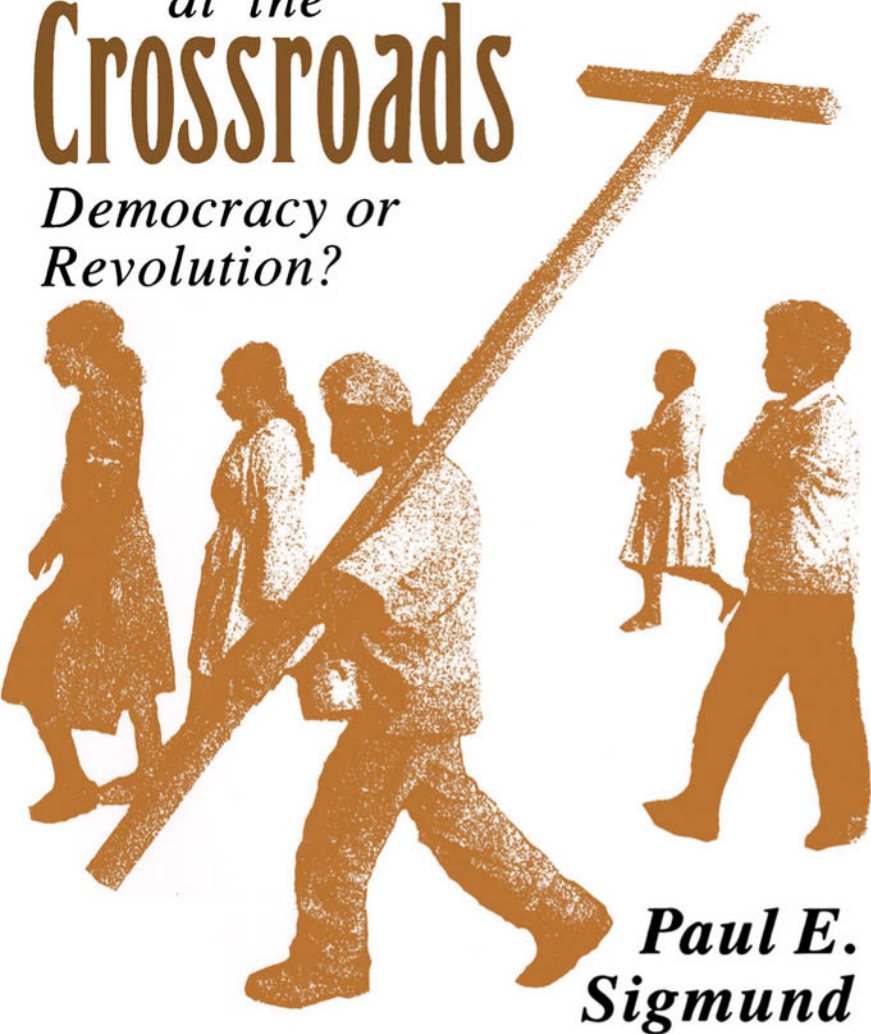


Liberation Theology

at the

Crossroads

*Democracy or
Revolution?*



***Paul E.
Sigmund***

LIBERATION
THEOLOGY
AT THE
CROSSROADS

This page intentionally left blank

LIBERATION THEOLOGY AT THE CROSSROADS

Democracy or Revolution?

Paul E. Sigmund

New York Oxford
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press

Oxford New York Toronto
Delhi Bombay Calcutta Madras Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Singapore Hong Kong Tokyo
Nairobi Dar es Salaam Cape Town
Melbourne Auckland

and associated companies in
Berlin Ibadan

Copyright © 1990 by Paul Sigmund

First published in 1990 by Oxford University Press, Inc.
200 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

First issued as an Oxford University Press paperback, 1992.

Oxford is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise,
without the prior permission of Oxford University Press.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Sigmund, Paul E.

Liberation theology at the crossroads : democracy or revolution? /
Paul E. Sigmund.

p. cm.

