way of historical languages, with all their cultural idiosyncracies, ideologies, with all of their tendencies toward rationalization and oversimplification, and social institutions, with all their inherent dangers of becoming inflexible and self-serving. The church cannot skip over these problematic mediations; it can only grow in maturity by means of them.

From the perspective of a political theology, the proper relationship between the church and the "world" is not the antagonistic one of a manichean dualism (the church versus the world), or the triumphalist one of an incarnational cosmology (the church as the embodiment of the salvation of the world). Rather, the relationship is to be secularized and dialectical, because the eschatological message of Jesus can only be understood "in a socio-political sense; that is, as a critical, liberating force in regard to the social world

and its historical processes In this context, "church" is not a reality beside or over this societal reality; rather, it is an institution within it, criticizing it, having a critical liberating task in regard to it."²⁵ The church is necessary because it is the "institution of the critical liberty of faith". Against the claims of individualism and a utopian anarchism, one of the paradoxes of history has been that only strong institutions can provide the historical continuity and intersubjective grounding required for the effective exercise of critical liberty.²⁶

The church is challenged to become the kind of institution which both attacks human egoism and domination wherever it threatens to objectify other human beings, and seeks to actualize the socio-critical dynamism of love.

Argues Enrique Dussel:

The "outside", the Other, is of the eschatological essence of the Church. If we feel that we are already in the kingdom of heaven, then there will be no prophetic mission and no Church militant The Church has a critical, liberative mission which is to destroy every self-enclosed totality -- thereby opening it up to new possibilities of political, cultural, and religious organization.²⁷

Of course, it follows that the church, if it is to truly help others, must first need its own advice:

As institution the Church herself lives under the eschatological proviso. She is not for herself; she does not serve her own self-affirmation, but the historical affirmation of the salvation of all men. The hope she announces is not a hope for herself but for the kingdom of God. As institution, the Church truly lives on the proclamation of her own proviso. And she must realize this eschatological stipulation in that she establishes herself as the institution of critical liberty, in the face of society and its absolute and self-sufficient claims.²⁸

At this point a serious objection arises which must be prosecuted before we can proceed further. Has not the church consistently suppressed critical liberty and collaborated with oppressing classes and governments in the past, and does it not continue to do so? If so, where on earth is the social and historical basis for the claim that the very essence of the church's mission is to act as a socio-critical institution? This objection is in some respects unanswerable, because to deny a sinful reality would be to engage in sheer romanticism and voluntarism. It is also, however, somewhat beside the point since unless one subscribes to the sort of sociological reductionism which eliminates 'a priori' any possibility of critical autonomy, the very fact that some Christians are evolving new theologies, and even laying their lives on the line in order to put them to the test, is reason enough not to pre-judge the future. In Latin America, under extremely varied and difficult circumstances, the whole church is being revitalized almost entirely because small parts of it have been able to shake off the paralyzing weight of tradition in precisely this way. And it is clearly the hope of men like Dom Helder that if more and more Christians believe in the church as an instrument of human liberation, their hope will indeed become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The church must still live with its past and its present, and with the knowledge that its responses to changing circumstances cannot escape being culturally and structurally conditioned. Even if one agrees that the church

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is not automatically a sacralizing mechanism for the ideology of a ruling class, it seems extremely unlikely that the church could remain viable performing a function which is by definition permanently "subversive". Yet this is precisely the political import of the church's eschatological burden. It would appear that to survive as a historical institution, the church must in the long run either acquiesce to an assigned role of integration, pacification, legitimization, etc., or renounce any claim to the exercise of political power. If it chooses the former the church ceases to be prophetic and therefore betrays its mission. If it chooses the latter it severely restricts its capacity to effect practical results in the socio-political realm, and runs the risk of being considered irrelevant or worse, of retreating into a shell.

Since the first choice is inconceivable in the light of a political theology, the dilemma for the church is how to become historically efficacious for human liberation from a position of powerlessness.-- that is, without recourse to any official or cultural status. The temptation for the church, as it has always been, is to bypass this costly challenge and lapse into quietism or opportunism. Such a temptation is at the heart of the question of the relation of prophetic action to ideological action. Like faith, prophecy without ideology is a mere abstraction. There is no "safe", atemporal way to denounce injustice. On the other hand, prophecy which transforms itself into an ideology becomes enclosed within a relative set of circumstances and

is therefore ephemeral. How then does the prophetic church use ideology in an efficacious but "powerless" way, all the while resisting the pressures of ideological captivity?

I think we may find an important clue in an essay by Ivan Illich on "The Church, Change, and Development".

Illich writes in the opening paragraph: "Only the Church can 'reveal' to us the full meaning of development. To live up to this task, the Church must recognize that she is growing powerless to orient or produce development. The less efficient she is as a power the more effective she can be as a celebrant of the mystery."²⁹ The 'telos' of the church is not to be a social service agency or a surrogate revolutionary movement. It is not for the church qua church to "liberate" anyone, any class, or any nation. Of course, insofar as the church in present-day Latin America still wields "legitimate" social power, it has a responsibility to use that power in the service of those suffering under the yoke of oppression, a yoke which sadly it helped to fashion. In this respect, Helder Câmara is perfectly correct in arguing that the Church must exercise its power to help make up for the sins of the past. But as his friend Ivan Illich advises, the church should not be wielding such power in the first place, and the onslaught of secularization will thankfully see to it that it has none in the future.

The church must reject any definition of its role as a 'modernizing elite' or a 'liberation front'. Rather, what it is called to be is, in Dom Helder's words, the visible "living presence of Christ" in the midst of man's constant

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struggle for liberation and development. This presence will therefore have to be active, public, and political, -- and to that extent, ideological. (In fact, all of these adjectives can be applied to a greater or lesser degree to Jesus's own ministry.) The mission which calls for such a presence remains, however, eschatological, and not fundamentally oriented toward temporary or short-term results. The special efficacy and scope of critico-prophetic activity is well summed up in the conclusion to a 1969 study on the concept of development in the Latin American church:

The proclamation which the Church makes -- or ought to make -- is not a secret message to a few elect, nor a call in code to the intimacy of the spirit, but constitutes a public proclamation -- cosmic, if you will --, of the ultramundane sense of all creation and, in balance, a denunciation of all those situations which lead man to lose himself in the senselessness of his existence. Such are -- and more acutely so in our day and age -- the situations of social injustice, of man's exploitation, of the exploitation of nations. This requirement of justice must become so absolute and radical in the Christian conception of man that no form of unjust society could be imagined that does not call forth the permanent, public denunciation of the Church. In this way, immersed in history, it works as a catalyst of progress, giving impulse to historical decisions and marking a minimum ethical level for political action.³⁰

The church is not to indoctrinate its members with its own "political science", or draw up a master plan for society. Its role is the more modest, yet far more demanding one of illuminating the path for its members, so that each will strengthen his commitment to contribute "his person and his action to the technical and political edification of a more just society."³¹ Just how the church should illuminate that path is a moot point. But we have already outlined in

a previous chapter the trap fallen into by the Christians For Socialism movement in Chile. Consider too the danger of clericalism and ideological partisanship inherent in the following statements from a sociological and theological study of an urban district in Buenos Aires, statements now almost taken for granted by many radical Latin American Christians:

... Jesus Christ founds in history a community which collaborates in the process of liberation. The faithful church is the response of Christ to the human situation surrounding the zone /in Buenos Aires/ because it is the most evident sign here and now of the new order

The social and political action /of the church community: the 'koinonia' or "society of friends"/ is directed toward eliminating marginalization, the dependency imposed by the violence and the appropriation of production. This lies in the transition from the capitalist to the socialist system.³²

The virtual equation in the above of the socio-critical mission of the church with a socialist project, harks back to the English New Left Catholics of the 1960s and their definition of the church as the "sacrament of a socialist society."³³ But in the political theology of Dom Helder the church is certainly not called to form its own little socialist ghetto, and even less to become the "religious" arm of a socialist movement (with special responsibilities, no doubt, for transforming its part of the "superstructure"). The struggle for socialism, as any other historical process, is not incidental to salvation-history, but the relationship between the two must always be dialectical and never derivative. It would be a hollow victory indeed for the faith if the church were to tie its fortunes in a simplistic

manner to the victory of socialism. In a post-revolutionary socialist society the church would be right back to sanctifying the status quo.

As Illich points out in the essay already cited, secular ideologies will always be necessary, but precisely because they are the secular vehicle for mobilizing solutions to secular problems. The church as an institution with a mission to perform in history must of course be concerned with these problems. But when it is implied that socialism (or likely some ultimate form of it) is the will of God because God is on the side of the proletariat, and that the church is therefore charged with building up socialism, then things are getting dangerously carried away. The advent of socialism does not prove that Christianity is "right" any more than it proves it "wrong". A living faith, to be sure, will always have an instrumental value. To really believe in the Christian God is to work for the liberation of man. But the converse does not hold: being a Christian may mean being a revolutionary, but being a revolutionary certainly need not mean being a Christian.³⁴ Moreover, the process by which faith is arrived at is necessarily gratuitous and unconditional, not instrumental. As Illich declares at the close of his essay: "I want to celebrate my faith for no purpose at all."³⁵

In the highly polarized political climate of Latin America such a statement sounds slightly heretical. Christianity and the church have been reactionary for so long that there is at times an almost feverish desire to

prove their revolutionary potential in dramatic and unequivocal ways. Impatience and zealotry, however, have never been the companions of clear vision. Simply exchanging clericalism in support of the status quo for clericalism in support of a revolution, is ultimately no advance at all. The church must undoubtedly do something more than moralize at a safe distance, but whenever it considers the question of direct involvement in the political process it must face up to the following dilemma and conclusion:

Most times -- and this we are seeing in Latin America -- a mere ethical attitude can be insufficient and even negative, as it causes the reaction and hardening of the means of oppression, of the structures and the oligarchies supported by these. Should the Church then transform itself into an ideology to provide an impulse for change and build more human structures? Undoubtedly this is not its function. The passage from prophetism to ideologism is a permanent and dangerous temptation when the Church assumes its intrahistorical function.³⁶

As Dom Helder never tires of repeating, the church's critico-prophetic task is not to take over or become attached to a political movement -- revolutionary or otherwise -- seeking power, but to defend all human rights, protest all injustices, and work selflessly toward the 'conscientization' of all men, whatever the cost. When the working class in a country is oppressed the church must therefore support its political struggle with the resources at its disposal, but this in no way obliges it exclusively to that class or entitles it to the expectation of future favors should that class assume power. The nature of the church's support is that it must be freely-given, not based on self-serving motives, and that it respect the autonomy of the political

sphere. It is the business of the church to 'conscientize', not to propagandize and proselytize, or "throw its weight around" in other ways.

In this regard it is worth noting that the lessons of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor can be appropriated by a "progressive" church as easily as by a "reactionary" church. With respect to Latin America, probably the greatest weakness of the seminal documents of the Medellín Conference was to have retained a dualistic posture with respect to pastoral praxis -- one for the "elites", and one for the "masses" -- as though, based on a crude sociological interpretation of "No salvation outside the church", it were necessary or even desirable to use mass mechanisms for the sake of the "many weak".³⁷ (Shades of Plato's "noble lie"!) Since Medellín the debate has raged over whether the so-called "popular religion" of the Latin American masses is unredeemable for a radical 'orthopraxis', because it is the product of an alienated, oppressed consciousness, or whether the praxis of liberation must develop ("spontaneously"?) from within the idiom of the people. Unfortunately the theological arguments have frequently been clouded by the association of mass lines of conduct -- which are by definition based on quantitative considerations and the following of a 'line of least resistance' -- with populist, nationalist, and anti-imperialist images³⁸, and, in turn, the association of minority lines of conduct -- which are by definition socio-critical and qualitatively rich -- with images of intellectualism and elitism.³⁹

Several conclusions are in order at this point. First, Uruguyan theologian J.L. Segundo is absolutely correct when he argues that "the worst contradiction imbedded in the praxis of the Church is the fact that it has tried to achieve liberative ends like those of grace and salvation by mass means that are intrinsically opposed to liberation."⁴⁰ A Christendom mentality of trying to hold on to a mass membership represents the degeneration of 'catholicity' into a 'phony universalism'. Second, "what is commonly called the pastoral effort for the people comes down to nothing more than taking religious advantage of those primitive traits of the people which persist, and for as long as they do persist. To think that the people are helped thereby is to entertain an illusion."⁴¹

A third and most important conclusion lies in a combination of the above. The Christian prophetic tradition stands, as it always has, as intrinsically and radically opposed to the standards of the "mass" -- which used to be called conformism, but now pass under the crypto-conservative jargon of pragmatism and systems theory --, and this is fraught with religio-cultural implications.

In the realm of social psychology there is no doubt that it is hard to find a foothold for a universal God who is conceived differently Such a God cannot fill the social role of justifying the stereotypes that are the basis for social cohesion on the mass level

A God who is love will instead call for the overcoming of our insecurity. He will launch the group into the risky venture of opening up calmly to "others" without losing its own cohesion. If God is indeed love, then none of the social functions analyzed above can correspond to him; none of the social functions based on stereotypes, prejudices

and group security can be related to him

This leads us to a pastoral conclusion of the utmost importance: it is "popular religion" that fulfills the social functions we have just discussed. And these functions take on a visceral force when truly profound and rapid cultural changes (e.g. urbanization) leave people without the security of an ancestral tradition.

The function of Christianity is essentially and dialectically opposed to that one. It presupposes that this psychosocial insecurity has been overcome in large measure Only liberation from oppression, insecurity, and passivity toward the phenomena of societal life can pave the way for a mature Christianity.⁴²

What we are now seeing in Latin America is far more than the mere up-dating of dogma. It is the catharsis and perhaps disintegration of a "mass" church. Moreover, the facts are, unless one subscribes to pure voluntarism, that this church has virtually no control over current processes of secularization and modernization, because these are primarily determined by socio-economic factors. This being the case, the church as a mass social institution "will certainly be the last element to change Sociology shows us that masses who are almost fully integrated into modern culture-forms maintain relationships with their primitive past solely in and through religious practices that have no relationship whatsoever with their present roles and values in the everyday life of modern society."⁴³

What then is to be done? Again Segundo puts us on the right track: "The only road open to them /the Latin American masses/ is to pass through the modernization that is a precondition for survival to a revolution that will thoroughly and radically humanize the social structures of the population as a whole."⁴⁴ This revolution will not be

made by the church, and it will necessarily create its own stereotypes (ideologies) which a truly prophetic church will have to remain critical towards, even though it may recognize them as greatly superior to the old.⁴⁵ "The Church really has only two choices. Either it has to be a mass entity supporting the existing order /which may be a post-revolutionary one/. Or else it may attack this order through its own process of consciousness-raising that is based on the revelation of a God who destroys stereotypes."⁴⁶

This goes to the very essence of Dom Helder's paradigm of 'conscientization' based on the courageous action of "abrahamic minorities". He has not been afraid to say both that "the only compromise for the Church is with the people", and that: "It is the minorities that count, they have always changed the world, by fighting it, and then by waking up the masses."⁴⁷ These two statements are complementary, not contradictory. The church must serve the people by directing its public praxis toward the ongoing liberation of all men, and to do so it must remain resolutely prophetic. A critical "minority" cannot be at the same time a powerful elite because the former serves all human beings through a struggle for human advancement (a course of action which entails, in Segundo's terms, a rich and costly synthesis of energy), whereas the latter serves itself through the manipulation of the lowest common denominator (i.e., facile syntheses). Therefore, 'mass' and 'elite' go together as qualitative terms, which are not to be confused with 'mass' and 'minority' as quantitative terms. It is a fact of human evolution that

minority conduct, even that which serves the numerical mass -- e.g., the work of 'conscientization' -- must rely on the efforts of a numerical minority. But any such minority has its own mass tendencies to combat, and any non-elitist minority cannot be opposed to, or apart from, the people it serves.⁴⁸

When one says that the specific socio-political role of the church is to 'conscientize' people, one is assuming, not that the church is a perfect body extrinsic to the mass -- a self-righteous "liberated" zone --, but that the church must always strive to be the leaven within the mass. The church partakes fully of sinful humanity, and at the same time, through the force of mutual love, works to liberate humanity from sin and the consequences of sin. Segundo puts it cogently in the conclusion to Evolution and Guilt:

When Christ bade us to love one another as he had loved us, when he gave us that one commandment, he was not presuming to rectify the mechanism of evolution and humanization. He did not bid us to exercise a celestial, disembodied love that would be ineffective and even harmful. He did not set up his Church as a community "alongside" the human community, as a parallel community dispensed from the latter's concern to move evolution forward and to arrive at the creation of a more human society.

To transpose the notions of grace and sin, love and egotism, outside the coordinates of efficaciousness governing history is tantamount to denying the gospel. But one can also deny the gospel by failing to recognize where the proper function of the Church lies. While the gospel does accept the whole dialectical process / of interaction between 'mass' and 'minority' syntheses/, it expects the Christian community to perform a function equivalent to one of the two poles: the minority.

Only from this vantage point can we appreciate why Christianity applies the word sin to all mass lines of conduct even though it realizes that they are and always will be necessary. Only from

this vantage point can we understand its deep-rooted emphasis on gratuitousness as an "efficacious" venture in love. Only from this vantage point can we see why it opposes the "world" and the "flesh" as dynamisms that drown out criticism and liberty.⁴⁹

This brings us to a final theme: namely, that there must be a "revolution" within the church and its structures if it is to fulfill its ordained function as an institution of critical liberty. On this point there is once again an enormous gulf between the perspective of conventional North American sociology and that of Dom Helder and a political theology. To begin with a particularly stark example of the former, in a 1968 article on the Chilean bishops Thomas Sanders remarked: "... ten years ago, authoritarianism, institutionalism, and insistence on unity exasperated lay clerical elites who wanted fresh approaches to social problems as an expression of their religious commitment. Today and in the future these same characteristics can make Catholicism the most competent of the world's great religious expressions in treating issues in the underdeveloped world."⁵⁰ And what is this vaunted "treatment" worthy of the Grand Inquisitor? It is throwing "its weight on the side of strategies aimed at modernization and development", by which Sanders means principally centralization and rationalization of the economy along advanced capitalist lines!⁵¹ A year earlier, echoing Dom Helder's oft-voiced sentiment that the church is still caught up in the "capitalist machinery", Ivan Illich had established his reputation as an inveterate foe of clericalism in all its guises with the publication of an essay which became an immediate 'cause célèbre'. The article,

entitled "The Vanishing Clergyman", began as follows:

The Roman Catholic Church is the world's largest non-governmental bureaucracy. It employs 1.8 million full-time workers: priests, brothers, sisters and laymen. These employees work within a corporate structure which an American business consultant firm rates among the most efficiently operated institutions in the world. The institutional Church functions on a par with General Motors and the Chase Manhattan. This common knowledge is accepted sometimes with pride. But to some, its machine-like smoothness itself seems to discredit it. Men suspect that it has lost its relevance to the Gospel and to the world. Wavering doubt and confusion reign among its directors, functionaries and employees. The giant begins to totter before its collapse.⁵²

Illich went on to exclaim: "I would like to suggest that we welcome the disappearance of institutional bureaucracy in a spirit of deep joy." Of course the church as presently constituted would still have to be replaced by some organized form of existence. A growing consensus that "We must destroy the Church in order to resurrect faith" may well be realistic⁵³, but the community of faith must have a fairly definite form if it is to be capable of living out a public, political praxis. A renewed church must also radically alter its social base if it is to overcome its own mass mechanisms. As Dom Helder's former theological advisor, Fr. Joseph Comblin contends: "In order for Christians to take part in world revolution, there will have to be a revolution in the Church. Revolution in the Church does not mean revolution in the structures of the divine institution It is about a revolution in the sociological structures Because one does not change ideas without changing the social situation,"⁵⁴

Comblin has been sharply taken to task for using this reasoning to deflect radical criticism of the church away

from doctrinal matters.⁵⁵ But surely it is nonetheless true that for a church to revolutionize its theology and ecclesiology it must first find a new 'locus theologicus'. Revolution does not consist of merely substituting one academic theology for another. A church, such as that of Latin America, which has long catered to a colonial ruling class, will have to begin by disentangling itself from official ties and tacit alliances with state institutions and economic elites. A church which remains a blatant example of dependency will have to apply some major surgery to itself if it is to move toward solidarity with the Latin American majority. Comblin's judgement is completely straightforward in this regard:

It is nonsensical to talk about a poor Church when the Church is supported by foreign money, and thus living in a style quite beyond the means of its own people Few institutions anywhere today are as colonialist as the Catholic Church in Latin America.

