

PSALM 5—A Paraphrase

HEAR MY PROTEST

Hear my words, Oh Lord, give ear to my groanings.
Listen to my protest.
For you are not a God who is friendly with oppressors,
nor do you support their devious ways,
nor are you influenced by their propaganda,
nor are you a cohort with gangsters.
One cannot believe anything they say,
nor have any confidence in their official pronouncements.
They talk of peace while they increase their production of arms.
They make gestures toward understanding at the Peace Conferences,
but in secret they prepare for war.

.

Punish them, Oh God,
bring to naught their machinations.

—Ernesto Cardenal (Managua)

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth....”

—*Revelation 21:1.*

Dedication

To the Christs of Latin America:

*To the martyred Bishop of Nicaragua,
Monseñor Antonio de Valdivieso (d. 1550),
assassinated by the oppressive violence of
the sixteenth century.*

*To the martyred priest of Recife,
Padre Antonio Pereira Neto (d. 1969),
assassinated by the coercive violence of
the twentieth century.*

“Nations on the road to progress, like those recently made independent, desire to participate in the goods of modern civilization not only in the political field but also economically, and to play their part freely on the world scene. Still they continually fall behind while very often their dependence on wealthier nations deepens more rapidly, even in the economic sphere. People hounded by hunger call upon those better off. Where they have not won it, women claim for themselves an equity with men before the law and in fact. Laborers and farmers seek not only to provide for the necessities of life but to develop the gifts of their personality by their labors.... Man is becoming aware that it is his responsibility to guide aright the forces which he has unleashed and which can enslave him or minister to him. That is why he is putting questions to himself”(*Pastoral Constitution Gadium et Spes*, 9, Second Vatican Council)

“*Growing distortion of international commerce.* Because of the relative depreciation of the terms of exchange, the value of raw materials is increasingly less in relation to the cost of manufactured products....This injustice clearly denounced by *Populorum Progressio* (n. 56 - 61) ...constitutes a permanent menace against peace. ... *International monopolies and international imperialism of money.* We wish to emphasize that the principal guilt for economic dependence of our countries rests with powers, inspired by an uncontrolled desire for gain, which leads to economic dictatorship and the “international imperialism of money” condemned by Pope Pius XI in *Quadragesimo Anno* and by Pope Paul VI in *Populorum Progressio*.” (2. Peace, n. 9, “Conclusions” of the Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops in Medellín)

Preface to the English Edition

This English edition of *History of the Church in Latin America* is a translation of the third Spanish edition completed in 1971. It is for this reason that I have added a section describing the period of 1972 - 1979 (from Sucre to Puebla), which brings the work up to date. Also, some of the Spanish appendices that are not of interest to the English-speaking readers have been eliminated. This English edition is, nonetheless, substantially the same as the Spanish one.

It is anticipated that the reader, in addition to learning of what has taken place in and to the Latin American Church, will comprehend more fully the suffering of this continent and the appearance of our own creations such as the Theology of Liberation—which is the product of the lives and the suffering of our oppressed people.

ENRIQUE DUSSEL

Mexico City
July 1979

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Translator's Preface

The prophets of Latin American liberation theology have been said to be Rubem Alves of Brazil, the systematic theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez of Peru, and the apologist Hugo Assmann of Uruguay. Were it possible to limit the circle of spokesmen to these three, which it is not, the group would have to be enlarged to include the Argentine Enrique Dussel who is liberation theology's principal historian and ethicist.

During the early days of the liberation theology movement Assmann wrote, "The greatest merit of the 'theology of liberation' probably lies in its insistence on the historical starting point of its reflection: the dominated situation of Latin America."¹ Professor Dussel has ably verified this fact in this his major work, *A History of the Church in Latin America*.

To the reader familiar with the writings of the Latin Americans, the intensity and passion with which Dussel writes will come as no surprise. But for one who has read little or nothing of the theology of liberation, this work will be unsettling not only because of the substance of the indictment against Christians' complicity in oppression, but also because of our North American and European insensitivity to such oppression. For this is not a cool, dispassionate retelling of events in the style of the "objective" historian, but a disquieting, painful, and sometimes glorious narrative written by one who is a careful observer and a meticulous investigator, as well as a competent theologian and a committed participant.