ISBN 0-19-506064-4

ISBN 0-19-507274-X (pbk)

1. Liberation theology. 2. Democracy—Religious aspects—
Christianity. 3. Revolutions—Religious aspects—Christianity.
4. Catholic Church—Doctrines. I. Title

BT83.57.S58 1990

232'.2—dc20 89-36761

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America
on acid-free paper

*To Ignacio Ellacuria S.J.,
rector of the Central American University of El Salvador
and liberation theologian,
who was killed because he believed that
Christians have a special duty to the poor and the oppressed*

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

Introduction 3

- 1** The Catholic Church and Politics:
Historical and Institutional Background 14
- 2** The Birth of Liberation Theology:
Medellín and Beyond 28
- 3** Revolution and Counterrevolution in Chile 40
- 4** The Development of Liberation Theology:
The Marxist Phase 52
- 5** Christology and Community:
The Boffs and Jon Sobrino 79
- 6** The Battle of Puebla 93
- 7** El Salvador and Nicaragua:
Test Cases of Liberation? 108
- 8** American Responses to Liberation Theology 134
- 9** The Vatican and Liberation Theology:
Confrontation and Compromise 154
- 10** After Twenty Years: Liberation Theology Today 176

Appendix I: "Notes for a Theology of Liberation"
(1970) 199

GUSTAVO GUTIERREZ

Appendix II: "Theology and the Social Sciences"
(1984) 214

GUSTAVO GUTIERREZ

Notes 227

Author and Subject Index 245

Index of Biblical Citations 257

LIBERATION
THEOLOGY
AT THE
CROSSROADS

This page intentionally left blank

Introduction

DURING THE Extraordinary Synod of Bishops in Rome in November–December 1985 there was an unusual public display of disagreement among the Latin American bishops. It focused on attitudes toward liberation theology, the new theological current that had originated in Latin America at the end of the 1960s. On Saturday, November 30, Bishop Dario Castrillon Hoyos, the secretary of the Latin American Bishops Conference (CELAM), denounced the liberation theologians, saying, “When I see a church with a machine gun, I cannot see the crucified Christ in that church. . . . Some lines of liberation theology . . . are based on the use of instruments that are not specific to the Gospel. We can never use hate as a system of change. The core of being a church is love” (*New York Times*, December 1, 1985). Two days later, in a formal statement presented to the synod, the president of the Brazilian Bishops Conference, Bishop José Ivo Lorscheiter, replied, “Liberation theology is not a theology of violence. . . . It is not a theology that assumes or justifies Marxist ideology. [It] presupposes a new consciousness of the context of oppression . . . a conversion toward the poor and a commitment to their liberation. Liberation theology is indispensable to the church’s activity and to the social commitment of Christians” (*New York Times*, December 4, 1985).

The Lorscheiter statement was not only a response to Bishop Castrillon, but more fundamentally it was an attempt to answer the criticisms of liberation theology contained in *The Instruction on Certain*

Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation," issued in September 1984 by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith over the signature of its prefect, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. That document had accused the liberation theologians of using "concepts uncritically borrowed from Marxist ideology and . . . theses of a biblical hermeneutic marked by rationalism," resulting in a "new interpretation which is corrupting whatever is authentic in the generous initial commitment on behalf of the poor."

It was not only the church hierarchy that felt compelled to choose up sides on the controversy. In the United States the *National Catholic Reporter* took a strongly favorable position to liberation theology.¹ The *National Catholic Register* attacked it, quoting the statement by the Catholic novelist Walker Percy that the liberation theologians "are saying that the only way to correct an evil . . . is by violence, violent revolution. And toward that end they justify not only killing, but also joining Marxist-Leninist revolutions. Liberation theology is a perversion of Christianity" (*National Catholic Register*, January 6, 1986). Internationally, a book-length interview by an Italian journalist with Cardinal Ratzinger was published in many languages (U.S. title, *The Ratzinger Report*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), which included a private memorandum critical of liberation theology written by Ratzinger in early 1984 that had been published by an Italian magazine. The *Instruction* and the Ratzinger book in turn produced responses by Latin American liberation theologians, including a book by the Uruguayan Jesuit Juan Luis Segundo S.J., which accused the Vatican of making "constant allusions to Marxism [as] a mere publicity gimmick to diminish liberation theology in the eyes of those who are not sufficiently sensitive to the profound and subtle methods of theology."² More conservative Latin American bishops began to meet and promote a "theology of reconciliation" as an answer to the liberationists. In July 1985, they issued a *Declaration of Los Andes* in Chile calling for reconciliation rather than liberation, and in January 1986 they met again in Lima. In the wake of the Vatican statement, a network of Latin American and European bishops and theologians developed who were opposed to liberation theology and committed to countering its influence. They held meetings and published articles and books, many of them in Bogota, under the auspices of the Center for the Study of Latin American Development and Integration (CEDIAL).