... at present there are a lot of religious institutions which offend against the common good, and we should be giving back to the poor all that we have accumulated from the mere desire to possess. How dare we denounce the evils of capitalism? The Church's own institutions exemplify that very thing, and often in the most antisocial ways possible⁵⁶

Dom Antonio Fragoso, a fellow bishop of Dom Helder in the Brazilian Northeast, concurs: "A propertied Church will easily be looked upon by the people as allied to the structures of oppression and imperialism."⁵⁷ Some sections at least of the church are clearly submitting themselves to a rigorous and highly 'political' auto-critique, but if the church as a whole is to rise above its colonial legacy, the socio-cultural correlates of any new critico-prophetic profile will have to be sharpened. It is not enough to talk

romantically of a mission to the "poor and oppressed" without defining one's terms and looking realistically at one's socio-economic base. This failing is still pronounced in works of missionary ecclesiology, particularly those emanating from western Europe and North America. Enzo Gatti prefaces his book Rich Church -- Poor Church? with a typically effusive but suspect rallying cry:

The biblical message is explosive: when it is preached to the poor it can lead to the destruction of any and every oppressive structure, whether political, social, economic, cultural, or religious.. Provided that it is accepted for what it is and allowed to speak its own language, it is a leaven of liberation and humanization. Christ constantly seeks to be born again of poverty and virginity.⁵⁸

This simply begs the question of why a church allegedly founded by Christ became a wealthy and arrogant oppressor. What can the bible speaking "its own language" possibly mean if one turns a blind eye to historical conditioning and the dynamics of ideology formation? Religious teaching and expression do not belong to some platonic universe. In Latin America, Segundo states flatly, "the dominant sacramental pedagogy is the pedagogy of the ruling classes."⁵⁹ Why? Because of sociological not theological reasons, which no amount of voluntarism can cancel out. The problem for the church is to mediate the theological understanding of its mission as one of universal salvation, to the sociological reality of social institutions in which class interests cannot be ignored. There is bound to be tremendous tension between the vision of the church as the visible sign of humanity's historical destiny leading to an eschatological

consumation, and the actuality of a church which often affects political neutrality while remaining tied to the established order. Shibboleths about "church unity" aside, honesty requires a proper recognition of class conflict and ~~her~~ oppressive divisions as facts to be reckoned with within as well as without the church.⁶⁰

Accepting class struggle does not entail the church becoming an ideological minion of the working class, but it does mean that now fashionable phrases like "church of the poor" may have to be tempered by a strong dose of 'real-politik'. An ecclesiology of 'kenosis' -- of being "born again of poverty and virginity" -- will prove to be a profound alienation if it never gets beyond abstract notions of the poverty of the cross as only a perennial symbolic re-enactment. Gatti argues that the authentic church of Christ is one "which accepts and confesses belief in him as crucified, today, in the poor and persecuted and oppressed of our world."⁶¹ But what of tomorrow? Surely a church dedicated to human liberation in concrete, historical terms could not seek to prolong poverty and oppression just so as to have an "easy" constituency to preach to. After all, even Marx admitted: "Religious distress is at the same time the expression of real distress and the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, ..."⁶² Any celebration of poverty and protest has paternalistic and opportunistic overtones when not immersed in a real-life struggle to eliminate poverty and the need for protest.

The notion of a "church of the poor", because it represents such a dramatic swing of the pendulum, also runs the risk of being overwhelmed at times by its own overheated but politically vague rhetoric against legalism, political establishments, and authority structures in general. Against this marriage of anarchistic revolutionism and quixotic populism there is Engels' reminder that a "revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing there is;"⁶³

While the church is certainly not going to be the protagonist of any revolution, it will not even have any relevance as the conscience of revolution if it simply denigrates politics and the means of power 'per se'. There has been a tendency, particularly among left-liberal North Americans, to view the church as ideally a sort of liberated, formless "people's happening", and Christians and their leaders as amorphous bands of latter-day Robin Hoods.⁶⁴ Most have soon discovered, however, that it takes a lot more for public, prophetic action than repeating among oneself words like "revolution", "liberation", and "the people", as though these were mantras with magic transformative powers.

In Latin America the focus of attention has been on the concept of "comunidades de base" or "base communities". This is also the approach singled out by Dom Helder as offering the most promising leads for a renewal of church structure. Only by an end to pharisaism and technocratic inertia can the church truly return to serve and live among the people as a "base" community, a "foco of evangelization", as Segundo Galilea calls it, or in Dom Helder's terms, an

"abrahamic minority".⁶⁵ What distinguishes the Christian base community from other minority groups, using "minority" in the qualitative sense, is of course the witness to faith in an eschatological message of liberation. The community of faith, however, is on no account to set itself apart from others as a perfect ghetto. Christian faith demands to be lived out in the midst of the ambiguities and exigencies of a secular and social praxis, in which it is the church which must be converted to others, not others to the church. In the words of a Brazilian priests' manifesto:

Basically what is at issue is the growing disharmony between the dynamic Church and the static Church; the intensely institutionalized Church and the minimally institutionalized and essentially missionary Church; the Church closed in upon itself ... and the Church as the leaven in the world

.... Faith is the free act of joining Christ and his kingdom. It is God's act in announcing the coming of the kingdom, which evokes the free response of man in accepting that news. In this sense, faith is a process of liberation. No one is freer than a Christian. The community we intend and hope to create is simply that community of faith, coming together in the light of Christ, for the service of others, of all our unknown and oppressed neighbours (Luke 10:25-37).

Hence our demand for a dynamic structure,⁶⁶ growing out of existing, living communities.

The manifesto goes on to make a number of specific organizational proposals, but the most important thing to note is that base communities are not to be "religious" bodies superimposed upon secular society, but simply the active, common witness of faith working within secular society. The base community is to be the 'locus theologicus' of the church and the epicentre of its liberative praxis. In this way the church's prophetic resources can no longer be

considered as a private repository of superior truth and vision, but only as a radical and daily invitation to "take up the cross" of Christ. Dom Helder applies these insights to his own situation:

When a layman, a religious, a priest, or a bishop is living with the people, it is not for bringing solutions. Their part is to work not only for the people, but with the people. More important than to bring solutions is to show that the poor people are sons of God -- that they have minds for thinking, mouths for speaking. Many times the poor are afraid to speak out. And it is very easy to prove that one can not do much alone. But, together, in the basic communities -- organized not to prepare plots or armed movements, but to defend basic human rights -- it is a great force.⁶⁷

We should now be able to see clearly that the relationship between the church and the secular progress of humanization -- the ends of the "structural revolution" which Dom Helder calls for -- is to be at the same time subordinate and critical. Subordinate because the church cannot divorce itself from the mechanisms of history, nor is it the business of the church to perform functions properly belonging to governments, to set itself up as an alternate power structure, or to become a recalcitrant or quietistic island unto itself. Critical because the proclamation of the church's prophetic mission means a tough-minded, public stance against all power that exploits or oppresses.⁶⁸

Frequently, it is claimed that certain passages in the New Testament commanding subjection to the authorities and obedience to the civil laws preclude the theological, not to mention, sociological possibility of a theory of the church predicated on its actual or potential "subversive" role within society. But, as a Latin American scholar has pointed

out, the scriptural admonitions to "give to Caesar his due" are "a pastoral attitude taken in respect of objective conditions, and in no case the dogmatic and definitive adoption of such structures [of political power], as demonstrated by the ideal of suppressing these systems of power expressed in their own epistles [i.e., of Sts. Peter and Paul] and in the gospels."⁶⁹ At the very least there is to be an ongoing dialectic of submission and independence in the church's relations with its cultural and historical milieu.

When today secularization has made it possible to speak more openly, and in a revolutionary way, about a political theology and ecclesiology, it must be borne in mind that what is involved is in no way a simplistic shift between two extreme alternatives: e.g., the abandonment of a defunct Christendom for a self-righteous avant-gardism, or the rejection of the status of an official cult in favor of the anti-politicism of an anarchist sect, or the switching of allegiance from a ruling class to a proletarian class. The church, as Dom Helder knows, cannot forget its past; it can only seek out new and more authentic ways of fulfilling its liberative eschatological mission within history. To do this, explains Rosemary Ruether, the "Church should relate to society, not by being co-opted by it to sanctify the status-quo, nor simply withdraw from it in isolated purity, but rather the proper relationship of Church to society is dialectical. The Church should stand in the midst of conventional society, but not be "of it", but rather be the place where a significantly new humanity, functioning in a

communitarian and non-exploitive way, is begun."⁷⁰

With respect to struggles for liberation and development, the church can claim no special expertise, and therefore it has no right to manufacture much less impose its own special solutions, -- solutions which would be necessarily patronizing. Neither has the church any right to be a navel-gazing, self-indulgent 'civitas dei', indifferent to if not contemptuous of the futile battles of poor mortals in the 'civitas terrena'. The church has a right and a duty to promote and to defend what it considers to be basic human values. It has a right and a duty to stand up and be counted whenever justice and decency are threatened, -- to not "stick to religion", if you will.

But this does not mean that the church must be recognized as a socially necessary institution, empowered to perform all sorts of functions (integration, assisting development, etc.) relating to the general welfare. In Latin America, it may be that the role of the church is to support socialist groups, insofar as these are fighting for human rights and greater social justice. But the church is in absolutely no position to impose a socialist solution anywhere in Latin America, nor should it be. The church will have to learn to accept official "powerlessness", without sacrificing active public engagement in respect of major social issues. Its political options will have to be governed by specific circumstances without becoming opportunistic and self-serving. This is Dom Helder's difficult and revolutionary challenge to his fellow believers.

NOTES

1. Arend van Leeuwen, Development Through Revolution, (New York: Charles Scribner, 1970), chp. 2, "Technical and Social Revolutions".
2. Ibid., pp. 61-78.
3. Cf. Leonard Binder et al., Crises and Sequences in Political Development, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).
4. van Leeuwen, op.cit., p. 78.
5. Vallier, "Church "Development" in Latin America: A Five-Country Comparison", in Karl Schmitt, ed., The Roman Catholic Church in Modern Latin America, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), p. 168. For a welcome North American critique of Vallier see, in the same collection, David Mutchler, "Adaptation of the Roman Catholic Church to Latin American Development: The Meaning of Internal Church Conflict".
6. See, for example, François Houtart, "Development: The Struggle for Liberation", in The Theology of Liberation, LADOC 'Keyhole' no. 2.
7. Denis Goulet, "Development ... or Liberation?", International Development Review, vol. 13, September 1971, p. 8. See also Bernard Olivier, Développement ou Libération?, (Paris: Editions Ouvrières, 1973).
8. Ibid., p. 9.
9. Cf. Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, pp. 232 ff.
10. Laurentin, Liberation, Development, and Salvation (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1972), "preface", pp. xii-xiii, and passim.
11. On the critical side, one finds in Paul Löffler's, "The Sources of a Christian Theology of Development" (in Kee, ed., A Reader in Political Theology, pp. 70-79) a host of searching questions, including a challenge to -- "A radically new appraisal of the prophetic calling in the Christian Church. What makes a prophet? What are his corresponding roles in society and in the Church? Who are the bearers of the calling -- individuals, teams, movements -- and what is their relation to the establishment of the institutional Church? How can the prophetic challenge reach transpersonal power structures?" (p. 78.) However, all of these questions are posed within a framework which assumes a universally applicable developmental model of 'modern', 'secular', 'pragmatic', 'industrial', 'pluralistic' society.

12. Cox sees revolution more in terms of a general cultural response to "future shock" than in terms of a struggle against oppression. He, like many other leading American liberals and "New Leftists" of the sixties, implies that Marxism has lost its direct relevance, at least in the 'developed' world, because: "We are entering an era in which power is based not on property but on technical knowledge and intellectual skills." /The Secular City, (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 115.7 Although Cox emphasizes the need for radical social change (adjustment), for him advanced capitalism represents the Janus-faced flowering of the 'technopolis', not the end of an epoch.
13. See, for example, Thomas Sanders, Catholic Innovation in a Changing Latin America, pt. 1/p. 14, pt. 6/p. 13, passim.
14. Schmitt, op.cit., p. 27.
15. Cited in Helder Camara, LADOC 'Keyhole' no. 12, p. 6.
16. See Camara, Church and Colonialism, chp. 11 "The church in the development of Latin America"; also the interview in Cooperation Canada, May/June 1975, esp. p. 8.
17. See, for example, the statement by Dom Helder, "Why Still Another Complaint, Still Another Protest?", from LADOC, March 1973, (also in PL).
18. Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, p. 68. Cf. also Paulo Freire, "The Educational Role of the Churches in Latin America", in Paulo Freire, LADOC 'Keyhole' no. 1, esp. pp. 25-28.
19. Interview, March 25, 1977, Recife, Brazil.
20. For example: "When the scribes and Pharisees commit blasphemy by attributing Jesus' works to the devil, the Synoptics indicate that we must distinguish between pardonable and unpardonable blasphemies. That is the view they attribute to Jesus. Not recognizing and acknowledging the "Son of Man" in the ambiguity of history is one of the pardonable blasphemies. The unpardonable blasphemy is independent of one's religious position. It consists in not going along with God's intention and will (or spirit) to win domination over the dominator, strip him of his weapons, and "divide his spoils" among the dominated (Luke 11:22; cf. Matt. 12:22-23)." /Segundo, The Sacraments Today, chp. 4 "A Community in Dialogue", p. 91. / See also Segundo, Grace and the Human Condition, esp. chp. 3, section III.
21. 'Grace', like all other theological concepts, must be "secularized" before it can be rehabilitated for a political theology. This phrase forms the recurrent and unifying theme of Paul Lehmann's The Transfiguration of Politics.

22. The Community Called Church, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973), p. 11.
23. See Leonardo Boff, Jesus Cristo Libertador, 3rd ed., (Petropolis: Editora Vozes, 1972), pp. 254-256, and passim.
24. Segundo, The Community Called Church, p. 66.
25. J.B. Metz, Theology of the World, chp. V "The Church and the World in the Light of a 'Political Theology'", pp. 114-115.
26. Ibid., p. 115 f. On the relationship of authoritative institutions to individual moral and political autonomy cf. also Jeffrey Reisman, In Defense of Political Philosophy, (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).
27. Dussel, History and the Theology of Liberation, p. 154.
28. Metz, op.cit., p. 116.
29. Ivan Illich, The Church, Change and Development, ed. by Fred Eychaner, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), p. 17.
30. The Concept of Development of the Catholic Church in Latin America, vol. II, (Rome: IDOC-International, 1969), pp. 193-194.
31. Ibid.
32. José de Luca, Situación Social y Liberación, Interpretación teológica de un contexto social específico: un área urbana-industrial en el gran Buenos Aires, (Cuernavaca: CIDOC Sondeos no. 49, 1969), pp. 163, 180.
33. See, for example, M. Redfern, "The Church, Sacrament of a Socialist Society", in Adrian Cunningham et.al., Catholics and the Left, The 'Slant' Manifesto, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1968).
34. J.M. Bonino points out some of the dangers:

When the cause of Jesus Christ (and consequently the Church in any missionary understanding of it) is totally and without rest equated with the cause of social and political revolution, either the Church and Jesus Christ are made redundant or the political and social revolution is clothed in a sacred or semi-sacred gown. Nonbelieving revolutionaries are then baptized as "latent", "crypto", "potential", or "unknowing" Christians, a new form of Christian paternalism which elicits a quite justified rejection on their part. (Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, p. 163.)

35. Illich, op.cit., p. 22.
36. The Concept of Development of the Catholic Church in Latin America, vol. II, p. 194.
37. See Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, chp. 7 "Theology and Popular Religions", esp. pp. 193-196. On "no salvation outside the church" see Segundo, The Community Called Church, pp. 73-76.
38. Gonzalo Arroyo writes: "To the extent that avant-garde elements come to identify with the popular masses, whose religiosity, even though ambiguous and sometimes alienating, possesses cultural roots distinct from those of the West, their position in the Churches is seen to be reinforced." ("L'Action idéologique et culturelle de l'Eglise", Le Monde Diplomatique, May 1976, p. 19.) The use of Fanonian logic and semantics is extremely widespread in radical Christian circles.
39. Cf. Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, chps. 7 and 8; also Segundo Galilea, Evangelização Na América Latina, (Petropolis: Editora Vozes, 1976), chp. 8 "Evangelização Ante a Religiosidade Popular"; Aldo Buntig, "Dimensiones del catolicismo popular latinoamericano y su inserción en el proceso de liberación", in Fe Cristiana y Cambio Social en América Latina, (Salamanca: Sigueme, 1973), and the article by Galilea in the same collection; Edenio Valle, "Psicología Social e Catolicismo Popular", Revista Ecclesiastica Brasileira, vol. XXXVI, 1976.
40. Segundo, ibid., chp. 8, "Mass Man -- Minority Elite -- Gospel Message", p. 215. Segundo also uses Lenin and Ortega y Gasset in superlative fashion to apply this insight to the general category of revolutionary mass movements. (see pp. 216 ff.).
41. Ibid., p. 201.
42. Segundo, Our Idea of God, pp. 130-131.
43. Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, pp. 201-202.
44. Ibid., p. 202.
45. The amelioration of the human condition -- "development through revolution" -- is possible as an open-ended dialectical process. Adds Segundo: "If the Christian is consistent enough to continue maintaining his revolutionary position, no matter what it costs, and if the revolution and its leaders manage to maintain sufficient breadth of outlook to appreciate and preserve attitudes that will be required and truly valued later, then Church and social change will have taken a considerable step forward." (Our Idea of God, p. 132.)

46. Ibid.

47. Interview in Helder Camara, LADOC 'Keyhole' no. 12, p. 6.

48. Masses and minorities are precisely what they are because they represent the two necessary poles of the economy of energy that rules the universe. They are the quantitative and qualitative poles present in any and every human group; but equally present in the patterns of conduct of each and every human individual

There is no scientific value at all in dividing human beings into masses and minorities without specifying what fields or attitudes or activities we are talking about. All of us human beings are, by definition, masses and minorities. "The people" are neither more "mass" nor more "minority" than the "elites" that govern them, exploit them or give them expression.

(Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, pp. 224-225.)

In other words, the church as "God's avant-garde" has no reason whatsoever to feel itself superior to the "masses", but at the same time it will always be the "abrahamic minorities" who expend themselves selflessly in the work of 'conscientization'.

49. Segundo, Evolution and Guilt, p. 131.

50. Thomas Sanders, "The Chilean Episcopate: An Institution in Transition", in Karl Schmitt, op.cit., p. 136.

51. Ibid., p. 137.

52. Included in Illich, op.cit., p. 61.

53. Fr. Francisco Lage Pessoa, cited in Gheerbrant, The Rebel Church in Latin America, p. 355.

54. Joseph Comblin, Théologie de la Révolution, p. 269. See also François Houtart and Jean Rémy, Eglise et Société en Mutation, Paris: Mame, 1969); Houtart and André Rousseau, The Church and Revolution, (New York: Orbis Books, 1972).

55. See Alfredo Fierro, The Militant Gospel, pp. 352 ff.

56. Cited in Gheerbrant, op.cit., pp. 244-245.

57. Cited in José Kosinski de Cavalcanti and Godofredo Deelen, Brasil: Igreja em Transição, (Cuernavaca: CIDOC Sondeos no. 45, 1970), pt. 1/p.29.

58. Gatti, Rich Church -- Poor Church?, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1974), preface to the 2nd ed., p. vii.

59. Segundo, The Sacraments Today, p. 102.

60. Gutierrez underlines this point in A Theology of Liberation:

It is undeniable that the class struggle poses problems to the universality of Christian love and the unity of the Church. But any consideration of this subject must start from two elemental points: the class struggle is a fact, and neutrality in this matter is impossible.

The class struggle is a part of our economic, social, and political, cultural, and religious reality. Its evolution, its exact extent, its nuances, and its variations are the object of analysis of the social sciences and pertain to the field of scientific rationality. (p. 273)

See also Gutierrez's answer to Althusser on church unity, p. 277; Noël Olaya, "Unidad Cristiana y Lucha de Clases", Cristianismo y Sociedad, nos. 3 and 4, 1970, pp. 61-68, (also in LADOC, vol. II no. 16a.); L. Pelissier, "L'Eglise et la lutte des classes", Frères de Monde, nos. 40-41, 1966, pp. 99-126; Hugo Assmann, "Political Commitment in the Context of the Class Struggle", in Greinacher and Mueller, eds., Political Commitment and Christian Community, Concilium vol. 84.

61. Gatti, op.cit., p. 112.

62. Marx, "Toward the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right", in Feuer, ed., Marx and Engels: Basic Writings, p. 263.

63. Friedrich Engels, "On Authority", in Feuer, p. 485.

64. Consider the progression of the following affirmations: "Where the eschatological characteristics of the kingdom -- freedom, peace, justice, reconciliation, community, shalom -- are emerging in the world through the heightened awareness and activity of men, there is the church." (Petulla, Christian Political Theology, p. 164); "The liberation church is an event as Christ joins the battle of the oppressed." (Herzog, Liberation Theology, p. 205); "Christianity preached a redemptive community of the poor, as Marx did, but it took Marx many steps further. Christianity, one could say, was the revolution within the revolution ... and the priest of course must be the revolutionary leader." (Philip Berrigan, cited in du Plessix Gray, Divine Disobedience, p. 147); "... to create a meaningful Church for the future we must commit acts of civil disobedience against the traditional Church, we must develop a theology of civil disobedience. Which hinges on a new theology of authority. If the Church is the people, our true obedience is to them." (Fr. David Kirk cited in Gray, p. 25.). But who are "the people", and are they, or their "general will", now to be infallible? Nebulous rhetoric and a quixotic populism produce a

"theology of the people" almost totally lacking in the subtleties and solid, no-nonsense basis which mark the analyses of Latin Americans such as Segundo.