Responding to popular interest in the subject, the prolific Ameri-

can sociologist, priest, and novelist Andrew Greeley published a best-selling paperback novel in 1985, *Virgin and Martyr*, the story of a nun who becomes involved in revolution in Latin America as a result of exposure to the teachings of the liberation theologians. One of the book's main characters describes the liberation theologians:

They are characterized by the following: A fierce hatred of the United States. An innocence of the complexities of international economics. A bland assumption that Marxism has been validated as a solution to social problems. A poverty of serious theological reflection. And the pretense that no Marxist society exists anywhere in the world by which Marxist "praxis" (their word—if you say "practice," you are horribly out of fashion) could be evaluated. [pp. 383–84]

The controversy over liberation theology is not new. Indeed, the publication in 1973 of the English translation of *A Theology of Liberation*, the book by a Peruvian priest, Gustavo Gutierrez, that gave the movement its name, immediately produced strong adverse reactions. Thomas Sanders, a Latin Americanist with theological training, published an attack on liberation theology in the liberal Protestant magazine *Christianity and Crisis*, in which he accused the liberation writers of "utopian moralism" that ignores the reality of sin and moral ambiguity in all human structures, and contradicts the central affirmations of the Pauline-Augustinian tradition developed in the Christian realism of Sanders's mentor Reinhold Niebuhr. In turn, Sanders's article was denounced by the Brazilian Protestant theologian Rubem Alves for its "ideological bias and unambiguous relationships with colonialism, racism, and economic exploitation. We believe that your theology to a great degree is part of cultural imperialism" (*Christianity and Crisis*, September 17, 1973). Similar attacks and defenses have been published in Europe, Latin America, and the United States for many years, with some theologians describing liberation theology as the "cutting edge" of theological thinking and others viewing it as a dangerous "politicization" or "horizontalism" in theology.

What accounts for the intensity of the feeling for and against liberation theology? Who gives a more accurate description of its content and implications? To answer these questions it is necessary to examine the origins, content, and development of a movement that is now two decades old. During the last twenty years, it has emerged as an identifiable school, with a method of doing theology and a set of

assumptions and doctrines that have become both influential and controversial. An examination of its history, method, and doctrines may help us to make a balanced judgment on the validity of the conflicting claims.

As a preliminary answer to the question of why so much attention has been given to what are, after all, the writings of fairly minor Latin American clergymen, one may say that we now realize—as we did not, say, twenty years ago—that religion in the Third World, and in the United States as well, has tremendous political potential. That potential can be activated, however, in different directions. It can give support to the status quo, it can call for reform and social change, or it can fuel a revolution. Catholicism in Latin America has played the first role, the justification of the status quo, throughout most of its history. In the last thirty or forty years, however, it has also promoted reform, especially in the areas of human rights, labor organization, and support for democracy. It is only in the last twenty years, however, that some Latin American theologians have moved one step further and begun to call for radical solutions to Latin American social problems. That opening to the left by the Latin American church has as its theoretical underpinning liberation theology. It represents a type of Catholic radicalism that was almost unknown in Latin America prior to the middle and late 1960s. Its emergence was possible only because of the changes that took place in the Catholic church worldwide during and after the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), and because of the heightened sense of the political and economic crisis in Latin America produced by the challenge of the Cuban Revolution and the American-sponsored reforms of the Alliance for Progress. That it was a radicalism linked to the oldest and strongest continent-wide institutional structure in Latin America—the Catholic church, for so long a bulwark of the status quo—made it all the more challenging—and to some, threatening. Later, when it seemed to have played a part in supporting and promoting two revolutionary movements in Latin America, the attempt at a transition to socialism in Allende's Chile (1970–1973), and the revolutionary turmoil in Central America involving the overthrow of Somoza by the Sandinistas and the emergence of guerrilla movements in El Salvador and Guatemala, it became the subject of positive and negative discussions, not only in religiously related media, but also in the world press and secular organs of opinion.

Liberation theology in Latin America is radical both in its method

and its content. A radical is one who goes to the root (*radix*) of a problem. Those roots are identified in the writings of the liberation theologians in several different ways.

1. First, it is argued that it is necessary to make a radical break with earlier ways of doing theology. Rather than developing a series of abstract and deductive propositions about the relation (*religio*) of man to God, theologians engage in their profession as a "second act," following after the experience of involvement with the poor at a given moment in history. Theology grows out of the combination of theory and practice that the liberation theologians call *praxis* rather than through some formal, systematic, organized study.

2. The locus for doing this theology is the poor, and theologians must both be committed to the poor and work with them if they are to do theology. God has a particular love for the poor, and those who wish to follow him must exercise what the church has called "the preferential option for the poor."

3. This theology must be related directly to the Word of the Bible. That is the primary source of religious knowledge, although always in relation to the experience of the poor. In fact, the very title of the liberation theology movement is derived from the Bible. The text on which it is based is the scene in the fourth chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke in which Christ announces his mission in the synagogue in Nazareth by reading from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, chapter 61: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor . . . to bid prisoners to go free . . . to liberate those who are oppressed, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, a day of retribution." According to Luke, after Jesus finished reading those words he closed the book and stated, "This day the scripture is fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:18-21). Other biblical texts that are frequently cited include Matthew 11:5, in which Jesus tells the disciples of John the Baptist to report as evidence that he is the Messiah the fact that "the poor have the Gospel preached to them"; Mary's statement in the Magnificat, "He has put down the mighty from their thrones and raised up the humble; he has filled the hungry with good things, the rich he has sent away empty-handed" (Luke 1:52-53); Christ's account of the Last Judgment, in which eternal life is the reward of those who feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and care for the sick and imprisoned (Matthew 25:31ff.); and the liberation of the Jews from Egyptian bondage in the Book of Exodus.

4. What the poor experience in Latin America is oppression. Theologians therefore are to concern themselves with liberation, in the sense of the removal of the causes of oppression. One can thus sum up the first four elements in the words that appear near the end of the first chapter of Gustavo Gutierrez's book that launched the movement. Liberation theology is "critical reflection on Christian praxis in the light of the Word" (*A Theology of Liberation*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973, p. 13).

5. If liberation theology were nothing more than a call for involvement with the poor as one's Christian duty, and relating the biblical message to their experience, it would not have produced the storm of controversy that surrounds it. However, besides the grass-roots radicalism in method, there are significant substantive elements that are radical in content. The liberation theologians argue that theology should make use of "the social sciences" in their attempt to analyze the obstacles to oppression. When they say "the social sciences," however, the liberation theologians usually mean Marxist methods of analysis. At least at the outset, therefore, there was a close association between liberation theology and Marxism—in the form of the claim that the root cause of the oppression of the poor in Latin America is "dependent capitalism"—and that the way to remove that oppression and to achieve the liberation of the poor is through socialism. Liberation theologians drew on the theory of *dependencia* that had recently been developed in Latin America, and linked it to Marxist theories of the class struggle and exploitation to argue that the church should concern itself with the poor in a specific way—by commitment to the (self-) liberation of the poor from dependent capitalism.

6. If this seemed to be a reductionist and simplistic approach to a complicated problem, it was. Over time and in dialogue with like-minded Christians, the liberation theologians later became aware that capitalism was not the only obstacle to liberation. By the mid-1970s they were reminded often that in a continent in which Indians, mestizos, and women had been exploited for centuries, the problem of liberation involved psychological, ethnic, racial, and gender factors as well as economic structures. As in mainstream Marxism, it was possible to relate those oppressions to economic causes—but since the commitment was to Marxism as a tool of analysis rather than a metaphysics, or philosophy, there began to be a willingness to consider other types of oppression as independent variables.

7. Early in the development of the liberation theology movement, it became clear that the emergence of Christian Base Communities in a number of countries in Latin America offered an instrument for the liberation of the poor that was in keeping with the fundamental principles of liberation writings, and they became incorporated into its message. Linked to the *anticapitalist* quasi-revolutionary *structuralism* of liberation theology was a *grass-roots populism* that had begun separately, and was theoretically distinct—but soon became closely associated with it. In such countries as Brazil, Chile, Nicaragua, and El Salvador, the Ecclesial Base Communities (CEBs) became an important force to press for social change and to develop among the poor an awareness (*conscientização*) of their spiritual and material problems, and of the possibilities of taking collective action to remedy them.