65. See Segundo Galilea, "A Comunidade de Base Como Lugar de Evangelização", in Evangelização na América Latina. Cf. also Comunidades: Igreja na Base, (Sao Paulo: Edições Paulinas, 1974); and vol. 104 of Concilium, Les Communautés de Base, August 1975, which includes an article by Roger Garaudy on "La 'Base' dans le Marxisme et le Christianisme".
66. "Manifesto of the 350" in Gheerbrant, op.cit., p. 59.
67. Interview, March 25, 1977.
68. See Jose-Maria Gonzalez-Ruiz, "The Political Meaning of Jesus in the Christian Community's Political Commitment", in Greinacher, op.cit.
69. Juan Bulnes Aldunate, Sacerdocios y Dominación, (Cuernavaca: CIDOC Sondeos no. 75, 1971), pt. 1/p. 12.
70. Ruether, Liberation Theology, pp. 154-155.

CHAPTER TEN

INTEGRATING HISTORY AND ESCHATOLOGY: A CLOSING NOTE ON THE MEANING AND INTENT OF SALVATION-HISTORY

So far we have seen how the synthesis of peace and radical social justice in Dom Helder Câmara's thought is bound up with a particular theologico-political stance toward the question of revolution, and a similarly comprehensive overview -- in a dialectical not monistic sense¹ -- of the logic and dynamics of modern-day revolutionary theory and practice. The church in this perspective is the historically necessary community charged with bringing the critical-prophetic presence of the Christian faith to bear in a public and efficacious way on the evolution (development) of human societies. It remains only to be seen how the ultimate, eschatological ends of the church -- traditionally conceived historically as the "salvation of souls" and transhistorically as the Apocalypse or "end of the world" -- can correspond to the ultimate ends of revolutionary peace. In other words, is a politics of liberation and "revolution through peace" at the same time a politics of salvation? If so, then is it possible for humanity to "evolve" or "develop" a political "order" of salvation?

These questions are in fact corollaries of the central theme running through all political theology: namely, the rejection of the notion of two separate histories, one sacred and eschatological, the other profane and temporal. This theme of the suppression of false dualisms between the

spiritual and the material, so strong in the visionary anthropology of Teilhard de Chardin and in the socio-religious principles of Dom Helder, is in turn part of an ongoing theological response to the general process of secularization. Theologies and other religious idioms are not immune to conditioning by socio-cultural factors. The earliest versions of classical Christian theology developed in opposition to naturalistic religions and in competition with state-supported cults. Moreover, throughout the stormy pre-Christendom era Christians continued to abjure politics in the belief that the 'parousia' or "Second Coming" was imminent. With the fading of millenarian hopes, however, "the ardent expectation of the total transformation of the world and the advent of the Kingdom of God was soon replaced in Christianity by a spiritualized and individualistic hope for immortal, celestial life."² Undoubtedly contagion from neo-platonist cosmology and mystery religions (e.g., the Gnostic heresies), and the tailoring of doctrine to meet the needs of an expanding institution, contributed further to this process.

On the methodological plane theology was "hellenized" in the sense of becoming a deductive science of "right order" and eternal verities. Real-life history was forgotten as the 'locus theologicus', and the term 'logos' itself (which is used in the prologue to the Johanne gospel to represent Christ) came to be understood in the intellectualist and speculative form given to it by classical Greek and Stoicist metaphysics. The messianic 'logos', however, referred to the

revealed word of God spoken to man -- i.e., the redemptive power of God's will --, and not to a pure act of ratiocination.³ The previous interventions of "Yahweh" in human history as recounted in the Old Testament should have formed the foundation for a Christian philosophy of history, but this remarkable semitic heritage with its preference for public, prophetic action over private fulfillment, was pushed to the background by the official church in favor of more culturally acceptable mystifications. Enrique Dussel summarizes well the contrast between the Hebraic and the classical traditions:

The Greek sage would attain perfection by solitary contemplation. The Semite would attain perfection by active involvement in his community and personal commitment to history. Hence Semitic perfection is the perfection of the prophet, who gives his life to the task of liberating the community of the poor and the oppressed.⁴

The culmination of classical dualism occurs in St. Augustine's City of God. It pervades the whole of his analysis, especially his emphasis on sinful nature and "the Fall", statically conceived, and his relative neglect of the messianic, historical thrust of Christ's death and resurrection. Salvation and history do not meet since the former is purely existential and atemporal. Political neo-Augustinianism has recurred principally in the Reformation, with its polemic against "good works" and stress on man's natural depravity, and in the twentieth century Protestant return to "realism" and "neo-orthodoxy", as discussed very briefly in chapter one.

The culmination of classical monism occurs in St. Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologica. Note that this was a thoroughly sacral monism -- of the order of "no salvation

outside the /Roman Catholic/ Church". -- corresponding to the sociological reality of Christendom. Theology, moreover, was the "first" science or meta-science which permitted men to grasp the providential workings of temporal history. Salvation was now corporate and world-historical, but entirely dependent on the persistence of a homogeneous, sacral culture. Political neo-Thomism has recurred principally in the Counter-Reformation (viz., the voluminous treatises of Suarez and Mariana in Spain) and in the twentieth-century, "neo-Christendom" Catholic social gospel exemplified by the papal social encyclicals and the "integral humanism" of such lay writers as Jacques Maritain.

Quite simply, though, secularization -- man's coming of age in a world of his own creation -- is more and more putting an end to traditional theology, although it has not done so unambiguously, or without the appearance of various mediate steps. Prior to political theology, liberation from the tutelage of religious metaphysics occurred primarily through philosophy (culminating in Enlightenment rationalism, Kant, and Hegel), and paradoxically, through the revolt of nineteenth-century irrationalism against the Enlightenment (Kierkegaard, Nietzsche), culminating in the flowering of existentialism during the first half of this century (Heidegger, Jaspers, Bultmann).⁵ These stages, however, failed to produce a secularized salvation-history.

The philosophical criticism of religious absolutes reached its height in the Feuerbachian overtones of the "theology of the death of God". This theology, with its

search for "secular" Christian absolutes, still accepted ontology, not history, as its starting-point.⁶ The existentialist criticism of conservative religion led eventually to the pre-eminence of humanism in Christian theology. But, in practice existentialist humanism denied historical grounding to the problems of personal existence. On social and political issues, theological humanism could not get beyond a "distinction of planes" in which God and everything related to eschatology was reduced to being "totally other" (as in Barth and Bonhoeffer), while man, the centre of the temporal universe, would have to take charge of it "on his own", -- in other words, a re-emergent, albeit secularized, dualism. By contrast, at the level of grand theory, humanist theology could make room for salvation-history, but only in terms of cosmic Christologies which introduced an overarching spiritual purpose into what had purportedly been demythologized, -- in other words, a re-emergent, resacralized monism.⁷

As noted in chapter one, it was J.B. Metz (a student of the leading Catholic exponent of existentialism, Jesuit theologian, Karl Rahner) who initiated the current response of a "political theology" to the impasse of philosophical and existentialist humanism. Political theology is the attempt to accept the radical secularity of the world, while believing that Christ came -- as a real, flesh-and-blood human being, not just a mythic or hypostatized Logos -- to save the whole history of that world, and not the "souls" of individuals. Political theology, therefore, first asserts that the relationship between history and salvation

(eschatology) must be integral. "The supernatural viewpoint, then, does not draw us away from our daily task nor deprive it of importance. On the contrary, it offers us a new interpretation of man and his destiny as God's gratuitous gift in Christ. "Salvation-history" is not some history different from human history; it is history as interpreted by the message which enables us to comprehend its profundity and destiny."⁸ But the relationship of salvation to history must also be integral in the sense of being dialectical. A 'political' salvation-history is not an indiscriminate apotheosis of secular history. Rather, as we saw in the previous chapter with the mission of the church, the work of redemption belongs to the minority pole of human evolution, made manifest politically through a historical struggle for liberation.

Political theology re-introduces into the concept of salvation-history the intense political and historical consciousness of the Old Testament in a secularized form. Nevertheless, in its original German formulation one senses little of the immediacy of the Old Testament language. Historical expectation, in fact, consistently becomes future expectation: historically immanent hope appears to end where eschatology and transcendent hope begin. Moltmann, for example, uses the Marxian image of the realm of necessity giving way finally to the realm of freedom, to indicate the boundary between history and eschatology -- the ultimate salvation of history -- which is to be crossed only in the "absolute future".⁹ It is not clear, however, in what way

salvation, defined only in future terms, can be considered as incarnate in world history from the very beginning. And how, concretely, does future salvation impinge on present history?

This lack of concreteness shows up in other ways. Leonardo Boff, who lives in Brazil but has been influenced primarily by German sources, writes that: "Kingdom of God signifies the realization of a utopia of the human heart of total liberation of the human and cosmic reality."¹⁰ Such future-oriented political theology has been obsessively scrupulous about rejecting the worldly wisdom of the Grand Inquisitor that the masses really do "live by bread alone", and cower and flee in the face of a gift so terrible as that of critical freedom. Millions of impoverished Latin Americans certainly have a right to more than bread for their stomachs, but in the meantime they cannot live indefinitely on "utopias of the human heart" either. For a man of action like Dom Helder, critico-prophetic theology must have some direct, tangible connection to the actual situations of people in need, if it is to generate more than an academic windfall of "new", "improved", but equally abstruse mysteries.¹¹

The involvement of the "Kingdom of God" in the rough-and-tumble of political and ideological controversies is obviously a dangerous enterprise considering the history of Christianity. Nonetheless, it cannot be repeated too often that political theology defines itself in contradistinction to religious politics and political religion. It explicitly repudiates the dualistic denigration of the political and the subsequent monistic subordination of politics to religion,

as much as it distances itself from the ersatz religions of the secular which seem to lead either to totalism or to nihilism. What this means is that a 'politicized' salvation-history represents an uneasy balance between, on the one hand, a sacralization or self-absolutization of the politico-historical sphere, and, on the other, the marginalization or total relativization of that sphere.

In regard to the former pole its dynamism clearly comes from the Judaeo-Christian messianic tradition. This tradition achieved its strongest expression as a religious ideology in Jewish 'manifest destiny' (see the discussion in chapter eight on the pre-Christian primacy of political praxis), the Crusades of Christian Europe, and the anarcho-communism of outcast millenarian sects. More modern manifestations have included various social gospels, and movements of Christian socialism and Christian democracy. Even Marx and Engels acknowledged this influence, but, ironically they seem not to have anticipated that the secular counterpart to what remained of politico-religious messianism was what Berdyaev was later to call the "secularized eschatology" latent in their own revolutionary humanism. (Whether or not this humanism is later replaced by "science" is rather beside the point, since the latter neither cancels out nor repudiates its genesis within a philosophy of history.)

The opposite pole also finds some roots in the messianic tradition: in this case, in an early Christian millenarianism turned sour, and so retreating into an interior sanctuary of spirituality, convinced that life in the earthly

city is indeed, in Hobbes' phrase, "nasty, poor, brutish, and short." But the modern mainstays of this pole have been, rather, a depoliticized secularism (e.g., the "death of God" movement) and pietism coupled with Christian "realism" (e.g., Reinhold Niebuhr). The secular counterpart to this seems to be the existentialist agnosticism of a Camus, or, alternatively, the deceptive and suspiciously Panglossian "pragmatism" of the "end of ideology" school.

To speak of salvation-history in the context of a political theology is, needless to say, to tread a very thin line. But it is no less necessary for all that, because secularization as an objective reality demands to be confronted on all fronts, and, moreover, even a secularized world is in need of prophetic responses. A Christianity which can no longer impose its own values as sacral, will either have to join in a search for common human values or wither away. As Bishop Mendez Arceo of Cuernavaca put it: "If Christianity presents itself before God as extraneous to these universal aspirations [he refers to "self-fulfillment, promotion of human dignity, liberation from all injustice"/], the Christian God will have died irremissibly for humanity and Christianity will be irrelevant for the great masses who lead an oppressed existence, suffering the violence of the established order."¹² The theology of the death of God did accept the urgency of redefining Christian responsibilities in secular terms, but, ironically, like conventional Christianity it ended up rendering everything to Caesar. "Secular" values often simply meant those of pragmatic,

bourgeois man, not those of a Christianity trying to "take up its cross" in history.¹³ By contrast, Juan Luis Segundo insists that what is demanded is not the "death of God", who, after all, is the well-spring of Christian prophetic activity, but rather the "death of idols", of cults, and of civil religions. "Salvation" he adds, "is a 'political' maturity."¹⁴

In sum, it can be said that a political theology proposes politicization as the indispensable mode of secularization. "Politicization appears on the scene as a historical process. It implies the transition from being-as-nature to being-as-history in the constitution of social man."¹⁵ Today theologians are better able to appreciate the semitic roots of Jesus' own prophetic career, in particular, its fundamentally non-"religious" character, and the centrality of its socio-political dimension.¹⁶ The messiah came to redeem all of human history, Gentiles as well as Jews, not to institute a new religion or concoct his own cultic rites of salvation.¹⁷

That the promise of universal salvation in history was eventually degraded into privatistic fetishes of sin and guilt, grace and election, should not obscure the fact that the original sense of sin and redemption was public, corporate, critical, and politico-historical.¹⁸ Man could sin through isolation -- by cutting himself off from "the brethren", spurning the law of mutual love -- but he could never be saved in isolation. Sin was of "the world" -- its mechanisms of objectification and massification, its self-serving ideologies, its closed circles of ontology and domination. Grace was the creative liberty of "the light", which is

witnessed to by the praxis of the critical minority, and which breaks into the present and propels the world forward to new and ever richer human syntheses. The paradigm of redemption is entirely a paradigm of humanization. Liberation from the sin of the world, in which men flee from history for the false security of "graven images", is at least in part analagous to the process of freedom from alienation in Marxian thought:

Sin builds up a corporate structure of alienation and oppression which man, individually, cannot overcome, because he has fallen victim to his own evil creations as the very social fabric of his "world". This corporate structure of sin distorts the character of man in community and in creation so fundamentally that it can be visualized as a false "world"; an anti-society and anti-cosmos where man finds himself entrapped and alienated from his "true home", and he cries out for a transcendent liberation which will overcome "this world" and bring him back to his "original home in paradise". But "this world" is not God's creation, and so the solution to this dilemma is not a flight from creation to "heaven", but an overthrowing of this false world which has been created out of man's self-alienation, and a restoration of the world to its proper destiny as "the place where God's will is done on earth, as it is in heaven."¹⁹

What should be absolutely clear from the above is that the plane of salvation-history is not the quantitative one of counting "souls" or adding up individual infractions of God's law, but rather the qualitative one of overcoming humanity's "political negation of history".²⁰ In the words of Segundo, "a presentation of Christianity is adequate only when it moves from the history of salvation to the salvation of history in man"²¹ This means nothing less than that: "Action in and on history, the salvation of social man in history, is the real pathway whereby God will ultimately deify

man. It is not just that salvation history entails salvation in history as a corollary. Rather, the salvation of man in history is the one and only way in which salvation history can reach its culmination."²²

Jesus' statement that his kingdom was "not of this world" is, taken in context, a statement not of spiritualistic dualism but of socio-political defiance of the ways of the world and of its wisdom. It means both the eschatological affirmation that the kingdom is "come" (but ~~will not have~~ "come" until the final victory over sin and death), and the historical denial that the kingdom could be based on political superiority, law, or nationality, as in the expectations of Zealot messianism:

To sum up, Jesus worked to transform a politicized religion /Judaism/ into a political faith. He did not give up the idea of saving humanity, but he was interested in the full and total dimensions of human salvation. From salvation in history one must move to a meta-historical salvation. Proclamation of this meta-historical salvation will help human beings to see what authentic salvation in history should be, just as authentic salvation in history will be the one and only valid sign, comprehensible to human beings, of what meta-historical salvation means.²³

Eschatology impinges on history precisely through the common efforts of men to build a more human society. "To work, to transform this world, is to become a man and to build the human community; it is also to save Without liberating historical events, there would be no growth of the Kingdom. But the process of liberation will not have conquered the very roots of oppression and the exploitation of man by man without the coming of the Kingdom, which is above all a gift."²⁴ The "absolute, eschatological dimension of

salvation is present, not as something opposed to the present "age" but as its gratuitous and actual, even though still invisible, absolutization."²⁵ The key words here are "common" and "gratuitous". Salvation is conterminous with liberation, -- with the realization of the secular values (love, peace, justice, freedom, ...) sought by Christians and non-Christians alike. Christianity adds only the symbols through which is revealed the meta-historical structure of liberation history. Faith in these symbols is a gift which is to galvanize the "hearers of the word" to prophetic action, to 'conscientize' them as to the existence of evil and to point out to them the path of self-sacrifice and fraternity required for an authentic liberation from evil.

Sin, properly speaking, occurs on an individual basis only when the "good news" is consciously and deliberately rejected: that is, when a personal relationship with God is broken.²⁶ Accordingly, one never hears contemporary prophets like Helder Câmara preaching a "christian man's burden", as if non-believers were either potential converts or hopeless sinners. On the contrary, insists Dom Helder, it is often professed Christians who are the biggest sinners. Evangelization is therefore not a prerogative of faith, but the duty of faith relating to man's common need for humanization. In fact, the salvation which Christians say they seek is precisely what should bind them to the common fate of humanity in history, not separate them from it, as so often happens. This much is made abundantly clear in the conclusion to "I Have Heard the Cries of My People", the 1973 message of the

bishops of Northeast Brazil headed by Dom Helder, a document which also does not mince words in its discussion of technical and political questions, or in its highly concrete suggestions for reform.

Significantly, this type of document leads directly to the crux of the problem with which this chapter attempts to come to terms. Is it valid to join theological arguments to proposals dealing with practical social and political matters? If the Christian concept of salvation is conterminous with the totality of human liberation in history, and I have already argued with Dom Helder and the political theologians that it is, are groups such as Christians For Socialism correct after all in implying that "building up the kingdom" is synonymous with building a socialist society? The argument which follows can be pictured as revolving around two propositions, both crucial, though by no means self-evident, and both frequently subject to misinterpretation. First, faith in Christian salvation-history demands the choosing of specific political options and a revolutionary commitment to them. Second, such faith, however, by itself is incapable of specifying the choice of any particular political option(s) in a given socio-historical circumstance.

Beginning with the first proposition, it can readily be seen that its basic requirement is the suppression of any dualism which opposes a "heavenly" to an "earthly" realm thereby relegating the work of salvation to the former. Contends Dom Antonio Fragoso, a colleague of Dom Helder: "A Christian who rests content with his liturgical life, with

meeting other Christians in Church to praise the Lord, to receive the sacraments; a Christian concerned only with the spiritual purification of his own soul; such a Christian is not faithful to Christ at all. He is betraying the total mission of Christ, which is not just the spiritual liberation of man but his liberation in every respect."²⁷ In other words, there is no salvation for Christians in trying to remain apolitical. On the contrary, there is a politics for Christians which must not be half-hearted, merely intellectual, or determined by criteria of conciliation, balance of power, and stability considered as ends in themselves, but, rather, fundamentally oriented toward human liberation in terms of the amelioration of social existence.

Does this mean that salvation is to be found in politics? When putting this question to Dom Helder I cited the following passage from Herbert Richardson's "What Makes a Society Political?", an essay noted in chapter one for its liberal empiricist concept of politics:

Politics can exist only when it is understood that politics is not religion. Politics has nothing to do with visions of man's ideal end (eschatology), and attempts to change the form of the political process by demanding that it produce utopia rather than compromise means its very destruction. Politics does not solve the ultimate questions of life, will not bring salvation, cannot make men happy. Its goal is more modest, but no less essential. Politics allows persons and groups that have different aspirations to live together in relative peace and to cooperate in limited ways for the sake of specific finite benefits. Whenever politics seeks to be more than this, it must inevitably become far less.²⁸

Richardson, in other remarks, makes it clear that by the need for "politics" he means nothing more than the supremacy of liberal-pluralist institutions, something as yet

rather meaningless in the Brazilian context. But the above declaration is important because of the fallacious construction which it puts upon the problematic of how eschatology impinges upon politics. Richardson is quite rightly concerned to protect the autonomy and realism of the political sphere understood in his sense of "structural-procedural" activity. But to say that the practice of politics (i.e., the rationality of means) ought to be independent of eschatology, is not equivalent to saying that the practice of eschatology (i.e., the rationality of ends) ought to be independent of politics. Yet Richardson assumes that eschatology and politics should be treated as entirely separate realities. In fact, eschatology, if it is to be at all historically efficacious, has everything to do with politics.

This was essentially the conclusion offered by Dom Helder in his answer. For him, it is not a question of substituting "religious" modalities for "political" ones, but of learning how to confront what Gregory Baum in Religion and Alienation calls the changing "grimace of evil" in the world. If, insisted Dom Helder, Christians are afraid to make mistakes by putting their values to the test politically, then they will do nothing, except of course to continue to uphold the status quo. He continued in no uncertain terms:

Religion is not a problem about everlasting life. Everlasting life begins here and now, ... is being constructed here and now as a consequence of our behavior. We are not only pastors of souls, but of men -- souls and bodies -- with all the consequences [this entails].

Christ is living above all in the oppressed person. When one has hunger it is Christ who is hungry. When more than two-thirds of mankind are being crushed and oppressed in a subhuman condition, it is Christ who is suffering. That is the right interpretation of the gospel. And if I respect the sacraments, receive communion with great devotion, -- fine, but exactly because it is Christ I am receiving. And we must more and more discover Christ in oppressed persons, in our poor brothers. It is a consequence of my faith.²⁹

The politics of the true Christian has a "religious" value which has nothing to do with the imposition of dogma, the safeguarding of special "religious" concerns, or the sacralization of particular political forms. Indeed, the very spirituality of the truly Christian life -- the personal relationship with God and the personal quest for salvation -- cannot help but become praxis on every level of human interaction, including the political. An authentic spirituality must be a spirituality of liberation which "will center on a conversion to the neighbor, the oppressed person, the exploited social class, the despised race, the dominated country Conversion means a radical transformation of ourselves; it means thinking, feeling, and living as Christ -- present in exploited and alienated man. To be converted is to commit oneself to the process of the liberation of the poor and oppressed, to commit oneself not only generously, but with an analysis of the situation and a strategy of action."³⁰

Christian faith demands a political praxis which is fundamentally determined by one end: man's liberation from social injustice. Of course there will be disagreements, belonging to the realm of ideology and empirical rationality,

as to the best way to achieve the liberating humanization of social existence. In one instance a full-scale revolution may be considered necessary, while in others, stability or increased pluralism may be the pre-requisites for liberative change. What is important to note is that these are debatable instrumental values, not in themselves the 'raison d'être' of political engagement. In Richardson's "political society", however, it is agreement on means, and disagreement on ends which is made mandatory! He writes: "... the thing that articulates the unity of a political society must focus on common procedural values and institutions alone, and must exclude (even oppose) all teleological values and images of a society's origin and end."³¹ One can only suppose that injustice is perfectly tolerable "politically" so long as it "works", for do not capitalist class relations "work" to produce material goods -- the supportive infrastructure for politics -- while affording time for private pursuits and coinciding with conflict-resolving institutionalization along liberal-pluralist lines?

Richardson's "pragmatist" approach is utterly and rightly rejected by Dom Helder and Latin American political theology. For him, it is justice which must be made to "work", not what "works" which determines whether justice is or is not an affordable "luxury". Besides, as is typical of much western pragmatist ideology, Richardson's claim to define politics solely in terms of instrumentalities conceals an implicit teleology, based on bourgeois-pluralist rather than democratic values, and is therefore completely disingenuous.

This is well exemplified by his bland statement, cited earlier, that: "Politics allows persons and groups that have different aspirations to live together in relative peace and to cooperate in limited ways for the sake of finite benefits."³² Why would not "benevolent despotism" allow the same thing, and probably at far less cost per capita? In fact, Richardson has already declared at the beginning of his essay that "the primary reason for the existence of a political society is that only such a society allows the dignity of man as an individual to be properly affirmed."³³ This is presumably the result of a non-ideological, "structural-procedural" consensus!

Religion, in Richardson's view, enters into the political equation only in that a "political society" must allow individuals sufficient private liberty to pick and choose in the marketplace of "supernatural" ends. Such a view represents nothing more than a lamentable regurgitation of conventional dualism, and is again completely at odds with Dom Helder's perspective and that of political theology. In the latter the proper relationship between temporal and salvific ends is evolutionary in an integral and dialectical sense. As Gutierrez puts it in A Theology of Liberation: "we can say that the historical, political liberating event is the growth of the Kingdom and is a salvific event; but it is not the coming of the Kingdom, not all of salvation. It is the historical realization of the Kingdom and, therefore, it also proclaims its fullness. This is where the difference lies."³⁴ In other words, the drama of salvation-history is

necessarily played out on the stage of a political struggle for liberation, but the whole of the action is only partially realized thereby. "The historical significance of the expectation of the Kingdom is preeminently to protect us from any too strong commitment to a present historical project."³⁵ It is not to minimize men's efforts while sending them off in search of heavenly pie-in-the-sky. This is the "political" meaning of even spiritual victory over death:

An eschatological faith makes it possible for the Christian to invest his life historically in the building of a temporary and imperfect order with the certainty that neither he nor his effort is meaningless or lost. In this context, the bold confession of the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting is not a self-centered clinging to one's own life or a compensation for the sufferings of life or a projection of unfulfilled dreams but the confident affirmation of the triumph of God's love and solidarity with man, the witness to the enduring quality of man's responsible stewardship of creation and of his participation in love, the final justification of all fight against evil and destruction.³⁶

Summing up our first proposition, every aspect of Christian salvation-history must bear an intrinsic and concrete relation to the political praxis of Christians.

The second proposition outlined earlier is more complex and ambiguous. Clearly it is not the case that Christian faith is equivalent to belief in an "objectivist" deposit of doctrines, from which automatically flow the answers to all human problems in ontological, deductive fashion.³⁷ If every Christian choice of relative political means and goals were so determined it would be absurd to speak of secularization in connection with a political theology. However, if, for

example, a group of Christians believe -- for empirical and ideological reasons -- that a classless society is instrumentally indispensable for the further realization of the absolute end of total human liberation, are they ipso facto entitled to assert that the process of attaining classlessness and any subsequent classless orders are "materializations" of the redemptive power of the transcendent? I think the answer to this must be both "yes" and "no".

Let us begin with the "no" first. Basically this negation is simply a warning against the zealous sacralization of any temporal, historical state, even one which may be hypothesized to have resulted from a quantum leap in the process of human liberation. In Latin America, especially, there continues to be a disturbing tendency to prophesy some brand of utopian socialism as ushering in the millenium and turning the planet at last into "God's country". Consider the statement by Juan Bulnes Aldunate that: "The final fulfillment of Christian salvation is realized in a new man and in a society with no other law but love, therefore without classes, because where there are no laws neither can there be classes."³⁸ It is not uncommon to see references to class struggle and classlessness freighted with such impossibly romantic and dangerously Christological overtones.³⁹ After all, if, in the dialectic between "good" and "evil", Christ represents only members of oppressed classes not suffering from "false consciousness", then it is a rather elementary deduction as to who might be coaching the silent majority.

In spite of ritual disclaimers against viewing

history as the glorified battleground of some omnipotent and omnipresent God, this sort of latent manicheism can still creep into careless or excessively rhetorical formulations of non-dualistic salvation-history. Moreover, if eschatology is considered naively as a divine guarantee of the temporal perfectibility of man, then in the final analysis it will be difficult to avoid absolutizing the immanent processes of history. A case in point is J.M. Bonino's argument that: "The Kingdom is not the denial of history but the elimination of its corruptibility, its frustrations, weakness, ambiguity -- more deeply, its sin -- in order to bring to full realization the true meaning of the communal life of man The Kingdom is not merely adumbrated, reflected, foreshadowed, or analogically hinted at in the individual and collective realizations of love in history, but actually present, operative, authentically -- however imperfectly and partially -- realized."⁴⁰

Bonino's polemic against a dualistic relativization of humanity's historical vocation, while initially insightful, eventually lands him on very shaky ground. He seems to suggest that History must produce the Kingdom, after the fashion of the heaven on earth promised by "scientific" socialism. Worse still, the fullness of the kingdom is identified, not with a meta-historical principle of transcending, but with some ultimate state of physical perfection in which even "ambiguity" will have vanished like magic from the scene. In this view, the definitive coming of the kingdom does not occur in the consummation of history, but

in the inauguration of an earthly paradise analagous to the Marxian passage from "pre-history" to "history".⁴¹

Not surprisingly, Bonino has been heavily influenced by the Mexican biblical scholar, José Miranda, who is in turn an ardent disciple of Ernst Bloch. Miranda is, if anything, more sweeping in his pronouncements than Bonino. For him, the biblical story of the Last Judgement refers purely and simply to "the final liberation of the poor and the oppressed, the definitive realization of justice on earth."⁴² Christianity means that: "There is an 'ultimum' in human history, and this 'ultimum' is defined and characterized, as in Marx, by the complete realization of justice on earth."⁴³ Again, Miranda is correct up to a point in arguing (against Barth and Bultmann) that an 'eschaton' belonging only to an eternal future beyond history would have nothing to do with history actually ever coming to completion. But, in fact, Miranda does not want history as such to come to an end, but only imperfect history. His "completed" history is explicitly an anarcho-communist utopia in which law, wrongdoing, and even mortality will have been abolished for all time.⁴⁴

Such a conception of Christianity as a revolutionary theory, and the bible in particular as a proto-socialist manifesto, must be rejected. It can only create the sort of messianic determinism in which a God who is the demiurge of history gives out divine blueprints for the future of the world, and even a divine methodology -- proto-Marxist dialectical science, if one is to believe Miranda -- for the

analysis of it. Against this a political theology seeks to evolve a language of faith which is critical, "secular", and symbolic. This new idiom must be resolutely critical so as to resist all socio-cultural and institutional captivities. It must be "secular" and symbolic because the pre-critical God-concept of a Supreme Being pulling the strings of history -- "liberating" peoples, classes, or nations as though their destiny were predetermined in some providential fashion -- is no longer credible, except perhaps among already devout believers. As Gregory Baum puts it: "The Christian symbols of the future demand that we speak of history paradoxically. History is destined for redemption, yet undetermined; it is alive by a divine drift toward humanization, yet remains locus of catastrophic sins; it is ever open to the unexpected new." The promise of the coming of the kingdom is not positive "information about the future", but rather a negative "symbol that through faith enters into the redemption of history."⁴⁵

Political theology must be a "negative" theology in that its hope, its negation of what Camus called "the absurdity of the human condition", cannot properly be expressed through doctrinal formulas, but only through symbols of redemption (e.g. the Exodus and other "liberative memories"⁴⁶) and, above all, through political praxis. Christian symbols and Christian praxis do not belong to any sacrosanct "supernatural" sphere, but are subject to the same complex of temporal determining factors as any other mental constructions or behaviours. To cite Baum again:

The sociological approach to symbols ... makes it clear that the revealed symbols have meaning and power only as they begin to structure the imagination; faith then mediates our experience and guides our responses to reality. This offers a realistic explanation of how Christian revelation transforms human life and history

... The symbolic approach to Christian theology acknowledges that something marvelous and unaccountable really happened in history which, when accompanied by a new word, revealed to people the meaning of their lives and enabled them to recreate their social existence. And this happened through symbols.⁴⁷

In other words, a secularized salvation-history can be neither a deification of history or a particular ideology of history, but only an "incarnate" symbolic promise of mankind's all-encompassing yet indeterminate freedom for history -- of his liberation from the myths of the eternal return and the fixity of human nature, and, as well, from all positivisms and reductionisms. This sums up the case against material and ideological representations of the salvific presence in history. There is, however, another side to the question which prevents such a blanket rejection. In this view it is vital that there be a distinction between derivative representations and efficacious representations, and that "yes" be said to the latter.

There is no problem in the argument that it is wrong to derive, in fundamentalist, deductive fashion, one's political stance from faith understood as a set of doctrines, an ideology, or a utopia. Yet the practice of politics can never be purely "negative" and symbolic, but necessarily involves ideologies, institutions, and concrete historical projects. Even a "negative", symbolic faith requires mediation by the tools of praxis if it is to be efficacious.

in the political sphere. A symbolic language of faith which disavows all visible or specific representations of its salvific import, does not thereby proclaim its ideological neutrality, but only its misunderstanding of the meaning of secularization and 'orthopraxis' in the political context.

Secularization in politics does not mean an end to ideology. Rather the latter rests on an erroneous ideological assumption that ideology and critical detachment (and therefore objective, scientific truth) are mutually exclusive. In fact, both rationalist and empiricist notions of "pure" knowledge are either utopian abstractions or applicable only to tautological relations. Similarly, 'orthopraxis' in politics does not mean inevitable capitulation before the problematic of the sociology of knowledge. That in a relative, historical world truth is also relative and historical should not surprise anyone. (After all, Thomas Kuhn has quite rightly spoken of the revolutionary overthrow of scientific theories, when it is obviously not the case in the natural sciences that validation is a matter of mere shifting opinion.) It is simply false to suggest that the only alternative to an acritical absolutism is an equally absolute relativism.

Applying these considerations to the critico-prophetic function of faith, we can say that a secularized 'orthopraxis' does not involve dispensing with ideological "materializations" in order to be rigorously critical, but rather incorporating these mediating factors into a critical "hermeneutic circle". As Segundo rightly points out, faith is not above ideology:

it is maturity by way of ideologies, -- a process of "deutero-learning", or "learning to learn", in which truth continually evolves by means of relative, historical praxes.⁴⁸ In the realm of political praxis, being abstract (utopian) or "non-ideological" does not mean being critical, it means being irrelevant, or worse, acquiescent. This is a danger which Bonino sees in the tendency of European political theology to articulate a "critical freedom of the gospel" as though it had nothing to do with the concrete ideological choices which people make every day: "Moltmann," he writes,

... sees a "political theology of the cross" in opposition to the classical political theologies which glorified and sacralized power. Its function is "to liberate the state from political idolatry and men from political alienation and powerlessness." This "critical function" of de-sacralization and de-ideologization is the "political task" of the Church

... But it is important to stress that such a secularization of politics is to be attained not through a new idealism of Christian theology, but through a clear and coherent recognition of historical, analytical, and ideological mediations. There is no divine politics or economics. But this means that we must resolutely use the best human politics and economics at our disposal.⁴⁹

Many advocates of a symbolic, "negative" theology have not taken this sufficiently into account. Baum, for instance, distinguishes between "ideological" and "utopian" religion as though they were mutually exclusive, and only the latter could be critical and prophetic. Yet utopia without ideology is simply idealist voluntarism. This much is acknowledged by Mannheim in his Marxian emphasis on the primacy of historical engagement. But Mannheim, like Marx and empirico-rationalism generally, is not satisfied with

"mere" relative truth, and so he reverts back to a vain search, albeit sociological this time, for a "neutral" standpoint. The logical result is the antithesis of historical engagement. In the words of Segundo, "the last systematic obstacle for any theology committed to human liberation" is "a certain type of academicism which posits ideological neutrality as the ultimate criterion; which levels down and relativizes all claims to absoluteness and all evaluations of some ideas over others."⁵⁰

The image of the political theologian as "déclassé intellectual" or "objective scientist" of religious praxis must be firmly rejected. It is because sociological relativism is such an intolerable position that it so often gives way to scientism. Alfredo Fierro, for example, argues that in an alienated, class-divided world, all religious expression is also alienated and class-based. It follows that there is no socio-historical truth, only socio-historical correspondence. Since it is intolerable that 'orthopraxis' and the "hermeneutic circle" should simply go out the window, Fierro appropriates Marxist "science" for an objective criterion of evaluation. Nothing can be said about the relative truth or falsity of Christian symbols in themselves, only about the "objective" use of these symbols in the overall articulation of class interests. However, unitary and complete theological truth will be possible, we are assured, come the Marxist millenium of the classless society. According to this redaction of noncognitivism mere "positive" or "rhetorical" theology is pre-critical and suitable only

for devotional purposes.⁵¹

Dom Helder Câmara is a prophet not a theologian, but because his prophecy is rhetorical and poetic, and radically Christian in the best sense of a political theology, the above considerations are extremely important. For Dom Helder faith involves real knowledge, not just the abstruse critical negation so beloved of academic theologians like Fierro. It is a knowledge, not of doctrine, but that the true meaning of Christianity is to be found in the life of the oppressed person, in the action of mutual love, in the struggles of all men for an order of justice and peace. This applies even to the most "spiritual" values: the concepts of "grace", "sin" and "salvation", and the traditional virtues of "faith", "hope", and "charity". Yes, a liberative political praxis is an inescapable part of "saving one's soul"!

This does not mean deducing a programme or a strategy from the gospels. It does mean accepting to work out one's faith in the context of the ambiguities and ideological risks of a relative, historical world -- an evolving world in need of humanization, even revolution -- without hiding behind absolutes, be they doctrinal, critical, or utopian. Dom Helder's faith is not a commitment to dogmas, to theoretical "negations", or perfectible futures, but to the struggles of real-life men everywhere who are called to a real-life liberation. The prophetic word and the prophetic deed belong wholly to what Rubem Alves calls the "holy insecurity" of a secular world. The salvation of that world does not lie in the retreat to a private realm of dualistic

fantasies. Nor does it lie in any naïve or purely formal identification of history with eschatology, -- the zealous resacralization of the immanent processes of history, or the idealist secularization of the 'not yet' of eschatology. Rather, salvation-history is the evolving dialectical synthesis of history and eschatology, which, to believers such as Helder Câmara, is present above all in each concrete 'political' act of "faith, hope, and love" in the service of one's fellow man.⁵³

NOTES

1. Recall that it is absolutely fundamental to a political theology to respect the relative autonomy of faith and politics within a unitary history. Theology is not the supreme platonic science ruling over politics, as in a dualistic theological politics. Nor is politics its own theology, as in a monistic political religion. Rather the proper relationship of theology, and therefore Christian values, to politics is integral and dialectical.
2. J.M. Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, pp. 132-133.
3. See Enrique Dussel, History and the Theology of Liberation, chp. 1 "Theology and Liberation History"; and Ignacio Ellacuría, Freedom Made Flesh, pp. 24-27.
4. Dussel, ibid., p. 62.
5. See the excellent survey of these movements and their place in the evolution of a political theology in Alfredo Fierro, The Militant Gospel, chp. 1 "From Anthropocentrism to Politics", and chp. 2 "The Rejection of Christendom".
6. Cf. Marcel Xhaufflaire, Feuerbach et la Théologie de la Sécularisation, (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1970).
7. Cf. Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, chps. 4 and 5, esp. footnote no. 44, pp. 76-77; Karl Rahner, "History of the World and Salvation-History", Theological Investigations, vol. 5 (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966); Rahner, "Theology and Anthropology", in T. Patrick Burke, ed., The Word in History, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1966); Hans Urs von Balthasar, Science, Religion and Christianity, (Westminster: Newman Press, 1958).
8. Segundo, Grace and the Human Condition, p. 95.
9. Jürgen Moltmann, Religion, Revolution and the Future, chp. IX "The Future as New Paradigm of Transcendence", esp. p. 191. The phrase "absolute future" is Rahner's.
10. Leonardo Boff, Jesus Cristo Libertador, p. 77. See also Boff, "Salvation in Jesus Christ and the Process of Liberation", in Geffre and Gutierrez, eds., The Mystical and Political Dimension of the Christian Faith.
11. On the mythologizing of radical theology see Hugo Assmann, "Basic Aspects of Theological Reflection in Latin America", in Kee, ed., A Reader in Political Theology.
12. "Desacralización para el desarrollo", in Baltazar Lopez, ed., Cuernavaca: fuentes para el estudio de una diócesis,

(Cuernavaca: CIDOC Dossier no. 31, 1968), pt. 4/p. 239.

13. Cf. Thomas Merton, Faith and Violence, passim.

14. Segundo, Our Idea of God, p. 39.

15. Ellacuría, op.cit., p. 10.

16. Ibid., chp. 2; "The Prophetic Mission of Jesus"; Gutierrez, op.cit., pp. 225-232.

17. Cf. Joseph Comblin, Jesus of Nazareth. Consider also the statements of two Chilean worker-priests: "Christianity is not a social institution, a political party, or even a religion. It is the intervention of God in liberating man"; "The Gospel is not 'religious', but the relation of man with his destiny, to realize himself. With the Resurrection the whole world is liberated." (Cited in Thomas Sanders, Catholic Innovation in a Changing Latin America, (CIDOC Sondeos no. 41, pt. 2/pp. 71, 75.)

18. See the brilliant exegesis of the Fourth Gospel in Segundo, Evolution and Guilt, chp. 3.

19. Rosemary Ruether, Liberation Theology, pp. 8-9.

20. Segundo, op.cit., p. 56.

21. Segundo, Our Idea of God, p. 37.

22. Ellacuría, op.cit., p. 18.

23. Ibid., pp. 68-69.

24. Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, chp. 9 "Liberation and Salvation", p. 159.

25. Segundo, Grace and the Human Condition, p. 156.

26. See Segundo, Evolution and Guilt, p. 57 f.

27. "The Gospel and Social Justice", in Gheerbrant, ed., The Rebel Church in Latin America, p. 183.

28. In Religion and Political Society, p. 120.

29. Interview with the author, March 25, 1977. Compare this statement of Dom Helder with Juan Bulnes Aldunate's declaration that: "Christianity is returning to find its center in man, especially in the small, the poor, the suffering, of whom Christ, with his profoundly human life, his denunciation of oppressors, hierarchies, and the mighty, with the sacrifice of his cross, ... becomes the redeemer and the primogenitor, in an act which is not magical, but involves all his followers in the liberating salvation of humanity." Sacerdocios y Dominación,

- (Cuernavaca: CIDOC Sondeos no. 75, 1971), pt. 8/p.11.
30. Gutierrez, op.cit., pp. 204-205.
 31. Richardson in Religion and Political Society, p. 119.
 32. Ibid., p. 120.
 33. Ibid., p. 102.
 34. Gutierrez, op.cit., p. 177.
 35. Bonino, op.cit., chp. 7 "Kingdom of God, Utopia, and Historical Engagement", p. 140.
 36. Ibid., p. 152.
 37. Cf. Gregory Baum, Religion and Alienation, pp. 251 ff.
 38. Aldunate, op.cit., pt. 1/p. 11.
 39. See, for example, José de Luca, Situación Social y Liberación, CIDOC Sondeos no. 49, passim, esp. pp. 127-128.
 40. Bonino, op.cit., p. 142.
 41. Cf. Ibid., pp. 140-141, 164 ff.
 42. Miranda, Marx and the Bible, p. 117.
 43. Ibid., p. 137.
 44. See Ibid., pp. 243, 254 ff., 272 ff., 282-285, 296.
 45. Baum, Religion and Alienation, chp. XII "Heaven as Revealed Utopia", p. 286.
 46. See Fierro, The Militant Gospel, esp. chps. 4 and 7. According to Fierro, Christian "hope is, first and foremost, a critico-prophetical negation of the atheist's alleged knowledge that there is nothing to hope for. This negation of the believer is articulated in symbols." (p. 412.) See also J.B. Metz, "The Dangerous Memory of the Freedom of Jesus" in the essay "Prophetic Authority", Religion and Political Society, pp. 203-209.
 47. Baum, op.cit., chp. XI "Symbol and Theology", pp. 244-245, 253.
 48. Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, chp. 4 "Ideologies and Faith", esp. pp. 118 ff.
 49. Bonino, op.cit., pp. 146, 149.
 50. Segundo, op.cit., p. 25. The context of this remark is a methodological critique of sociology after Marx, as

exemplified by Weber and Mannheim.