The experience of popular participation within the Roman Catholic church challenged older hierarchical models of church authority, but the reforms associated with the Vatican Council and the acute shortage of priests gave them a kind of legitimacy. Protestant observers such as Richard Shaull might call the liberation theologians *The Heralds of a New Reformation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984) but in such countries as Brazil the growth of the Base Communities was seen as a positive application of the church's continuing concern with the evangelization of the poor within, rather than against the institutional church. Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff put forward a more uncompromisingly democratic model of the church in *Church, Charism, and Power* (English translation, New York: Crossroad, 1985), making use of quasi-Marxist terminology to do so (the hierarchy was accused of "the gradual expropriation of the spiritual means of production from the Christian people"—p. 112), and brought down upon him the wrath of the Vatican. Yet Boff continued to insist that the papacy has a special position in the church constitution in maintaining doctrinal unity on the basis of the emerging consensus of the community. Along with other liberation theologians, he also reaffirmed (and reinterpreted) such traditional doctrines as the Trinity, the special position of Mary, and the central importance of the Eucharist. If it was a new reformation, it was very different from the one that occurred in the sixteenth century.

There was no question, however, that it was radical. Besides the radical character of its approach to theology, its structural anticapitalism and its grass-roots populism related it to two long-standing tradi-

tions of Western radical thought—Marxist socialism and Rousseauian populist democracy—but in both cases those traditions were refocused upon the poor. The socialist revolution was to be carried out by the poor (not the proletariat), and the local community was to be made up of the poor and marginalized.

The combination of two different radical strains—anticapitalism, and the promotion of popular participation in church and state—helps to explain the ambivalent reaction that liberation theology has produced. Supporters of liberation theology point to its concern for the liberation of the poor, and view opposition to its teachings as inspired by a desire to defend positions of wealth and power in church and state. Opponents, on the other hand, highlight its Marxist terminology and class analyses and its readiness to blame capitalism for all of Latin America's problems and to endorse an undefined socialism as the cure-all for the evils of exploitation and oppression. In fact, the writings of the liberation theologians combine both types of radicalism, although they do so in different ways and the relation of the two elements has changed in the last twenty years.

The tensions between the two types of radicalism were not evident, however, as long as most of Latin America was governed by authoritarian military dictatorships. Things changed, however, in the 1980s. By the end of that decade only Chile and Paraguay remained as rightist dictatorships and they were both beginning democratic transitions. On the left Cuba and, in the view of some, Nicaragua used a combination of Marxism and nationalism to keep the ruling *caudillo* or *comandantes* in power.

How are religiously motivated radicals who are concerned with the liberation of the poor in Latin America to respond to this situation? Will they continue to argue for "revolutionary" structural changes leading to the overthrow of the capitalist system, or will they make use of the Base Communities and the institutions of "bourgeois" democracy to promote the welfare of the people? How helpful to the poor is revolutionary rhetoric and action when the lessons of the 1970s in Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina seem to have been that such rhetoric and action lead only to counterrevolution by the armed forces? This is the choice that the liberation theologians face today. Will they make use of the structural and ideological resources of the Christian tradition to bring about a genuine participation by the poor and oppressed in bettering their condition, or will they retreat

into a sterile revolutionism that may be emotionally satisfying but does not help the poor?

The choice was posed all the more dramatically with the publication of the "Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation" on April 6, 1986, by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The Instruction abandoned the negative tone of its 1984 predecessor and asserted that the "quest for freedom and the aspiration to liberation which are among the principal signs of the times in the modern world, have their source in the Christian heritage" (*New York Times*, April 6, 1986). While rejecting "the systematic recourse to violence as the necessary path to liberation" (although in extreme cases "recourse to armed struggle" may be permissible "to put an end to an obvious and prolonged tyranny") the Instruction argued that "it is perfectly legitimate that those who suffer oppression on the part of the wealthy and the political powerful should take action through morally licit means, in order to secure structures and institutions in which their rights will be truly respected." The Instruction endorsed "a preferential love for the poor on the part of the church" and a "Christian practice of liberation" that recognized the natural rights and duties of the individual but linked them to the principle of social solidarity and the common good, while opposing all forms of collectivism.

Shortly after the Instruction was published, a letter from the pope to the Brazilian bishops made the church's commitment to liberation all the more clear. The pope endorsed the Brazilian bishops' efforts to find responses to the problems of poverty and oppression that are "consistent with the teachings of the Gospel, of the living tradition and of the ongoing *magisterium* [teaching] of the Church. As long as this is observed, we are convinced, we and you, that the theology of liberation is not only timely but useful and necessary." Both documents clearly identified the central teaching of the church with the "special option for the poor," while at the same time they rejected class struggle and violence.