51. See Fierro, op.cit., Part Three "Theory". Fierro attempts to distinguish between "theological", rhetorical theology, which is the direct "precritical" testimony of faith, and theology in the strict sense as a "critical", "scientific" metalanguage capable of "objectively" analysing the social praxis and symbolization of faith. The latter theology, as a science of religious expression in the era of secular, dialectical thinking, is compelled to adopt the Marxist hypothesis of historical materialism. However, nearly all of what still passes for theology, including political theology, is merely "theological" and has no cognitive status whatsoever. Fierro never tires of repeating that hoping, believing, symbolizing and like operations, although necessary, contribute absolutely nothing in the way of real (meaning "scientific") knowledge. In this way he is able to maintain the peculiarly academic pretension that his evaluations of theology are truly critical and objective (neutral?), whereas other political theologians have only succeeded in producing "left-wing orthodoxies". For refutations of this superior attitude toward rhetorical, or more broadly, "normative" discourse see Polanyi, Personal Knowledge, part three; Henry David Aiken, "The Revolt Against Ideology", in Cox, ed., Ideology, Politics, and Political Theory; Segundo, The Liberation of Theology, chps. 1-6.
52. Dom Helder has been writing poetry for most of his life and his work is highly regarded. A few of his poems appear in English in The Desert is Fertile, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1974).
53. Gutierrez ends his A Theology of Liberation on a note with which Dom Helder would surely concur:

We must be careful not to fall into an intellectual self-satisfaction, into a kind of triumphalism of erudite and advanced "new" visions of Christianity. The only thing that is really new is to accept day by day the gift of the Spirit, who makes us love -- in our concrete options to build a true human brotherhood, in our historical initiatives to subvert an order of injustice -- with the fullness with which Christ loved us. To paraphrase a well-known text of Pascal, we can say that all the political theologies, the theologies of hope, of revolution, and of liberation, are not worth one act of genuine solidarity with exploited social classes. They are not worth one act of faith, love, and hope, committed -- in one way or another -- in active participation to liberate man from everything that dehumanizes him and prevents him from living according to the will of the Father. (pp. 307-308.)

PART FOUR

CONCLUSION: FOR A DIALECTICAL UNDERSTANDING OF REVOLUTION THROUGH PEACE

'Revolution' and 'peace' are, in the common usage of these terms, considered to be mutually exclusive, if not contradictory. A revolutionary state is easily contrasted with its opposite, the peaceful state. Yet in the popular thought of Brazilian Archbishop Helder Câmara, there is a striking transvaluation of the conventional meanings of revolution and peace, which is reflected above all in the paradoxical and enigmatic theme of "revolution through peace". Within the radically Christian political philosophy to which Dom Helder has given his voice, it is not just that peace is no longer regarded as an end-state to be valued in itself -- a benign 'stasis' --, but that peace is seen as a means toward the very negation of secure stereotypes and complacent stability, -- i.e., as a means of permanent revolution. The object of peace must always be the revolutionary one of complete openness -- before the horizon of the unrealized future -- to the humanizing demands of the 'Other'.

Revolution and peace constitute two poles in a dialectical process of human social evolution. Revolution is the antithetic, messianic pole which breaks with the logic and the structures of the given in order to move history forward. It is the daimonic power of the future which historizes man and frees him to recreate his social existence. Peace is the synthetic, reconciling pole which allows a new

logic and new structures to be created. Peace does not seek the elimination of conflicts, but rather their revolutionary humanization, so that the struggles for a more just society will truly free man to be more and to create more, and not end up as a "spiral of violence" -- a vicious cycle of self-destruction. The relationship of revolution to peace is here described as "dialectical" in a very deliberate sense, because, beyond a critical point, each tends to operate in opposite fashion with respect to the other. Revolution which seeks only to perpetuate itself (e.g., when a critical 'minority' becomes a revolutionary 'elite'), rather than to continue to move toward new and richer social syntheses, becomes in effect counter-revolutionary and abortive of prospects for peaceful change. Similarly, when the search for peace leads to the acceptance of facile 'mass' syntheses and a refusal to acknowledge the dynamic interplay of basic oppositions, then peace becomes counter-revolutionary and the society is made increasingly vulnerable to violent revolutionary impulses. "Revolution through peace", therefore, does not refer simply to fundamental changes brought about through nonviolent action. It is pre-eminently a metaphor which integrates dialectically the creative and destructive, continuous and discontinuous, elements in every humanization process.

1.1 Revolution as a Process of Political Love

The paradigm of revolution in Dom Helder's thought involves much more than a Jacobin outlook on the contest for political power, a mechanical Marxist overview of conflict

between the forces and the relations of productions, or a futuristic scenario of inexorable technical "development". Revolution, insists Dom Helder, must have positive, quantitative results, but it takes place first as a qualitative transformation, or not at all. Such things as access to power and material abundance may be the visible concomitants of a process of liberation, yet they can also corrupt, enslave, and lead to new alienations and injustices. Revolution for Dom Helder is really the political embodiment of the twin commandments in Christianity of love of neighbor -- the sinful, mortal 'other' --, and love of God -- the transcendent 'Other'. Revolution is both the prophetic denunciation of social structures which "sin" against justice and love, and the prophetic annunciation of humanity's vocation to evolve new social relationships based on justice and love.

Revolution, moreover, centres on the emergence of secular political man: man as the conscious subject who is free to create his own history. Revolution, to be sure, remains fundamentally an experience of altered consciousness -- revolution in the "mental structures", as Dom Helder puts it --, but it is an experience which manifests itself first and foremost in politics and in history. Revolutionary 'conscientization' and humanization takes on its essential aspect, not as a private therapy or an advance in self-knowledge, but as a socio-political event.¹ This means, as we have repeatedly argued, that politics itself must become more than a neutral (sic!) mechanism of interest articulation, adjustment, adaptation, compromise, etc. Rather, politics

is to serve the "humanization of the social reality" and the "conquest of the various forms of human alienation."²

In this context the question is invariably asked: "Can 'mere' politics carry such a seemingly utopic burden?". The straightforward answer of Dom Helder is that politics is either part of the solution or part of the problem: it is the public mode of action which has the greatest relevance for the welfare of individuals in society. That political problems have such a personal dimension may make them more intractable than those of mathematics, but it does not make them any less political. Poverty was commonly considered to be a "personal" problem resulting from the moral turpitude or laxity of the individual. Yet few today would argue that private economic well-being is not, or cannot be, substantially affected by social and political structures. If politicization means anything, it is that the bogus supremacy of "God's will" and "weak human nature" over human affairs has finally begun to wane.

In chapter one I quoted Bernard Crick to the effect that: "Politics are the public actions of free men. Freedom is the privacy of men from public actions."³ The first sentence might seem to indicate some recognition that politics is indeed the decisive sphere of human interaction in which the struggle for liberation occurs within history. After all, politics is made synonymous with the freedom of public actions. Yet the second sentence renders Crick's vague liberalism vacuous at best. For someone who has lived among Dom Helder's beloved slum-dwellers in Recife, there can be no mistaking

the myopic insensitivity of a definition of freedom which denies it all positive social, political, and historical content, and in fact reduces it to a private commodity to be "afforded" only by those individuals so privileged as to possess it already. If the "facts" -- ahistorically understood -- of social class and geography determine that one is forced to carry on a daily struggle for survival, then politics is by definition a meaningless or excluded activity. Yet so long as the state does not "interfere" in the private lives of the Latin American masses, they are presumably still "free" to be malnourished, "free" to suffer oppression, "free" to be alienated!

The entire thrust of the ideas of Helder Câmara and of Latin American political theology is dedicated, not to the mythic "free man" of bourgeois liberalism, whose freedom for politics is no more than a luxury of the leisure class, but to the freeing -- through political struggle -- of the "oppressed man" who is dehumanized by, and trapped within, sinful social structures. The overriding motivation for Christian engagement in politics is not rational self-interest, the maximization of individual or systemic utilities, and the like, but the prophetic imperative of selfless love. Politics, therefore, is the essential horizon of Christian obedience in which the truth of such love -- its "socio-critical dynamism" -- is to be made manifest. Adds J.B. Metz: "If love is actualized as the unconditional determination to freedom and justice for the others, there might be circumstances where love itself could demand actions of a revolutionary character."

If the status quo of a society contains as much injustice as would probably be caused by a revolutionary upheaval, a revolution in favor of 'the least of our brothers' would be permissible even in the name of love."⁴

No doubt it will grievously offend the conventional wisdom of politics as the exercise of power to speak of a revolutionary politics in the context of the politicization of self-denying love. It is easy to agree, surveying the history of actual revolutions, that Che Gueverra's romanticized evocation of the "true revolutionary" as "guided by great sentiments of love" does sound slightly ridiculous.⁵ Yet prophets and visionaries such as Dom Helder persist in the foolishness of their passionate belief that the force of love will indeed free and ultimately redeem human history from the cycles of necessity, -- the established violence and the "legitimate" disorder of the "reign of force".

For the person called to a life of prophetic risk, politics cannot be other than a passion. It is instructive in this regard to contrast the perspectives of Paulo Freire and Hannah Arendt on the scope and meaning of revolutionary political activity and democratic participation. Freire, the 'nordestino' theorist of 'conscientization', argues that the revolutionary hopes of utopia can confront and begin to overcome the dilemmas of power. Arendt, on the contrary, sees politics as only one vocation among many, and the best hope for an "open" civil society in a Jeffersonian "polyarchy" of meritocratic, self-selected elites.⁶ For Arendt, "realism" and moderation dictate that the practice of politics be

rigorously anti-utopian and anti-messianic, -- indeed, anti-Christian. For Freire and Dom Helder, on the other hand, the tyranny of pragmatism must be overthrown in favor of a political love which is as inherently dangerous as the Christ figure was dangerous to the authorities of his time.

The 'orthopraxis' of the intersection of Christian love and revolutionary politics is brilliantly analysed by Paul Lehmann in The Transfiguration of Politics. Lehmann sums up Arendt's political negation (in On Revolution) of the messianic story as follows:

As far as Arendt can see, "the only completely valid, completely convincing experience Western mankind ever had with the active love of goodness as the inspiring principle of all action (was the) consideration of the person of Jesus of Nazareth." But then, as far as she can see, we must turn this experience over to the poets, from whom we can learn "that absolute goodness is hardly any less dangerous than absolute evil" and that there is a "goodness beyond virtue" and a "wickedness beyond vice."⁷

Arendt's exegesis of Melville and Dostoevsky must be understood in this context. "The immediate revolutionary experience to which the poets tried to relate Jesus was the French experience. In order to do this, they dared to undo the haloed transformation of Jesus of Nazareth into Christ, to make him return to the world of men."⁸ Yet Arendt's interpretation of the politics of compassion is fundamentally flawed and inadequate.

Jesus's own self-identification with the messianic tradition of Israel's prophets and the accounts in the gospels of his own involvement with power, certainly support every effort to "undo the haloed transformation of Jesus of Nazareth into Christ, to make him return to the world of men." But when we face up to this messianic story in its original

and originating context, it exhibits another point and purpose altogether. They are, to invert and sharpen the thrust of Arendt's phrase, the hallowed transfiguration of the world of men by the continuing presence in and over human affairs of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ.

... The Christ story is the story of the presence and power of Jesus of Nazareth in and over the ambiguity of power in human affairs. It tells in word and deed of the liberating limits and the renewing possibilities within which revolutionary promises and passions make room for the freedom to be and to stay human in the world. As the inaugurator of a "new age", the "age to come" in the midst of the "old age" the "age that is passing away", Jesus is a revolutionary, as surely as revolution and humanization, history and fulfillment are inseparable from one another As a model of a new humanity, he involves us in the struggle for a new and human future. The way leads from a politics of confrontation to a politics of transfiguration and the transfiguration of politics.⁹

It is integral to the Judaeo-Christian consciousness that "grace" (the messianic presence) is the power of the transcendent to break into history and to "revolutionize" the human condition. Human beings, therefore, are neither slaves to an external kingdom of force and necessity (contra Arendt and Ellul), nor slaves to their own purely temporal powers (contra Marx and Marcuse). The wisdom of the post-Christian world on the question of revolution rests with Lenin's statement in The State and Revolution that: "Revolution consists in the new class smashing this machine /the old, bourgeois state/ and commanding, governing with the aid of a new machine."¹⁰ Christianity teaches that: "The weakness of power is that of itself it cannot make room for the freedom that being and staying human in the world take."¹¹

This may help to explain why the images in a Christian paradigm of revolution do not derive from superficial operations of power and efficacy, but from personalized forces

of truth and love, humility and sacrifice, submission and silence, and why Christian political activists such as Helder Câmara often evince such an intense and profound spirituality. Yet, as in the biblical tradition, power and egoism are never denied or retreated from, but rather exposed as belonging to the realm of necessity not eternity, and therefore as partaking of the sin and transitoriness of the present age.

Lehmann gives the example of the famous thirteenth chapter of St. Paul's Letter to the Romans which closes with the admonition: "Discharge your obligations to all men; pay tax and toll, reverence and respect, to those to whom they are due. Leave no claim outstanding against you, except that of mutual love. He who loves his neighbor has satisfied every claim of the law." What Paul is calling attention to, argues Lehmann, is not, as is usually supposed, the absolute justification of legitimacy, but on the contrary the inescapable ambiguity of the role of legitimacy. The Kingdom of Christ which is not "of this world" is not an anarchist fantasy which prescind from the order of necessity, but rather that which holds out the promise of liberation from necessity as having been made incarnate within the evolution of the order of necessity itself. The requirements of necessity impose a negative obedience to "law and order" as a precaution against the tyranny of anarchy and relativism. But it is mutual love alone which imposes the positive obligation that transcends all other claims, and that accords with the providential destiny of mankind.¹²

Throughout the New Testament the tension is always

between the state and the law as indispensable yet relative goods in a sinful, finite world, and love and the neighbor -- the 'other' -- as the absolute boundary of ethical action. The revolutionary order which seeks justice can no more escape this tension between love and necessity than the established order which perpetuates injustice. As Karl Barth has pointed out in a commentary on the Letter to the Romans, the "great negative possibility of revolution" -- the struggle for power which remains within the "rules of the game" of power -- is confronted, in a revolutionary way, by the "great positive possibility of love". It is true that revolution, not the "establishment", is pregnant with mankind's hopes for a new and better tomorrow, yet it is precisely for this reason that the still more revolutionary challenge of love imposes such harsh limitations and radical demands upon the revolutionary.¹³

One cannot but be struck by how, in the writings and messages of Dom Helder, and indeed in radical Christian literature down through the ages, the images of service, suffering, and self-denial form the backbone of the revolutionary lexicon. Liberation and humanization occur only on the far side of the "transfiguration" of power relationships.¹⁴ "Revolution through peace" means therefore, at its deepest level, that only peace -- the transfiguration of the "spiral of violence" -- can save revolution from aborting its liberating and humanizing potential. That which is sought in revolution is related instrumentally and historically to the means of achieving and maintaining power, but finally

(eschatologically), only to the absoluteness of the call of conversion to the 'other'. The coincidence of all these seemingly contradictory demands (e.g., individual and structural, those of love and those of necessity, of gratuitousness and of efficacy) finds vivid expression in the prospective for nonviolent revolution outlined by James Douglass in Resistance and Contemplation:

Liberation has two dimensions: freedom from the bondage of the individual self, as in Zen, and freedom from the extended self of social expression, as in liberation movements in Latin America and Southeast Asia. Neither dimension of freedom, personal or social, can be won without suffering. We begin always on the far side of the flaming sword, the purifying fire of revolutionary suffering

If the prophets envision the destruction of imperial power and the liberation of all oppressed peoples in a new heaven and a new earth, they leave to each generation the task of embodying that struggle and of moving humanity from here to there in the grace of the Lord. The end is certain But even given the faith to hold on to an eschatological vision, we also know that liberation occurs in stages, and we need to understand more of its form within history, and in our time in particular

Liberation is the political expression of humanity's transformation in love The political liberation of humanity is a sign of God's redeeming presence breaking the bonds of sin

The paradigm of liberation is the cross and the empty tomb, crucifixion and resurrection, suffering love and transforming power Liberation is the cross of self-emptying, suffering and non-violent love which moves one to faith, and to a deeper humanity.¹⁵

Liberation, in the Christian perspective, is the "crucifixion" of egoism "through a dark night of contradictions and a prolonged apprenticeship to brotherly love."¹⁶ This is the meaning of such phrases as "the darkness of the gospel" and "the folly of the cross". An authentically Christian approach may appear paradoxical in the eyes of the world, yet

it does not seek an idealist escape from law and history, but rather the revolutionary fulfillment of law and history. An authentic Christianity recognizes that power and egoism, even violence, may be necessary for the evolution of history -- that is, for progress toward liberation from these very means of necessity. If, for example, class conflict is an accurate description of the primary social dynamics of evolution, then class struggle may be the unavoidable historical mediation of Christian political love.

The insertion of Christian love into particular evolutionary processes does not thereby destroy its distinctive character. Underlying the whole of Dom Helder's analysis of revolutionary theory and practice is the conviction that what the world considers strong -- the right of force, the violence of domination, the power of legitimation and self-gratification -- is in the long run very weak. This is not evidence of a special Christian theory or explanation of social problems, but of a unique stance before the question of revolution and the (relative) justification of legitimate authority. In Lehmann's paradigm of political transfiguration, for Christians, as for everyone else, the "line is drawn between a self-justifying perpetuation of power at the service of the established order of things and a revolutionary use of power for the liberation of man for human fulfillment."¹⁷ Christians, as everyone else, are called unequivocally to the latter option. But it is only the Christian who can dare to say: "The ultima ratio of submission and silence is their power to expose the weakness of power before the power of

weakness."¹⁸

Christianity has been intolerable to revolution and to what Barrington Moore calls the "dilemma of power", not because its faith is at bottom too conservative, but, on the contrary, because it is too revolutionary. This is the truth behind Dom Helder's statement, cited in a previous chapter, that "the Gospel is much more revolutionary than Marx." Both Marx and the oppressors accept the same circumscribed logic of a world of power, egoism, and violence. (Even class struggle is only "objective" because it corresponds to the dynamic of self-aggrandizement in the dialectic between man and nature). The Marxist revolutionary has nothing more to guide him than the criteria of ideology and 'realpolitik', which derive necessarily from the rationality of the already given -- of the "present age" as opposed to the "age to come". Christianity, on the other hand, proclaims the presence of an eschatological Absolute (transcendent love made flesh) and a revealed logic (selfless, solidary love) which subvert all historical absolutes, even those arising from the struggle for humanization. It is almost inevitable, therefore, that at a critical juncture authentic Christianity will be considered a danger to the necessary legitimacy of every order, including the necessary legitimacy of those created by every revolution.¹⁹

The very unfitness of Christianity for the imbroglios and supposed exigencies of the politics of power, as remarked upon with increasing disgust from Machiavelli to Nietzsche, is nonetheless, as Dom Helder has clearly seen, ultimately the only political strength of Christianity. This does not mean.

that the faith of a political theology ties itself to a separate "spiritual" political order or revolution which can be conveniently opposed to man's every historical effort. The liberation which such faith proclaims is neither a triumphalist conquest of the secular world, nor an idealist evasion of it. Yet it is in the very "alienation" of the "kingdom" from the "world" that Christianity is able to assert, from within the reality of power and necessity, that the liberation of the world will never take place solely on the world's terms (violence and egoism, etc.), but finally only as a liberation -- even if only partial and imperfectly realized -- from those terms.²⁰ That is what Dom Helder means by "liberation from sin and the consequences of sin", and it has absolutely nothing to do with private manuals of quasi-magical salvation or with revolutionary catechisms of secular salvation. Sums up Paul Lehmann:

The Gospel is no more for Christians only than only Christians are revolutionaries. Perhaps, however, Christians are the ultimately real revolutionaries because their ultimate commitment commits them to keeping revolution and truth and life effectively together. Christians have glimpsed in the darkness of the Gospel the illuminating confidence that "freedom for revolutionary action can be bound up in faith with freedom from the coercion of revolutionary action Perhaps they are something like the fools of revolution (But) where this spirit of freedom reigns, ... there the revolution within the revolution can take place, the deliverance of revolution from the alienating forms which it assumes in the struggle." If Che Guevara is right that "the vocation of every lover is to bring about revolution," the Christian is he who has discerned that "the vocation of every revolution is to bring about love."²¹

1.2 Peace as the Redemption of Revolution: the Politics of Reconciliation

There is probably nothing which disqualifies Christian faith more in the eyes of the modern revolutionary than its twin concepts of peace and reconciliation, just as the twin concepts of justice (equality of the 'other') and love (freedom of the 'other') disqualify the Christian message in the eyes of the Grand Inquisitors of the power establishment. Paraphrasing Dom Helder, we might say that for the Christian, while revolution is the indispensable basis for peace, peace is the indispensable basis for revolution. So although Marx and Engels anticipate Bloch in singing the praises of primitive Christianity and radical apocalypticism, they ultimately have no difficulty choosing the wisdom of a Nietzsche over that of a Weitzing, consigning Christianity to a religion of slaves, of "canaille", -- a religion disgustingly unsuited to the appointed "scientific" tasks of realizing proletarian will-to-power.

Marxism, Dom Helder and the political theologians all agree, is 'par excellence' the modern, secular world's paradigm of revolution.²² Hence the central importance for concrete revolutionary action, of the Marxian critique of religion and society. The church or the individual Christian are practising self-delusion or simply being dishonest when they try to evade this while still claiming to participate, in a meaningful and efficacious way, in contemporary struggles for the humanizing of society.²³ Yet it is the very "fitness" of Marxism for the realistic transformation of the present

(i.e., the positivist logic of its dialectic) which is its ultimate "unfitness" and inadequacy in the eyes of Christianity. And this ambivalence before Marxism points to the ultimate unfitness and inadequacy of revolution itself, because "Christians understand that the misery of men does not simply lie in their not-yet-realized possibilities, but even deeper in man's real impossibilities or his lost possibilities."²⁴ In a passage decisive for the politics of "revolution through peace" Jürgen Moltmann writes:

Revolution of freedom is alive where people hear the categorical imperative "to overthrow" all circumstances in which man is a humiliated, an enslaved, a forsaken, and a despised being." Karl Marx is completely right in this. And if his critique of religion ends with this categorical or eschatological imperative, it is better than all demythologizing of Christianity by theologians too well adjusted to the social, economic, and political status quo. This revolution of freedom, however, attains its end only if we find the certitude that future and freedom do indeed gracefully meet us in our revolutionary struggle.²⁵ /emphasis added/

The certitude of hope posited by Christianity is in the end only justifiable through faith, not "works". By contrast, Marxism can only offer an "objective" calculus of external revolution against the alienations of the human condition. So, in the last analysis it invites the reduction of the fear and anxiety of freedom, and of the suffering and protest of division, into manageable epiphenomena of impersonal, "natural" (or "real" historical) forces -- the very sort of forces which conservatives and political reactionaries attribute to their autocratic gods, their inviolable traditions, and their static ontologies of nature and law. What is largely missing in such external calculi of behavior

is what for Christians is the permanent mystery and ministry of "reconciliation".

This does not at all mean that Christians have a monopoly on the acknowledgement of reconciliation. Moltmann cites the poem of Bertolt Brecht written while in exile from Nazi Germany:

We who wished to prepare the soil for kindness
could not be kind ourselves.
But you, when at last it will come to pass that
man is a helper to man,²⁶
remember us with forbearance.

But in Christianity the plea for reconciliation is not construed 'ex post facto' as the result of an exigency which is only temporary. Rather, the call to reconciliation is a continuous challenge within the revolutionary imperative itself: ultimately, through reconciliation, the way of peace is the way of revolution. It is important, therefore, that the use of the concept of peace in these terms by Dom Helder and other radical Christians, be properly understood.

Dom Helder himself offers the most important clue in Revolution Through Peace:

Let no one be deceived as to the nature of Christ. There is no doubt that He came to bring peace to men. But not the peace of stagnant swamps, not peace based on injustice, not a peace that is the opposite of development. In such cases, Christ Himself proclaimed that He had come to bring strife and a sword.

Alas for those with no heart for the struggle, the satiated, those who have lost their hunger and thirst for justice. Alas for those who love their own lives and do not know how to lose them. Alas for those who cling to their reputations, honor, and convenience. Christ crowned the beatitudes by naming as most blessed among the blessed those who suffer persecution for the sake of justice.²⁷

Peace is, in other words, pre-eminently a permanent, personal

struggle against the dehumanizing violence of injustice. In the context of that violence, peace is a process of reconciliation which entails revolution.

Some critics will be tempted to misread this of course. They may contend that personal can only mean individual, that the revolutionary repudiation of violence means passivity or pie-in-the-sky, and that the struggle of peace is therefore a private, futile escape from the "real world". On the contrary, Dom Helder and the proponents of a political theology never shy away from the difficult application of such eschatological imperatives as "love of enemies" to the historical realities of revolutionary violence between oppressors and oppressed. They know that real peace is incompatible with class domination, and that the paradox of an absolute rejection of violence is that "the absolute character of this rejection calls for attitudes and lines of action that cannot help but be extreme."²⁸ Personal acceptance of a prophetic vocation of nonviolent liberation, undertaken in love, is by no means an easy way out, because:

In the present situation of mankind there are still cases in which recourse to violence is the sole means possible of preventing violence which would have irreparable consequences. It is not always possible to wait. The universal adoption of a non-violent attitude in this kind of situation would mean, in practice, giving free play to disordered violence. Heroic love can certainly go as far as self-sacrifice in order to avoid sacrificing an assassin, but when it is a question of others, who can say that the life of the malefactor should be preferred to that of the innocent? There is violence, then, which is postulated by love, violence, which is postulated by non-violence.²⁹

In Latin America it is generally accepted that peace,

as the synthesis of a new, more human order, may have to come through the violence of revolution. And the focus of this revolution is no metaphysical abstraction. "Peace", writes Arturo Paoli, "is the result of an order sought through liberation", adding that: "There can be no peace without destroying the capitalist system"³⁰ Among the Latin Americans there is no quarrel with the socio-economic realism of Marx. But where they do part ways with him (or at least with the "cold current" of Marxism) is in their conviction, as Christians, that history impinges on the ethical responsibility of each individual in a personal, not simply exogenous or reflexive way. Historical acts do not become non-moral simply through the facile designation of every morality, whether of ends or means, as a class-based morality.

Again, to forestall any possible misunderstanding, the notion of a personal, gospel-inspired commitment to revolution is not a throwback to privatistic conversion or to a neo-Hegelian "revolution of consciences". It is 'conscientization' in the radical sense of a 'kenosis' and 'metanoia' of personal existence; the freeing of the self from the oppressive structures which imprison being and separate it from its object; liberation from the alienation which estranges being from its own truth. For Dom Helder, this personal (as distinct from ideological) engagement in struggle is more "objectively revolutionary" than would be, for example, preaching the "scientific inevitability" of socialism while, in the intervening twilight of "pre-history", being content to lead the lifestyle of a bourgeois.³¹ (This is in no way

a criticism of Marx himself, but only of a scholastic attitude which disdains any personalistic dimension of struggle, and dismisses the forms which it takes as naive and irrelevant.) In The Republic Socrates reproaches Polemarchus for suggesting that justice is doing good to friends and harm to enemies. In Matthew's gospel we read: "For if you love those who love you, what right have you to claim any credit?"³² Adapting this to our present discussion, we might ask what merit there would be in creating a history of freedom if it could be carried out entirely through the rational recognition of "objective" class interests, without any personal commitment to love of the 'other'?

Dom Helder's message has little to offer any quest for rational certitude about the future, or about the prospects for an absolute suppression of conflict. As a result, it will doubtless be objected that reconciliation means in the final analysis only conciliation -- i.e., a tolerable consensus or, at best, harmonious compromise --, and not the decisive historical resolution of conflict.³³ Whereas traditionalism "solves" the problem of contradictions through evasion or sacralization, rationalism, whether historicist or positivist, always seeks their total consummation, -- an end to alienation and ideology in the Marxian sense, and therefore an end to the need for reconciliation. (In the history of absolutism, however, the traditionalist and the axiological 'a prioris' -- determination by the past versus determination by the future -- have turned out to be not so far apart in practice after all.)

material existence. Marcuse seems to have sensed this, albeit in a purely secular way, in his suggestion that the pathway to socialism may have to be "from science to utopia and not, as Engels believed, from utopia to science."⁴⁷

Marcuse adds pointedly in Eros and Civilization: "Where religion still preserves the uncompromised aspirations for peace and happiness, its "illusions" still have a higher truth value than science which works for their elimination."⁴⁸

But if positivism and critical rationalism cannot engineer mutual love or happiness, they are even less able to confront the negative side of the human condition.

Marxism is the child of a historical epoch which can find no meaning in failure or suffering, and which treats sin as an absurdity and death as an obscenity. Marxism remains unequalled as the revolutionary ideology of modernity, but it is too bound up with the logic and the frame of reference of the current epoch to be able to exercise any ultimate (eschatological), demystifying judgement upon it. There is no "cross" in Marxism, and neither therefore can there be any "resurrection". And as Alistair Kee notes in A Reader in Political Theology: "The culmination of political theology might ... be the discovery for Christians that their own faith is more subversive of the present age than anything deriving from purely political analysis The cross was a symbol of resistance before it was ever mythologized into an eternal altar."⁴⁹

In this regard, it seems to me that the essence of the question of "revolution through peace" as a Christian paradigm,

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.... Underlying the new ideas, including those of modern physics, is a unifying order, but it is not causality; it is purpose, and not the purpose of the universe and of man, but the purpose in the universe and in man Therefore we need a calculus of potentiality rather than one of probability, a dialectic of polarity, one in which unity and diversity are redefined as simultaneous and necessary poles of the same essence

This Series is committed to a re-examination of all those sides of human endeavour which the specialist was taught he could safely leave aside. It attempts to show the structural kinship between subject and object; the indwelling of the one in the other Each author deals with the increasing realization that spirit and nature are not separate and apart; that intuition and reason must regain their importance as the means of perceiving and fusing inner being with outer reality.³⁹

Following the above terms of reference the whole of "revolution through peace" might be summed up as the politico-evolutionary fusion of personal 'conscientization' and "structural revolution". And this has occurred, unfashionable though it may be to say it, through the politicization and historical validation of the Judaeo-Christian idiom.⁴⁰ In Christianity and World History and Prophecy in a Technocratic Age Arend van Leeuwen points out that it is the true secularity of Christianity which pits it against dehumanized material progress and the "ontocratic" systems which reduce man to a manipulable object. The old blasphemy -- "It is the will of God" -- has given way to a new blasphemy -- "it is the will of reality" -- no less deadly. Imagination is branded as illusion and the obsession with rationalization becomes itself irrational.⁴¹ (Was not Kierkegaard the logical successor of Hegel, and Nietzsche of Marx?) Christianity, notes Rubem Alves, destroys man's secular totems, his "graven

which is a "grace-full" liberation from violence. Peace is always a creative dynamic: a dialectical, practical-critical "doing". It could never be the static, ahistorical state which is the phantasmagorical dream of a thousand naive or disingenuous eulogies.

Peace is re-birth, re-creation. It is a passing through the fire of transforming love which is the personal-social dialectic of reconciliation. It is a getting from here to there -- that is, from the sinful "here" of neo-capitalism, neo-colonialism, and technocratic "development", to the redemptive "there" of a more fraternal community. Peace is therefore pre-eminently a historical dialectic.³⁶

It is a dialectic which paradoxically leaves open the question of violence because there can be no prefabricated, unhistorical absolutes to fall back on.

Peace is therefore profoundly revolutionary. It reaches down into the personal centre of being -- to the source, in Lehmann's terms, of the freedom "to be and to stay human in the world" -- to build the whole man who is the "new man" of the gospels. It reaches out to the totality of human relationships in a relentless struggle against the exploitation of man by man. Truly it is the peace-makers who "make the revolution".

1.3 Prospectives

In the preface I wondered about the validity of the Judaeo-Christian tradition as a basis for bringing a prophetic political vision, such as "revolution through peace",

to bear upon the jaded hopes of modern, secular man. The answer, I think, must be a qualified "yes". I say qualified because the great mass of professed Christians will always be too busy making their own collective or individual accommodations with the status quo to give much thought to the meaning of "missionary" presence. The disturbing figure of the crucified Christ has needed its apologies far more than ever did the urbane eclecticism of Socrates. But I am also convinced that there will always be the critical "abrahamic" minorities, and their "spiritual" leaders -- the Helder Camaras of this world -- who will "take up the cross" anew in the midst of the violence of unfreedom and the equally terrible fear of freedom itself.

I do not rest my case simply on the exuberance and passionate conviction of one man. It is political theology, which has taken root in Latin America as a theology of liberation, which provides the secularized Christian idiom capable of confronting the issues of peace and revolution in the modern age. Political theology is a negative, symbolic theology. It bears no relation to the naive idealism of the Social Gospel and its virtual equation of the Kingdom of God with the amenities of the welfare state. But political theology is also a theology of hope -- hope not in a "golden age" of unthinking religiosity, but in the destiny of man in a world "come of age". There is not here the lament of Berdyaev that wars and revolutions are a visitation of sin and death for the failures of Christianity. Nor is there here the pessimism of Niebuhr and Ellul that pragmatic

"realism" is the only sober and responsible response to an increasingly technocratic kingdom of necessity. Political theology and Dom Helder celebrate secular modernity, but they have learned to do so on their own terms.

Dom Helder has sought to revolutionize the canons of development and change by holding them up to the light of a radical paradigm of liberation and humanization. In the utopic, quasi-anarchist "personalism" of Mounier he discovered the truth of the intuition that conscience, integrity, and self-realization through self-giving can overcome the bonds of systemization, rationalization, and legitimization. In the "integral" humanism of de Chardin, Maritain, and Lebreton he discovered the truth that it is not cold calculations of interest, but moral vision and the formation of a communitarian culture -- the "indivisible socialization of property, power and knowledge" -- which are the basic building blocks of a more human order.³⁷ In the heroic non-violence of Ghandi and Martin Luther King he discovered the truth that authentic liberation from oppression must also be a liberation from the power to oppress.

In his passionate quest for new approaches and a fresh resolve before the mounting problems of world and human development, Dom Helder has demonstrated the capacity of the Christian ethic, and even, to a limited extent, the established institutions of Christianity, to come to grips with the dynamics of modernization in a critico-prophetic way. Without the leadership of men like Archbishop Câmara the documents of Vatican II and Medellín on development and

social justice would not have been as progressive as they were. That these texts now appear timid and already dated is a measure of the vitality and intensity of the greatly enlarged atmosphere which they helped to create for subsequent Christian, especially Catholic, political thought. It is interesting to note that Joseph Comblin, a theologian who worked closely with Dom Helder in Recife for many years, had written a theology of peace in the early sixties, but by the end of the decade he had also written a theology of revolution. Just as liberation had become the new name for development in Latin America, revolution had become the new name for peace.

The challenge thrown down to the "one-dimensional" civilizations of the industrialized world by Dom Helder and other Third World activists is also evidence of a remarkable shift in political priorities. If it is true that the peoples of the underdeveloping regions of the globe are the proletariat of contemporary humanity, it is perhaps to be expected that such a challenge should come from this dependent periphery, and from those least affected by bourgeois secularization -- the progressive "cultural secularization" before which western social science genuflects in the pursuit of the anonymous, "functional" and post-ideological political culture. The simultaneous massification and fragmentation of society (the favored "scientific" phrase is "structural differentiation") is reflected in the compartmentalized and specialized impotence of knowledge of that society. What seems to be lacking is the overarching vision

and purpose which religion and philosophy, faith and ideology, once provided. Over a decade ago Henry David Aiken remarked that the few political philosophers who "still suppose that they have a useful political role to play, discover it to be only that of unmasking the pretensions of other political philosophers."³⁸ Radical Christians, especially in Latin America, have also discovered that the emperor indeed has no clothes.

I find it rather ironic, but just, that this should be the case. The Judaeo-Christian tradition is part of the mental baggage of the West, and, in fact, of its secularizing drive. It is a tradition which will not be easily jettisoned by the sleight-of-hand of empirico-rationalist epistemology. Dom Helder's own personal witness, as articulated particularly in his book Revolution Through Peace, attests to this in a limited yet profoundly vital way. Significantly, the English edition of that book is volume forty-five in a series on science and culture entitled "World Perspectives". The series' editor explains its 'raison d'être':

Only those spiritual and intellectual leaders of our epoch who have a paternity in this extension of man's horizons /i.e., goal-directed social evolution/ are invited to participate in this Series: those who are aware of the truth that beyond the divisiveness of men there exists a primordial unitive power since we are all bound together by a common humanity more fundamental than any unity of dogma; those who recognize that the centrifugal force that has scattered and atomized mankind must be replaced by an integrating structure and process capable of bestowing meaning and purpose on existence; those who realize that science itself, when not inhibited by the limitations of its own methodology, when chastened and humbled, commits man to an indeterminate range of yet undreamed consequences that may flow from it.

... Underlying the new ideas, including those of modern physics, is a unifying order, but it is not causality; it is purpose, and not the purpose of the universe and of man, but the purpose in the universe and in man Therefore we need a calculus of potentiality rather than one of probability, a dialectic of polarity, one in which unity and diversity are redefined as simultaneous and necessary poles of the same essence

This Series is committed to a re-examination of all those sides of human endeavour which the specialist was taught he could safely leave aside. It attempts to show the structural kinship between subject and object; the indwelling of the one in the other Each author deals with the increasing realization that spirit and nature are not separate and apart; that intuition and reason must regain their importance as the means of perceiving and fusing inner being with outer reality.³⁹

Following the above terms of reference the whole of "revolution through peace" might be summed up as the politico-evolutionary fusion of personal 'conscientization' and "structural revolution". And this has occurred, unfashionable though it may be to say it, through the politicization and historical validation of the Judaeo-Christian idiom.⁴⁰ In

Christianity and World History and Prophecy in a Technocratic

Age Arend van Leeuwen points out that it is the true secularity of Christianity which pits it against dehumanized material

progress and the "ontocratic" systems which reduce man to a manipulable object. The old blasphemy -- "It is the will of

God" -- has given way to a new blasphemy -- "it is the will of reality" -- no less deadly. Imagination is branded as

illusion and the obsession with rationalization becomes itself irrational.⁴¹ (Was not Kierkegaard the logical

successor of Hegel, and Nietzsche of Marx?) Christianity,

notes Rubem Alves, destroys man's secular totems, his "graven

images", in order to situate transcendence in the "holy insecurity" of a world of unrealized, but not unrealizable human freedom. That is why "peace with God means a "sword" for the world -- the permanent judgement and rejection of the untruth of what is; for the sake of a new tomorrow of reconciliation and liberation."⁴²

In like manner, the Christianity of Dom Helder and of political theology asserts the power of purpose over the purpose (function) of power; moral, political, and dialectical reason over instrumental and technical reason. That this goes against the dominant grain of conventional western thinking to contain and to neutralize reality is obvious. But political theology does not hesitate to assert with Emmanuel Levinas (whose thought, Comblin claims, has had the most influence of any philosopher on the theology of liberation⁴³): "A philosophy of power, ontology, as a fundamental philosophy which does not call into question the self, is a philosophy of injustice."⁴⁴ Viewed in this light science itself is to become an instrument of 'conscientization', -- which is the critical difference between observing and serving the power of the given. As Jürgen Moltmann puts it in Religion, Revolution, and the Future: "The sciences are being recalled to their truly human possibilities and promises. They are to be enlisted for the realization of humanity. They can no longer be the slaves of a society which misses its genuinely human opportunities. Thus every science is questioned about its socio-political function."⁴⁵

As we have seen, much of the appeal and validity of

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material existence. Marcuse seems to have sensed this, albeit in a purely secular way, in his suggestion that the pathway to socialism may have to be "from science to utopia and not, as Engels believed, from utopia to science."⁴⁷

Marcuse adds pointedly in Eros and Civilization: "Where religion still preserves the uncompromised aspirations for peace and happiness, its "illusions" still have a higher truth value than science which works for their elimination."⁴⁸

But if positivism and critical rationalism cannot engineer mutual love or happiness, they are even less able to confront the negative side of the human condition.

Marxism is the child of a historical epoch which can find no meaning in failure or suffering, and which treats sin as an absurdity and death as an obscenity. Marxism remains unequalled as the revolutionary ideology of modernity, but it is too bound up with the logic and the frame of reference of the current epoch to be able to exercise any ultimate (eschatological), demystifying judgement upon it. There is no "cross" in Marxism, and neither therefore can there be any "resurrection". And as Alistair Kee notes in A Reader in Political Theology: "The culmination of political theology might ... be the discovery for Christians that their own faith is more subversive of the present age than anything deriving from purely political analysis The cross was a symbol of resistance before it was ever mythologized into an eternal altar."⁴⁹

In this regard, it seems to me that the essence of the question of "revolution through peace" as a Christian paradigm,

and its subversive relevance to the prevailing western cultural and intellectual ethos, has been brilliantly captured, if only indirectly, within several passages of Michael Polanyi's monumental work Personal Knowledge. In a particularly insightful discourse on the "intellectual passion" of Christian faith, he writes:

The confession of guilt, the surrender to God's mercy, the prayer for grace, the praise of God, bring about mounting tension. By these ritual acts the worshipper accepts the obligation to achieve what he knows to be beyond his own unaided powers and strives towards it in the hope of a merciful visitation from above. The ritual of worship is expressly designed to induce and sustain this state of anguish, surrender and hope. The moment a man were to claim that he had arrived and could now happily contemplate his own perfection, he would be thrown back into spiritual emptiness.