The challenge was thus posed as to the future development of liberation theology. Gustavo Gutierrez, the founder of the movement, recognized this when he welcomed the Vatican documents and described them as "ending a chapter" in the history of liberation theology. The Brazilian bishops were also enthusiastic about the apparent resolution of the conflict that had divided the Latin American and

Brazilian church. Others, however, were less willing to abandon earlier Marxist-influenced rhetoric, and raised questions as to whether the earlier radicalism of the liberationists was being coopted by the church establishment.

The conflict seemed to parallel the earlier problems of the socialist movement in Western Europe. The Social Democratic parties were for a long time ambivalent about the parliamentary system and reluctant to abandon the revolutionary tradition of Karl Marx. It is true that Marx had made some grudging concessions to the possibility that the workers might take power peacefully (Speech to the Second International, The Hague, 1882) but the basic thrust of his analysis seems to have been that in normal circumstances only a revolutionary upheaval can resolve the inherent contradictions of capitalism.

For Marx that transformation was to be carried out by the overwhelming majority of the population, but in the hands of Lenin, Marx was used to justify the imposition of the rule of a revolutionary vanguard party bent on eliminating the traces of "false consciousness" among the masses that had led them to support reformist trade unionism and bourgeois democracy. In Western Europe, however, socialists such as Jean Jaurès in France and Eduard Bernstein in Germany argued that parliamentary democracy was an important component of the Marxist tradition.

Which way will the liberation theologians go? Will they abandon or fundamentally alter the utopian revolutionism that they adopted in the late 1960s and early 1970s? Will they listen to the "praxis" of the poor and respond to their expressed needs and specific problems, or will they continue to believe in the necessity of "conscientization" by means of a naive and reductionist anticapitalism? If liberation theology is committed to "using the tools of social analysis" and "learning from the social sciences," *which* tools and *which* social science will they utilize?

It will be the argument of this book that it is time for liberation theologians to distinguish between the *method* and the *content* of the theology that they have developed. It is entirely in keeping with their own emphasis on "praxis" that the liberation theologians should continue to utilize the methods and promote the goals that they developed nearly two decades ago, but be willing to alter the content of their socioeconomic analysis, on the basis of experience, to recognize that there may be other sources of oppression (racial, sexual, and cultural) besides economics, and to reassess the liberal democratic

and constitutionalist tradition that the liberation theologians rejected in the late 1960s. This is especially important at a time when democracy and human rights need "all the help they can get" in Latin America—and the possibilities for the development of genuinely participatory policies and institutions are greater in Latin America than ever before. At the outset, liberation theology was both a demand for true democracy and a protest against the exploitation and external domination associated with dependent capitalism. In its more extravagant rhetoric, its original formulations seemed to emphasize the need for an anticapitalist and antiimperialist revolution more than the need for empowerment and participation of the poor. Today there is less emphasis on structuralist criticisms and more on participatory involvement. (For examples, compare Gutierrez's first book, *A Theology of Liberation*, published in Spanish in 1971, with his recent books, for example, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, the Spanish edition of which was published in 1983—or contrast the arguments of the 1970 and 1984 articles by the same author, published as appendices to this book.) The question for the future is whether this commitment to involvement of, and with, the poor can take place without the heavy overlay of pseudo-Marxism that produced such a strong reaction against the movement in the 1970s. At a time when the American Catholic bishops are actively engaged in criticism of the shortcomings of the American system because of a concern for social justice that is based on both the Christian and liberal traditions, it is time for a new North-South dialogue on the part of Christians, concerning both the accomplishments and the shortcomings of liberal democracy and the mixed economy as it has developed in the Americas. It is in the hope of contributing to this dialogue that this book has been written.

1

The Catholic Church and Politics: Historical and Institutional Background

THE MESSAGE of the Bible is not an overtly political one; it is about the relation of God to the Chosen People, and the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ. Christ did not endorse any particular political system, and the political implications that have been drawn from his message are diverse and even contradictory. Part of the message of the liberation theologians is an argument for a new relationship between Christianity and politics that is more faithful to the Bible than earlier theory and practice. To understand in what respects this relationship is new, and why it emerged at the time it did, it is necessary to begin with an historical overview of the way in which Christianity—especially Roman Catholicism—has been related in the past to political, economic, and ecclesiastical structures in Europe and Latin America. In an organization with an institutional memory spanning nearly 2000 years, this is not easy to do. Yet for the bishops and theologians of Latin America in 1968, the year of the birth of liberation theology as a distinct current of Catholic thought, that memory is important as a source of both legitimation and differentiation.