The indwelling of the Christian worshipper is therefore a continued attempt at breaking out, at casting off the condition of man, even while humbly acknowledging its inescapability. Such indwelling is fulfilled most completely when it increases this effort to the utmost. It resembles not the dwelling within a great theory of which we enjoy the complete understanding, nor an immersion in the pattern of a musical masterpiece, but the heuristic upsurge which strives to break through the accepted frameworks of thought, guided by the intimations of discoveries still beyond our horizon. Christian worship sustains, as it were, an eternal, never to be consummated hunch, a heuristic vision which is accepted for the sake of its unresolvable tension. It is like an obsession with a problem known to be insoluble, which yet follows, against reason, unswervingly, the heuristic command: 'Look at the unknown!' Christianity sedulously fosters, and in a sense permanently satisfies, man's craving for mental dissatisfaction by offering him the comfort of a crucified God.⁵⁰

[emphasis added]

Polanyi understands the 'via negativa' of obedience to God's will solely in existentialist and contemplative terms. (In fact, he compares the process of a negative theology to aesthetic negations and the nihilistic techniques

of Sartre in La Nausée. When Personal Knowledge was first published in 1958 existentialist theology had reached its height.) Political theology, as we have seen, understands the indwelling of transcendence, not only intersubjectively, but also, and primarily, politically. From within the risks of faith in the future the divine command is not so much 'Look at the unknown!' as 'Do the unknown!': the individual pursuit of meaningfulness and inner peace has been politicized into the collective pursuit of justice and social peace; the personal 'will-to-meaning' is comprehensible only as part of the interpersonal 'will-to-justice'. But equally of note is that it is humanist existentialism, and not any set version of Christian social principles, which has been the womb of political theology.⁵¹

Political theology is a negative theology. It therefore acknowledges its moral and intellectual passions openly, not furtively or epiphenomenally as the cult of objectivity has taught so many. And, moreover, in this case there is a double heresy, since such passions are manifested above all concretely as political passions. Truth and right cannot be contemplated privatistically as objects external to the self, but only lived out for others from within the praxis of doing the truth and doing the right. Just as the encounter with Marxism sharpened and redirected the thrust of Sartre's humanism, the same encounter has radicalized and redirected the language of faith which underlies the search for "revolution through peace".

In Dom Helder's vision the personal element has not

thereby been lost, but rather has gained added force. His fusion of 'conscientization' and structural revolution makes explicit for the problems of global injustice and underdevelopment, what could only be intimated in Mounier's integration of personalism and radical socialism, and Teilhard de Chardin's integration of personalization ("noogenesis") and socialization. But it is not so much in the subject matter as in the political and prophetic act of integration itself that the axis of revolution-peace is resolved. For Dom Helder, the revolutionary is the man who seeks the peace of others in order to be at peace with himself and with his God.

Returning to Polanyi, it is no coincidence that Personal Knowledge ends with a paean to evolutionary humanization.⁵² Polanyi, moreover, has correctly appreciated the relation of critical reason to what might be called the experiences of faith, hope, and love in the construction of history. In the chapter on "The Critique of Doubt" he writes:

We owe our mental existence predominantly to works of art, morality, religious worship, scientific theory and other articulated systems which we accept as our dwelling place and as the soil of our mental development. Objectivism has totally falsified our conception of truth, by exalting what we can know and prove, while covering up with ambiguous utterances all that we know and cannot prove, even though the latter knowledge underlies, and must ultimately set its seal to, all that we can prove. In trying to restrict our minds to the few things that are demonstrable, and therefore explicitly dubitable, it has overlooked the acritical choices which determine the whole being of our minds and has rendered us incapable of acknowledging these vital choices.⁵³

As André Malraux once remarked: "Only the believer can doubt." For this believer, history is neither only "a tale told by an idiot", nor only the infallible "cunning of reason". For this believer, the ultimately shallow and enclosed logic of speculative absolutisms is matched only by that of objective relativisms. Indeed, José Miranda in Marx and the Bible contends that: "Perhaps the greatest triumph of conservatism in the history of thought was when empirical verifiability became the criterion of truth."⁵⁴

To disparage Dom Helder's politico-religious affirmations as "objectively" meaningless is really to refuse to acknowledge what Polanyi might call the personal conjunction of "knowing and being". The validity of (as opposed to emotive preference for) the message of "revolution through peace", and of a political theology of liberation, cannot be measured scientifically in terms of "hard facts", but neither can it be simply dismissed by making that message a mere function of environmental stimulus-response. Polanyi explains that:

It is justifiable ... to speak of the verification of science by experience in a sense which would not apply to other articulate systems. The process by which other systems than science are tested and finally accepted may be called, by contrast, a process of validation The emotional coefficient of assertion is intensified as we pass from the sciences to the neighbouring domains of thought. But both verification and validation are everywhere an acknowledgement of commitment: they claim the presence of something real and external to the speaker. As distinct from both of these, subjective experiences can only be said to be authentic, and authenticity does not involve a commitment in the same sense in which both verification and validation do.⁵⁵

Polanyi's remarks are in effect a clear statement of

the existential meaning of 'orthopraxis' in human endeavour.⁵⁶ Applied to our discussion of Christianity and the revolutionary imperative, we can say that evangelization, as a process of radical humanization, demands of the person not only to be true to self, but also to be true to the real 'other', both transcendent and fraternal. It is political theology, finally, which completes 'orthopraxis' by articulating its fundamentally political meaning. The quest for an authentic biblical hermeneutic, for an authentic Christian faith, becomes also the quest for a gospel of liberation. Authenticity must be validated historically and publicly through political praxis, just as for Dom Helder, revolution must be validated by the practice of love, and peace by the practice of justice.

Ultimately, the meaning and significance of Dom Helder's vision is in its demonstration of the continuing validity of the Christian tradition as at the same time a fundamental experience of purification, authentication, and adaptation -- as both a return to the gospel roots and an attempt to grasp the present historical situation by the root. In this sense, the enigmatic ideal of "revolution through peace" is representative of the intense striving for a renewed efficacy and integrity of belief which has accompanied the current profound re-awakening of the Christian conscience throughout Latin America. Specifically, this ideal directs us to at least three primary areas of renewal. First, as we have seen, it follows the new political

theologies in liberating the traditional Christian concepts of sin and conversion, peace and love, etc., so that they will be used, no longer to deny the modern challenge of revolution, but rather to qualify the process of revolution in order to redeem and to strengthen it. Second, it entails a total humanistic critique of world politico-economic structures, denouncing both the subordination of production to the selfish interests of tiny elites, and the subordination of all human beings to increasingly technocratic norms of production. Third, it promotes greater solidarity among all peoples through an "other-directed" conversion oriented towards the integration of all levels -- personal, communal, structural, societal -- of human interaction. In short, it proclaims that man's individual and collective responsibilities within the vast existing network of injustices, necessarily call him to a revolutionary vocation, -- and that this call ought to be felt especially keenly by Christians.

"Revolution through peace" is in itself, however, only a powerful metaphor providing an opening for critical reflection on the path of liberating struggle. As evidenced by the abrupt failure of Dom Helder's 1968 project, "Action for Justice and Peace", it will probably not be of immediate strategic importance in Latin American politics. Those who are looking for a recipe for social and political action or a handbook of "applied Christianity" in the Archbishop's ideas will be disappointed. His crusade is to live his own faith in a totally engaged way, but only by motivating the self-awareness of others, not by specifying their responses

to particular circumstances.

Although Dom Helder can perhaps be faulted for his relative neglect of practical questions, he undoubtedly realizes that the greatest contribution which he can make through his work will be exemplary and symbolic. In any event, there is no set of concrete guidelines which can guarantee that Christian belief will always be a liberating force in Latin America, or anywhere else for that matter. For my own part, I have tried to let the proponents of a radical new Christian vision speak for themselves, rather than presuming to know, and therefore to prescribe, the specific courses of action which they should take to ensure continued church "development". Because what is important, finally, for the purposes of this study, is that, more and more, profoundly searching, serious, and original attempts at social criticism are being made by Christians such as Helder Câmara, in order, first of all, to liberate themselves and their churches for the sake of a new tomorrow of justice and peace among all of the earth's inhabitants.

NOTES

1. This has been the particular weakness of secularization theologies which begin and end with the revision of mental categories. Cf. also the critical remarks in Donald Evans, "Gregory Baum's Theology of Liberation", Studies in Religion, vol. I, January 1971, pp. 45-60.
2. Norbert Greinacher, "The Christian Community and Political Commitment", in Müller, et.al., Political Commitment and Christian Community.
3. In Defence of Politics, p. 18.
4. Metz, Theology of the World, pp. 119-120.
5. See the commentary on Guevara's musings in Arturo Paoli, Freedom to be Free, pp. 33 ff.; also chp. 7 "Political Love".
6. Cf. Jerez and Hernandez-Pico, "Cultural Action for Freedom", in Paulo Freire, LADOC 'Keyhole' no. 1, pp. 38-40.
7. The Transfiguration of Politics, p. 19.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., pp. 19-20.
10. Cited in ibid., p. 28.
11. Ibid., p. 32.
12. Ibid., pp. 35 ff. Consider also the juxtaposition in St. Augustine of the statements: "For what are kingdoms but great bands of robbers?", and "Love and do what you will". A major problem in the interpretation of the supposed ultra-conservatism of Paul and Augustine is that the cultural ethos of Greek metaphysics and classical legal philosophy is so often equated with the germ of the Christian kerygma when in fact its immediate roots are semitic. We have already commented in earlier chapters how the historical-consciousness of the Hebrews was lost or resolved into a sacred/profane dualism. But it might also be added that it is only in the modern age that a truly evolutionary perspective of world history -- and therefore of sin and salvation -- has become possible.
13. Barth writes:

We call "love" the "great positive possibility", precisely because in the act of love the revolutionary meaning of all ethos is exposed, because

love actually has to do with the negation and the breaking down of that which exists. It is love that also ultimately declares the reactionary man to be in the wrong, in spite of the wrong that the revolutionary does. For insofar as we love one another, we cannot wish to maintain the status quo. Instead, we do in love the new thing that casts down what has become old. Thus what we are talking about is the breach in the wall of incomprehensible inaction, which is the still more incomprehensible action of love. (ibid., p. 44.)

Explains Lehmann: "On this reckoning, the Establishment is not the problem, because the Establishment is already condemned. It is God's agent and has certain services and duties to which its energies are devoted. But the dialectic of legitimacy is that in confusing itself with the order of God it begets its own downfall The dialectic of revolution, on the other hand, is that the revolutionary is always nearer to what God is doing in the world to make human life human but is imperiled by the temptation to mistake his own "no" to the existing order for the new order. The revolutionary is more vulnerable than the conservative to being overcome of evil, because with his negation he comes so very near to God." (p. 45.)

14. See ibid., chp. 6 "Transfiguration and Politics". Lehmann uses the biblical metaphor of "transfiguration" to connote a "paradigmatic", radical and dialectical qualitative leap in the ordering and valuation of social relationships.
15. Resistance and Contemplation, pp. 18-19, 29-30.
16. Segundo Galilea, "Liberation as an Encounter With Politics and Contemplation", in Geffre, et al., The Mystical and Political Dimension of the Christian Faith, p. 26 f.
17. Lehmann, op.cit., p. 77.
18. Ibid., p. 69.-
19. This critical moment cuts both ways:

It is the time of decision for a revolutionary movement whether those who are formed and informed by biblical politics are to be rejected as laggards and traitors to the revolutionary cause and destiny, or whether they are the liberating (saving) vanguard of the revolution itself. Similarly, such a critical instant is the time of decision for those who are formed

and informed by biblical politics whether or not a revolutionary movement must be rejected because the leadership and membership of that movement have turned aside from the vocation and destiny of revolution and have converted the power of its ideology into an ideology of power, the risk of violence into violence as policy, and the iconoclasm proper to revolutionary theory and practice into the idolatry of a self-justifying absolutization of revolution itself. (*ibid.*, p. 281.)

See also the section on faith and the function of social stereotypes in Segundo, Our Idea of God, pp. 127-133.

20. Cf. Yves Congar, "Christianisme et libération de l'homme", Masses Ouvrières, no. 258, December 1969, pp. 3-12.
21. Lehmann, *op.cit.*, pp. 69-70.
22. At the present stage of political theology this is simply taken for granted, and already during the sixties the fascination of Marxism was the subject of earnest debate. See, for example, Câmara, "Universidade, Christianismo, e Marxismo"; Caruaru, Brazil, December 19, 1966 (in PL); Hildegard Goss-Mayr, "Peace through Revolution", Concilium, vol. 35, 1968; Giulio Girardi, Marxism and Christianity.
23. An example is the devising of what Jean Guichard calls "religious strategies" to avoid linking the action of personal conscience to real social forces. See Eglise, Lutte de Classes et Stratégies Politiques, (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1972).
24. Jürgen Moltmann, Religion, Revolution, and the Future, p. 78.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
27. Revolution Through Peace, p. 130.
28. Ellacuría, Freedom Made Flesh, p. 230.
29. Girardi, Marxism and Christianity, p. 249.
30. Paoli, *op.cit.*, p. 289.
31. See Câmara, "Universidade, Christianismo, e Marxismo", *op.cit.*, and "Tentando Ver Claro Para Agir Firme", Rio de Janeiro, December 16, 1968, (also in PL).
32. Plato, The Republic, Bk. I, chp. II; Matthew 5:38-48. It is in this context that the teachings to "turn the other cheek" and to "love your enemies" are expounded.

33. On the distinction between reconciliation and conciliation see J.G. Davies, Christians, Politics, and Violent Revolution, pp. 184-187.
34. J.B. Libânio in Cei, "Reconciliação", supplement no. 16, Brazil, December 1976, p. 22.
35. Theology of the World, p. 139; also John McQuarrie, The Concept of Peace, (London: SCM, 1973), passim.
36. It is important to note that the dynamic of peace in Dom Helder's thinking is in no way akin to the bourgeois-pluralist model of a "politics of consensus". The "dialectic" by definition is always process and movement -- a dynamic interplay of creative oppositions, but it is not thereby necessarily historical.
37. See Câmara, Race Against Time, chp. IV. "Teilhard as prophet of development"; Denis Goulet, A New Moral Order: Development Ethics and Liberation Theology, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1974), chp. 2 on Lebreton. In a 1972 address "Christianity, Socialism, Marxism Seek Dialogue" Dom Helder explained:

.... believing in the spirit does not at all mean neglecting the body, just as believing in God does not mean looking on man as a marionette in the Creator's hands: man is a co-creator, told by God to dominate nature and complete His work.

The facts show that socialisms built on dialectical materialism have led to horrible distortions.

....

Some people would retort too quickly that there has never been such a full socialization, applied to property, power and knowledge. But those who feel the need for an esthetic, as an apprenticeship in creative activity, those who believe that the imagination should be cultivated before all other faculties, find an added attraction in the novelty that such an experiment would offer.

(Helder Câmara, LADOC 'Keyhole' no. 12, p. 415.)
38. Aiken, "The Revolt against Ideology", in Cox, ed., Ideology, Politics and Political Theory, p. 136; cf. also P.H. Partridge, "Politics, Philosophy, Ideology" in the same collection.
39. Ruth Nanda Anshen, "World Perspectives", Revolution Through Peace, pp. 152, 154.
40. For the meaning of "validation" in this context see the end of the chapter.
41. See Rubem Alves, Tomorrow's Child, especially p. 50.
42. Alves, A Theology of Human Hope, pp. 164, 122.

43. See Comblin, "The Church in Latin America After Vatican II", LADOC, vol. VII, no. 14, p. 17.
44. Cited in Miranda, Marx and the Bible, p. 266.
45. Religion, Revolution, and the Future, p. 131.
46. Celebration of Awareness, (Doubleday: Garden City, 1970), p. 189.
47. Cited in Segundo, Our Idea of God, p. 127. Segundo comments brilliantly on the poverty of much modern logic in the section on "God and Liberty":

With the growing efficacy of a more or less mechanistic explanation and its accompanying manipulation, the question of finality and the wherefore of things is banished from the scene Teleology is excluded from science in the seventeenth century, and mechanical causality alone is scientific causality.

... The industrial, technological, and capitalist world of the West made this "leap" from efficacy to truth, not so much because it "seemed" logical, but largely because it served its interests wittingly or unwittingly

The history of man's domination over nature is also the history of the domination of some human beings over other human beings. And the aim of this process was to have the latter group assume the cost of the "modern world" while the former group would enjoy the results

As pragmatism and scientific efficacy become more and more successful, however, it is at least possible for scarcity to be overcome completely. In this context domination over human beings appears to be unnecessary, and repression must then explicitly assume its planetary role: that of permitting modernization at the expense of humanization

Experience also proves that a mere shift from individual ownership of the means of production to state ownership of them (i.e., a shift from capitalism to socialism) does not invalidate this dilemma. (pp. 125-127.)

48. Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), p. 73.
49. Kee, ed., A Reader in Political Theology, p. 154.
50. Polanyi, Personal Knowledge, pp. 198-199. Cf., also Moltmann, The Crucified God.
51. See Fierro, The Militant Gospel, chp. 1 "From Anthropocentrism to Politics". On the 'will-to-meaning' cf.

Viktor Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning, (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963).

52. See chp. 13 "The Rise of Man", esp. part 7 "First Causes and Ultimate Ends". "
53. Personal Knowledge, p. 286.
54. Marx and the Bible, p. 261.
55. Personal Knowledge, p. 202.
56. Polanyi applies this with great accuracy to the 'praxiological' essence of the faith relationship. At the beginning of a section on "Religious Doubt" he writes:

Religion, considered as an act of worship, is an indwelling, rather than an affirmation. God cannot be observed, any more than truth or beauty can be observed. He exists in the sense that He is to be worshipped and obeyed, but not otherwise; not as a fact -- any more than truth, beauty or justice exist as facts. All these like God, are things which can be apprehended only in serving them. (p. 279.)

EPILOGUE

COMMITMENT AND CONTAINMENT: A COMMENT ON THE CONTEMPORARY IMPASSE IN LATIN AMERICA

"Christians should opt definitely for the revolution -- particularly on this continent where the Christian faith is so important among the masses of the people....."

When Christians dare to give full-fledged revolutionary witness, then the Latin American revolution will be invincible; because up to now Christians have allowed their doctrine to be used as a tool by the reactionaries."

With these words of Che Guevara ended the final document of the first congress of Christians For Socialism in Santiago, Chile, in April, 1972.¹ Today, many of the participants in that historic gathering are in exile, and the continent of Latin America seems farther away than ever from a socialist future. Have the hopes which lay behind those words proved apocryphal or delusory? That would be far too harsh a judgement in the light of the depth of revolutionary commitment which has been indicated throughout the preceding chapters. However, it is not an agenda for revolution, but the containment of revolution, which sums up the present-day reality of Latin America, and of Chile in particular. As one astute observer has noted, the task facing radical Christians is increasingly one of learning how to 'do theology in a counter-revolutionary situation'.²

In recent years, moreover, there has been a marked retrenchment among the Roman Catholic hierarchy of official support for a highly politicized theological idiom. The fact that Latin American sociology has long been heavily

Marxist meant that there was a strong tendency among liberation theologians to identify true social science almost exclusively with Marxism and to choose their specific political options accordingly. The momentum generated by the Medellín Conference in 1968 and the enthusiasm and optimism which characterized the formative stages of the liberation theology movement served for a time to delay the impact of the strains created by the extreme radicalization of what was, after all, a minority within the institutional church. That there was as yet little in the way of an organized counter-reaction is evidenced by the statement of an American political scientist in a perceptive 1973 article. "Most conservative members of the hierarchy," he concluded, "are simply overwhelmed by the massive documentation and sophisticated presentation of the younger specialists."³ Also, during the early seventies liberation theology achieved, in the words of one of its chief protagonists, Hugo Assmann, "mythic proportions" among Christian intellectuals in the advanced countries.⁴ So, ironically, while the actual prospects for revolutionary change were steadily worsening in Latin America, its theologians were providing other regions with a vicarious source of pseudo-revolutionary inspiration.

In retrospect, it was inevitable that the radicals' fervent adoption of Marxism, contrasting with a growing reality of counter-revolution, should have resulted in the current defensive stance and cautious mood of the official church. The church cannot easily turn its back on Medellín or its statements regarding the protection of human rights,

but it can retreat to a depoliticized social ethics. Liberation theology has by no means been repudiated, still the hierarchy seems to be saying: 'It's fine to talk about liberation as a vague biblical or world-historical principle, but not to apply it to concrete involvement in revolutionary politics.' The danger is that the vocabulary of liberation, having been mythologized outside of Latin America, will now become emasculated within it.⁵⁴

Given the prevailing climate of repression such a danger will not be averted completely, but it can probably be coped with if there is a more sober appreciation of the continuing obstacles to a more effective, prophetic Christian presence on the continent. In this regard, Helder Câmara's call to "revolution through peace" is really a gamble that the church and the Judaeo-Christian tradition can make an important contribution to a process of liberation, despite past failures and present difficulties. It may be that, as Bishop Mendez Arceo of Cuernavaca told me, great adversity will stimulate a widespread rebirth of true Christian witness and be a prelude to profound change. Such hopes, as the Latin American masses know too well, can always be disappointed. But if a combination of realism and perseverance prevails, the intense renewal and learning experiences of recent years will certainly not have been in vain.