At the time of Christ, Palestine was under Roman rule, but the Jews continued to be restive, and a nationalist revolutionary movement called the Zealots called for liberation from Roman rule. It is believed that one or more of Jesus' followers was or had been a member of the Zealot movement, and Barabbas, who was set free by Pilate in response to popular demand, is usually considered to have been

condemned for participating in a Zealot uprising or political assassination. Yet when Christ was asked whether a Jew should pay taxes to the Romans he replied, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21), an answer that has been variously interpreted as calling for separation of the spiritual and the temporal, submission to existing rulers, or complete disinterest in politics.¹

In response to what appear to have been anarchic tendencies in the early church, Paul wrote in his Epistle to the Romans (ch. 13), "Be subject to the powers that be. The powers that be are ordained of God. He that resists the power, resists God." Yet from the outset there were clear limits on the Christian's political obligation. St. Peter refused an order from the Sanhedrin to stop preaching because "we must obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29), and the early Christians repeatedly defied Roman orders to give divine honors to images of the emperor. Faced with Roman persecution, the Christians organized their own underground religious communities, and as early as the writings of St. Paul it is evident that there were problems of organization and authority within these communities. There is debate about the emergence of the distinction between bishops (*episcopoi*, "overseers") and priests (*presbyteroi*, "elders"), the relation of their authority to that of the apostles (the "apostolic succession"), and the respective powers of the successors of the other apostles and those of the successor of Peter ("Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church," Matthew 16:18), but there is evidence for monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic elements in the early church constitution, with the Bishop of Rome, the patriarchs and bishops, and the local Christian communities representing each of the three classic forms of government.

As a persecuted sect, the early church developed independently of the political structure, but it could not fail to be affected both by Jewish and Roman legal theories (transmission of authority by the laying on of hands, the theory of ordination) and by the philosophical currents of the contemporary world. The church fathers wrote in an intellectual context that was deeply affected by two major philosophical schools, Stoicism and Platonism. After the legalization of Christianity by Constantine in 313 AD and its subsequent adoption as the official religion of the empire, the Christian fathers, notably St. Augustine (354-430), drew upon Stoicism and Platonism to forge a world view that emphasized the hierarchical and ordered nature of God's cre-

ation ("the Great Chain of Being") and the immanence of God's moral purposes in the structure of the world that he created ("the natural law"). While it is true that as a consequence of the Fall the world had been corrupted by sin and one could hope for happiness not in the "earthly city" but only in the "City of God" to come, it was the duty of Christians in positions of authority, such as rulers or judges, to impose a minimal order on a sinful world (*The City of God*, bk. XIX, chs. 6-13), just as it was the duty of the subjects of those in authority to obey them. Augustine's views provided the basis for an essentially conservative Christian world view that emphasized order, obedience, hierarchy, authority, and the divine origin of spiritual and temporal rule.²

These were the underlying assumptions of the traditional, legalistic, and feudal society of the Middle Ages. The translation of the works of Aristotle into Latin in the thirteenth century threatened the stability of this order, but Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), in his great synthesis the *Summa Theologiae*, endeavored to prove that the claims of reason as represented by "the Philosopher" (Aristotle) could be harmonized with Christian revelation. The political implications of the Thomistic synthesis were not threatening to the medieval order since monarchy in church and state was endorsed as reflecting the divinely intended order in the universe, although typically a place was also given to the participation of the nobles and the people as well and to the restraints of basic law upon the ruler.³

In the late Middle Ages the development of representative institutions out of earlier feudal consultative bodies did not challenge the principle of monarchy, since parliaments were perceived as primarily consultative bodies with a *duty* to "advise and consent" to taxes and legislation. It is true that in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries a constitutional crisis in the church produced the conciliar movement that argued for a structure of representative bodies in the church, deriving their legitimacy both from the succession of the bishops to the apostles, and from a belief in the council as the corporate representative of the whole body of believers (*congregatio fidelium*). Once the crisis was past, however, the course of papal centralization continued—and it was intensified by the challenge of the Protestant Reformation. Monarchy and hierarchy were the prevailing models of Catholic Christendom, and the earlier competing aristocratic and democratic principles formed the basis of the rival episcopal and congregationalist theories in Protestantism. Concordats—diplomatic

agreements between the Vatican and the monarchs of Catholic Europe—regulated the respective rights of pope and king, and part of the legitimacy of the Catholic ruler was derived from his or her religious duty to spread the faith (for example, *Isabela la Catolica* of Spain).