Belgian theologian Joseph Comblin, a close associate of Dom Helder at Recife until 1972 (when he was barred from re-entering the country), has frequently pointed out that some of the most serious obstacles to meaningful church

participation in social reform are also internal. Realistically, although the church may be potentially of great strategic importance in mobilizing the Latin American masses, it remains sharply divided and institutionally weak, dependent to an inordinate degree on foreign priests and foreign money, as well as on the beneficence of local elites.⁶ A true church of the poor and oppressed would never be able to maintain the glittering monuments of gold and bronze which crowd the Latin American landscape, nor would it have much interest in doing so. Moreover, church leadership during the past several decades has tended to suffer from a great lack of practical political acumen. Comblin notes that: "Neither the Council (Gaudium et Spes) nor Populorum Progressio nor Medellín make reference to the political conditions for development. The conciliar church simply ignored political problems or pretended their non-existence."⁷ Beyond vague liberal democratic or social democratic formulations of the role of the state, the church preferred not to link its social and political ideals to the realities of the power structure.

In a recent article Comblin identifies four recent phases of church-state relations in which changing political circumstances have demanded, but not always received, adjustment on the church's part.⁸ In the first phase of "developmentalism" (1956-1966) the church was not required to alter its basic patterns of collaboration with governments, but rather to redirect its public works toward broad social development programmes and popular education rather than

private charity and private schooling for the rich. This was the era of church-state cooperation along rather traditional "social gospel" lines. The second phase, "turbulent times" (1967-1970), reflects the culmination of the crises of national reformist capitalism and of democratic and populist institutions, -- crises finally resolved through military "stabilization" under the aegis of the Pax Americana. In these intervening years student unrest and disintegrative radicalism (e.g., 'foquismo') reached its height. Many ultra-radical-Christian groups sprang up and the church became polarized as never before. There was also a third phase, "experiences of social change" (1970-1973), which provided a very ephemeral interlude before the triumph of reaction in countries such as Chile, Peru, Argentina, and Bolivia. Many elements in the church supported the left-wing populism of the new nationalist regimes, but the expectations and controversies which these radical Christian groups provoked were soon swept away along with the regimes themselves. Thus was inaugurated the fourth and current phase of "new authoritarian states" which has set the seal to the unholy marriage of militarism, domestic neo-fascism, and international corporate capitalism.

There are signs that the harshness of this situation is forcing the institutional church to begin to pull itself together and to define for itself a clear, prophetic role. There are more and more documents denouncing global injustice along with local corruption and violation of basic rights. But such documents alone do not make a change in the living

standards of the people, much less a popular revolution. And the burden of heroic witness continues to fall on the shoulders of the few individuals, notably Helder Câmara, who have grown out of the developmentalism of the 'fifties and survived the turbulence and extremism of the 'sixties and early 'seventies. The church as a whole has by no means resolved the question of how it should act vis-à-vis the state in order to bring about any liberative development in the foreseeable future.

As noted in previous chapters, most conventional North American analysts of changes in the church have been unable, or unwilling, to conceive of its role in terms much beyond those of a narrow developmentalist perspective, or often, too, of a strategic liberalism after the fashion of the "Alliance for Progress". If the church is still a force to be reckoned with at all, it is only to the extent that its "progressives" can become "modernizers", integrators, and bridge-builders, -- in short, a safety-valve to head off "disruptive" revolutionary change.⁹ As if there could be a non-disruptive revolution! Nowhere are the gods of bourgeois pragmatism and evolutionary functionalism worshipped more than in Guenther Lewy's Religion and Revolution. While he refers to revolutionary theology and to dependency theory in Latin America almost in passing, both are rudely dismissed, only to arrive at the profound conclusion that: "The ultimate test, surely, is not prophetic indignation at injustice or good intentions but performance and results."¹⁰ The lesson of fascist dictatorships that personal freedom and dignity

are superfluous commodities so long as "the trains" run on time", has obviously not been lost on Mr. Lewy.

The fiction that "results" is a politically neutral criterion surfaces time and again in North American analyses of church responses to social change. In a study of Catholic involvement in the labor movement Floridi and Stiefbold, having noted Dom Helder's unequivocal rejection of economism and pragmatist (i.e., neocapitalist) reformism, lament that: "The priests of ONIS (a radical Peruvian group) stage mass street demonstrations in the name of the 'proletariat' aimed at the liberation of the oppressed through the establishment of socialism. They appear to give higher priority to promoting 'an autonomous popular mobilization and cultural revolution' than to working to achieve the concrete demands of the unions".¹¹ Granted that Christian radicalism frequently suffers from an excess of rhetoric over action, the authors themselves admit that the "concrete demands" they refer to are generally neither spontaneous nor radical. So it would seem to be less a question of who is working with the working class than of who is working for the working class. Typically, however, their study ends up implying that the revolutionaries are the wild-eyed partisans, whereas those who legitimize and "assist" modest, "progressive" development are non-ideological moderates.¹²

For Dom Helder, on the contrary, being truly 'radical' and idealistic is the only way to be clear-sighted and realistic, because without creative political passions men will never be able to take control over their own future.

The problem of the Christian avant-garde is not that it has exchanged pragmatic goals for revolutionary ones, but that the rest of the church (although it has, since Medellín, officially broken, at least semantically, with developmentalist ideology) remains tied to archaic, neocolonial and collaborationist structures. Since Latin America is supposedly a "Christian" continent, it is incongruous, to say the least, that a decade after its Catholic hierarchies almost universally endorsed the term 'liberation', the majorities in greatest need of liberation have seemingly less reason than ever to hope for it. Although the shift in language has been extremely important for an already radical and politicized minority, it is still true, as Hugo Assmann observes, that: "Not only is no explicit change in the present direction of commitment to the process of liberation discernible at either hierarchy or mass level, but there is no sign of such a thing happening in the near future. It cannot therefore be relied upon as a possibility in any strategy of liberation."¹³

Liberation theology has penetrated the ideology of the institutional church, but much less so its structures and its pastoral praxis. This holds out many grave dangers, not the least of which is a growing chasm between theory and practice. While the hierarchies have been able to incorporate a biblical and generic terminology of liberation into their written documents, their actions are still constantly constrained by fears of specific ideological commitments, of internal divisions, and of the provocation of violence among the oppressed masses and counter-violence by the state.¹⁴

6. Cf. "The 'Pseudo-Manifesto' of Fr. Comblin" in Gheerbrant, The Rebel Church in Latin America; Comblin, "Problems of the Church in Brazil", The Clergy Review, London: January 1972; P. Gilhodes, "L'Eglise catholique et la politique en Amérique Latine", Revue Française de Science Politique, 19, 3, June 1969; also the chapters on the church and on Brazil in Gary McEoin, Revolution Next Door.
7. Comblin, "The Church in Latin America After Vatican II", LADOC, VII, 14, p. 9.
8. Ibid., pp. 8-15.
9. See E.J. Williams, "Latin American Catholicism and Political Integration", Comparative Political Studies, 2:3, October 1969, pp. 327-348.
10. Guenther Lewy, Religion and Revolution, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 590; also chp. 20 on "Theology of Revolution and the Catholic Left in Latin America".
11. Alexis Floridi and Annette Stiefbold, The Uncertain Alliance: The Catholic Church and Labor in Latin America, pp. 32-39, 45.
12. Ibid., p. 81.
13. See Assmann, Theology for a Nomad Church, Part IV "The Christian Contribution to Liberation in Latin America", p. 134; also Cesar Aguiar, "Los Cristianos y el proceso de Liberación de América Latina: Problemas y Preguntas", in América Latina: Movilización Popular y Fe Cristiana, ISAL, 1971, pp. 41-72.
14. See Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, especially pp. 57-58.
15. See, for example, the frequent references to conciliar and papal documents in the radical literature surveyed in Gheerbrant, op.cit. Particularly notable in this regard is the article by Fr. Francisco Lage Pessoa, "The Church and the Revolutionary Movement in Brazil", pp. 335-354. Cf. also the convergence of liberation theology and official Catholic social teaching implied in Part One, "Overview and Prospectus", of Joseph Gremillion, The Gospel of Peace and Justice.
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17. Assmann, op.cit., p. 143.
18. Spiral of Violence, pp. 48-50.

been taxed with promoting the "integral" liberation of man while remaining completely above the partisan categories of "left" and "right". This façade of ideological neutrality is, not surprisingly, utterly unconvincing since the hierarchy, when it remains silent or appeals to those in power for cooperation, aids their cause, even if unwittingly, and when it comes directly to the defense of the poor and of political prisoners it naturally alienates the ruling classes. Only the few radical bishops such as Dom Helder seem prepared to cope with the fact that, the moment "liberation" becomes more than words on a piece of paper, there will be accusations of "playing politics" and "inciting violence", followed by other less subtle forms of harrassment.

Beyond the concerns for an impossible unity and an equally impossible neutrality, another major problem with the church's, particularly the Catholic church's, stance toward secular liberation, has been the attempt to maintain complete continuity with official orthodoxy. True liberation theology, it must be remembered, is a "political theology", not simply the revision or updating of a "social gospel" of "applied" Christianity. Political theology rejects orthodoxy in favor of orthopraxis, and posits a secularized, non-positivist relationship between faith and politics which is thoroughly at odds with that assumed by even the most recent papal social teachings. Yet many radical Catholics continue, mostly I suspect for non-theological reasons, to defend orthopraxis in the name of orthodoxy, or to behave as though

there were no real differences between the two.¹⁵ A complicating factor in Latin America is that liberation theology to the extent that it regards itself as indigenous and flowing from institutional consensus (e.g., Medellín), and to the extent that it remains aloof from secularized political theology considered only as a separate European creation, it saddles itself with incongruous church doctrine even while proclaiming that a theology of revolution entails a revolution in theology.¹⁶ Like putting "new wine into old wineskins", the new application of old doctrine is not going to liberate Latin American theology or the Latin American peoples. The Christianity which produced such doctrine was both politically pre-critical in its theology, and institutionally dependent on the status quo. Moreover, as Hugo Assmann notes: "Constantly to insist on the original dynamism of the social teaching of the churches, and blithely to pass over the terrible sociological fact of the massive reactionary presence of "Christianity" in practice, merely transforms what is best in Christianity -- its effective possibility of being a real humanizing influence -- into trivial ideology."¹⁷

Christian faith is not properly an ideology unto itself, and yet to be effective, indeed to be expressed historically at all, it cannot avoid taking stands which are necessarily ideological. We have encountered this problematic before, since it is of the essence of the working out of a "negative" political theology. In Latin America it seems inevitably to come down to a choice between social doctrines

which are presented (erroneously) as part of an eternal Christian ideology, and Marxism, which is presented as the ideology of real revolutionary humanization. Obviously bishops such as Dom Helder cannot be expected to make such a choice, especially given the present constitution of the church. Dom Helder, as we have seen, borrows eclectically from both Marxism and Catholic tradition, rejecting dogmatism 'per se', while focussing instead on the existential challenge of total liberation which the Christian message addresses to each person in all of his capacities, public as well as private. His position is not to evade ideological labels, but to make use of them only as they affect the real-life situation of the people. Unfortunately, the debilitating and interminable debates concerning theological and / revolutionary political "orthodoxy" within the Latin American church, have been a good deal less disinterested. The clash of orthodoxies -- "Christian" and "Marxist" -- has hardly been conducive to a realistic orthopraxis among the millions who need clean water and decent housing more than eternal verities made in heaven or the rational verities of a "scientific" Marxism.

Given the ideological confusion and hasty sectarianism which has marked much of the public discussion of the church's role in the process of liberation, it is unlikely that the contradictions between theory and practice will be resolved in the near future. They may not be resolvable at all short of a social revolution. It is difficult to believe that there could be a revolution in the church without a prior

transformation of the societal structures to which it has had to accommodate itself. Theologians and activist minorities may call for a church of the "poor and oppressed" and initiate new "base communities", but in the eyes of the ruling class the church is still the "religious" social institution which serves its ideological interests. The same military-technocratic governments which persecute radical Christians claim to love the "true" church and to be defending "Western Christian Civilization". In the present phase of church-state relations, therefore, putting into practice the vocabulary of liberation can be politically, if not literally, suicidal.

Under the circumstances the distinctive contribution of the church is probably greatest at the superstructural level. The church cannot will an objectively revolutionary situation into existence, but it can promote 'conscientization' through religious education, and expose the ideological manipulation of Christianity by self-serving elites. Individual Christians working with the peasants and urban poor will continue to bear the brunt of any repression directed against the church, along with their non-religious co-workers. But it is to be expected that governments can and will use many more subtle means (e.g., censorship, slander) to demoralize the church as institution. Dom Helder points out in Spiral of Violence that "one of the most terrible weapons of the authoritarian regimes is to spare the great leader and seize the humble collaborators", adding that "More serious still for the priest than being put in prison

is not being put in prison, but seeing in prison all around him militant laymen who have simply echoed the evangelical message."¹⁸

In sum, there are hazardous times ahead for the church in Latin America, and particularly for its most dynamic sectors. On the surface it appears as though the heroic witness of the "abrahamic minorities" has been ineffective in bringing about real, tangible change. But it can also be argued that the spirituality of liberation inspired by the sacrifices of men like Camilo Torres and Hélder Câmara, has "mystical force at the moment it loses a directly political bearing."¹⁹ After all, as we have seen in the Conclusion, the Christian cross is a symbol absurdly ill-suited to "politics as usual". The Christian hope in revolution rebels against power and conquest, and the Christian hope in peace rebels equally against passivity and complacency. In the final analysis, the Christian hope in Latin American liberation is strengthened, not disappointed, by the knowledge that, in the words of Jürgen Moltmann: "The good news of salvation is for losers."²⁰

NOTES

1. For the full text in English see John Eagleson, ed., Christians and Socialism, pp. 160-175.
2. See the "Appendix" to Phillip Berryman's outstanding article included in the documentation of the 1975 Detroit Conference (Torres and Eagleson, eds., Theology in the Americas, pp. 54-75). Already in his earlier article in Theological Studies Berryman had stressed that there was little evidence that Latin America was in a pre-revolutionary stage, or that the left was about to emerge from its marginal and largely symbolic presence in most countries. The theology of liberation, he suggested, faced the prospect of being more a theology of exile than of exodus. In this respect many commentators have tended to paint a rather too optimistic and generalized picture of ferment on the continent. (See, for example, Jordan Bishop, "Christianisme et révolution en Amérique Latine", Esprit, 39:399, January 1971; G. Mottet, "La Iglesia Católica en América Latina, Un punto de vista político", Cuadernos Americanos, 32:4, July-August 1973.) Jean Yves Calvez, in the conclusions to his massive Politics and Society in the Third World, points out that revolution is extremely doubtful in areas such as Latin America where those suffering the greatest oppression are still disorganized, largely illiterate peasants, and in which the urban working classes are fragmented and zealously watched over by military-technocratic elites that have become the real policy initiators and power-brokers in the public arena.
3. Paul Sigmund, "Latin American Catholicism's opening to the left", Review of Politics, 35:1, January 1973, p. 74.
4. See Assmann, "Basic Aspects of Theological Reflection in Latin America", in Kee, ed., A Reader in Political Theology, pp. 106 ff.
5. On the problems of the semantics of liberation see the essay by Raul Vidales in Geffre and Gutierrez, eds., The Mystical and Political Dimension of the Christian Faith. It is significant that in the first months of 1978 Dom Helder was reportedly prohibited by the Vatican from further travels abroad. Although the Vatican has denied taking this action, Dom Helder has warned that moves are underway by conservative forces, including certain outside Catholic aid agencies, which could result in "the undoing of Medellín" at the third congress of the Latin American bishops to be held in Puebla, Mexico, on the tenth anniversary of Medellín in October, 1978. Clearly, the immediate outlook is uncertain at best for the most politically and theologically advanced sectors of the church.

6. Cf. "The 'Pseudo-Manifesto' of Fr. Comblin" in Gheerbrant, The Rebel Church in Latin America; Comblin, "Problems of the Church in Brazil", The Clergy Review, London: January 1972; P. Gilhodes, "L'Eglise catholique et la politique en Amérique Latine", Revue Française de Science Politique, 1973, June 1969; also the chapters on the church and on Brazil in Gary McEoin, Revolution Next Door.
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16. Cf. Gonzalo Arroyo, "L'action idéologique et culturelle de l'Eglise", Le Monde Diplomatique, May 1976; Fierro, The Militant Gospel, chp. 7 "Theological Specifications".
17. Assmann, op.cit., p. 143.
18. Spiral of Violence, pp. 48-50.

19. See Michel de Certeau, "Mystiques Violentes et Stratégie Non Violente", Le Monde Diplomatique, May 1976, p. 16.
20. Moltmann, Theology of Play, (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 100.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

In order to assist the reader the selected references which follow have been divided into six categories, the first five of which correspond to the major themes of the thesis, and the final one being a residual category. The first section deals exclusively with works directly pertaining to the life and thought of Dom Helder Câmara. It includes, therefore, those which have been authored or co-authored by him, and those for which he is specifically the subject. Undoubtedly the best and most comprehensive bibliographical source of information on Dom Helder is contained in the unpublished doctoral dissertation of Fr. Patrick Leonard, "Dom Helder Câmara: A Study in Polarity" (St. Louis University, 1974). An abridged version of this bibliography can be found in the article by Fr. Leonard in the Summer, 1975 issue of the Latin American Research Review. The original bibliography of one hundred pages is fairly exhaustive for the period up to 1974. As well, most of Dom Helder's current discourses are carried in the monthly communiques of the Brazilian Bishops' Conference (CNBB), or the bulletins of the CNBB's Regional Secretariat for the Northeast. English versions are often published by IDOC, the international documentation service of the Catholic Church, or by LADOC, the Latin America documentation division of the United States Catholic Conference. For many less accessible documents an extremely useful source is the microfilm collection on Dom Helder in the Pius XII Library of St. Louis University (cited as PL).

Since Dom Helder has achieved world recognition for his spirited attempts to publicize the cause of the Third World's oppressed, he has been the focus of an enormous amount of journalistic material. My list, however, will necessarily be highly selective and reflective of the overall orientation of the present work -- namely, philosophical analysis rather than simply socio-historical and psychological profiles.

Section B will include books and articles directly associated with the evolution of political and liberation theologies in recent Christian thought. Again, there is no intention of being exhaustive. The number of publications, already voluminous, continues to grow rapidly. There are also several bibliographies in existence which are listed in J.M. Bonino's Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation. Other useful bibliographies can be found in the anthology Fe Cristiana y Cambio Social en América Latina and Alfredo Fierro's The Militant Gospel. Fierro's book is indispensable as the major critical overview of current radical theology to date. However, his strongly academic and European "death of God" bias, and his uncritical appropriation of Marxist structuralism, make parts of the book less useful than they might otherwise have been. Fierro must also be taken to task for virtually ignoring the brilliant work of Juan Luis Segundo. Segundo's The Liberation of Theology constitutes by far the most incisive and important programme for a political theology from a Latin American perspective, and parts of it, notably those concerning the interrelation

of faith and ideology, can be read as a counterbalance to the more positivist arguments of Fierro. (The original Spanish editions of both books appeared in 1975. However Segundo's earlier five-volume series Theology for Artisans of a New Humanity does not even appear in the bibliography to The Militant Gospel. In the preface to the 1977 English translation of the latter Fierro acknowledges some recent work in political theology, but again no mention is made of Segundo's contribution.)

Section C is devoted to the situational context in which this explosive Christian political language and its new "secularized" symbols of Christian prophecy have developed. Since political theology might be accused, albeit unkindly, of making a fetish of the word "praxis", it follows that the intersection of theory and practical realities is of the utmost importance to any concomitant agenda for revolution, including one based on the "violence of the peacemakers". Moreover, in Latin America, radical theology is neither the plaything of a few academics nor the undisciplined outpouring of a "popular" religious movement. The cultural and historical context of Latin American Christian radicalism is that of the struggle against all the various forms of colonial domination, internal as well as external. In the contemporary setting the institutional context is the striking transformations in the organized mainstream churches. (It should not be surprising that it is a bishop that Dom Helder has become a chief protagonist in these revolutionary changes.) Documentation on the ongoing processes affecting

the church is scattered but abundant. For researchers in the West the best continuing sources are IDOC, LADOC, and ICI (Information Catholiques Internationals). Coverage with a broader focus can be found in the regular reports and newsletters of NACLA (North American Congress on Latin America) in the United States and LAWG (Latin American Working Group) in Canada.

Sections D and E reflect the most significant problematics which the challenge of modern revolution poses to Christianity. That the fundamental axis of confrontation in Latin America is now seen as between oppressors and oppressed, rather than between the godless and the God-fearing (i.e., the old opposition between a Marxist paradigm of violent revolution and a Christian "revolution" of hearts and consciences) is an indication of the centrality being given to political questions concerning the nature and interrelationship of revolutionary ends and means. For example, although a Christian approach to class struggle necessarily involves an ethical "plus", the empirical validity of a class analysis must be allowed to stand (or fall) on its own merits. Since there is a vast non-Christian literature on the themes of revolutionary violence and Marxism, only a few basic sources have been included along with some of the more important recent Christian contributions to the debate.

The final section contains a cross-section of works of general relevance to the emergence of a revolutionary political idiom within Christianity, but which do not fit

into any of the above categories. This does not mean, however, that the specific categories should be regarded as strict divisions which do not overlap. In fact, many of the larger works of political theology cover a whole range of contemporary issues.

By way of conclusion it should be noted that not all references occurring in the main body of the thesis appear again in the bibliography. English translations have been cited wherever possible, especially since the original editions of works by Latin American authors are not as readily available. As a further assistance to the reader sources of particular importance or outstanding merit have been marked by an asterisk.

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