This was the religio-political outlook that was brought to Spanish and Portuguese America by the era of colonial conquest. The spread of the faith by missionaries and soldiers ("the cross and the sword") was but a further extension of the crusading spirit that had only recently (1492) liberated southern Spain from Moslem rule. While there were a few courageous churchmen who criticized the quasi-genocide of the native Indian populations, the exercise of the *patronato*, or nominating power, by the Spanish monarch guaranteed that Catholic bishops would be faithful servants of the Spanish throne. When the Spanish colonies revolted in the early nineteenth century, the papacy denounced the uprisings and called upon the Latin Americans to return to obedience to the Bourbon monarchs. While the lower clergy in Latin America (for example, Fathers Morelos and Hidalgo in Mexico) often supported independence, the church hierarchy was sympathetic to the continuation of Spanish rule. After independence the principal political division between conservatives and liberals often focused on the status of the church in the areas of education, marriage, and landholding.

In Latin Europe, the anticlericalism of the liberal movement in revolutionary France and the desires of liberal nationalists in Italy to annex the papal states (they formed a band across central Italy from south of Venice to north of Naples, blocking Italian unification) led the papacy to issue repeated condemnations of liberalism and democracy in the nineteenth century. Initially the papacy under Pope Pius IX (1846–1878) had responded to the challenge of modern liberal democracy with condemnations (see, for example, Proposition 69 of the Syllabus of Errors [1864])—"It is an error to believe that the Roman pontiff can or should reconcile himself to, and agree with progress, liberalism, and modern civilization"), but under Pope Leo XIII (1878–1903) it began to develop a Catholic alternative to the main politico-economic movements of the nineteenth century, liberalism and socialism. Drawing on the thinking of St. Thomas Aquinas, the teaching of which he had made the basis of theological instruction in Catholic seminaries, Leo XIII published his famous labor encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, in 1891, supporting the workers'

right to earn a living wage and to form trade unions, and condemning both "the misery and wretchedness" of the workers under economic liberalism, and the collectivist materialism of an undifferentiated—but presumably, from the description, Marxist—socialism. The pope's criticism of socialism emphasized the "natural right" of man to the fruits of his labor and in effect adopted the argument of John Locke that when a man mixes his labor with the fruits of the earth he is entitled to their ownership. Leo also stressed, however, the social obligations that accompany private ownership and the limits that the community could place upon it. Rejecting the class struggle, Leo called on labor and employers to cooperate since "it is ordained by nature that these two classes should exist in harmony and agreement, . . . so as to maintain the equilibrium of the body politic" (par. 15).

The social Catholicism that was propounded by the papacy still was not combined with an endorsement of political democracy, despite the fact that Christian Democratic and Catholic parties were being formed in many European countries. Pius XI's labor encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), seemed to propose a decentralized form of corporatism, based on intermediate and professional associations ("subsidiarity"). It was not until the end of World War II that the papacy formally supported democracy as morally and religiously justified (Pius XII, Christmas Message, 1944). Official papal endorsement of democracy as the form of government most in keeping with the "dignity of the human person" took place only during the pontificate of John XXIII, with the publication of *Pacem in Terris* (1963) and in the declaration on *The Church in the Modern World* of the Second Vatican Council (*Gaudium et Spes*) adopted in 1965.⁴

Pope John's encyclical *Pacem in Terris* was addressed to "all men of good will." And the Vatican Council's declaration, *Gaudium et Spes* [The Church in the Modern World], stated that it was aimed at "the whole of humanity," expressing an attitude toward the modern world very different from that of the nineteenth-century popes. In *Gaudium et Spes*, Vatican II called for a continuing dialogue between the church and the world, denounced economic inequality and disparities between rich and poor nations, and based human freedom and interdependence on the dignity of man and his creation by God. This freedom can be attained, said the council, only in solidarity with others since by divine intention all human beings constitute one family and are endowed with a social nature, and "since all men possess