A half-century ago John Millington Synge wrote: "A translation is no translation ...unless it will give you the music of a poem along with the words of it." I have tried to render faithfully and accurately not only Professor Dussel's thoughts and the results of his exhaustive research, but also the anguish and poignancy of his descriptions. The story is a moving example of what Robert McMee Brown has aptly called "theology in a new key."²

The value of this work is threefold: it recounts concisely and lucidly the complex and tumultuous history of Latin American Christianity; it recreates the religious and secular context from which emerged an abundance of saints and sinners—some well known, others obscure or long forgotten; and it forces a rereading of a history not known by most of us North Americans and Europeans—and by relatively few Latin Americans—a history in which all of us are inextricably involved.

It has been my good fortune to have had the encouragement of many to undertake this task of translation, including Orlando E. Costas, recently elected Professor of Missions at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, who first suggested it, and many of my colleagues both here in the United States and in Latin America. In addition, Professor Dussel has been able to read the entire manuscript and to point out the occasions when another word or phrase would better express his thoughts.

John E. Steely, Professor of Historical Theology here at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and translator of numerous works, has been particularly helpful in checking references and bibliographical materials in German and Dutch. The careful and competent assistance of my wife, Virginia, both in the translation and in the preparation of the manuscript has been invaluable. I could not have completed this nor much else without her .

ALAN NEELY

*Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary
Wake Forest, North Carolina
October 1, 1979
The Day of Panama's Liberation*

PREFACE TO THE FIRST
SPANISH EDITION

We should like, in the first place, to make clear our purpose in writing this book, so the reader will understand what we have attempted to do.

This is a study centering on a limited area between the *philosophy of culture* and *history*, but it is basically *theology*. We believe, as we will demonstrate, that we must place ourselves within the contiguous boundaries of diverse sciences if we are to help the history of the Latin American Church to emerge from the crisis in which it has recently been born.

It should be evident even to one who has only begun historical studies that the history of the Church in Latin America has just begun. During the period of the conquest, soldiers, rulers, missionaries, and clergy —those gifted in the art of writing — left us many interesting stories, chronicles, and descriptions of the events and activities in which they participated. But their chronicles and anecdotes are not history in a scientific sense. Little more than these was written during the colonial period, and one will look in vain for any significant historical work prior to the third decade of the nineteenth century. In fact, it was not until the latter part of this century that important historical works began to appear. We would refer the reader, for example, to the writings of Icazbalceta in Mexico or of Groot in Colombia. One must wait until the twentieth century before a Cuevas appears in Mexico, or a Furlong or a Carbia in Argentina, an Eizaguirre in Chile, a Vargas Ugarte in Peru, a Leturia in Spain, a Ricard in France, or a Konetzke in Germany. The fact is that Latin American church history as a science is very recent, and works like those of Valencia on Toribio de Mogrovejo, or that of Juan Friede on the life of Juan del Valle are very rare.

We have already noted that the birth of the history of the Latin American Church was intimately related to a crisis. We believe that this can be affirmed by observing that until recently it has not been possible to distinguish clearly in what way the history of the Church differs from secular history. We believe there is a radical difference. None of the historians we have mentioned has published a “problematization” of his method of recounting the history of the Church which could be referred to as scientific history and which at the same time could be regarded as theology. We believe, furthermore, that the development of history as a science will necessitate our working together as interdisciplinary teams composed of historians, theologians, sociologists, and philosophers. Otherwise we will continue to produce merely secular history —as we have already indicated —or apologetic history.

In this brief essay, we attempt to initiate a dialogue regarding certain fundamental *hypotheses* that must be discussed if we are to open the history of the Church in Latin

America to the issues currently debated in theology, philosophy, and sociology, as well as in the economic and political sciences.

A *hypothesis*¹ in science is a proposition considered to be a possible explanation for the occurrence of a certain phenomenon that must be tested by additional investigation. But a hypothesis can also result from previous scientific investigations. A hypothesis can be, therefore, either a beginning or a terminal point. As the former, it involves a certain risk in that it may prove to be unfounded. But as the result of investigations already done, a hypothesis can be accepted as an established fact.

What we propose is a beginning hypothesis of the periodification of *all* the history of the Latin American Church. As a hypothesis, we are obligated to sketch briefly the contents and the meaning of what we propose to include. Each period is described in a few short pages because we are not attempting to recount all the historical events of each era—even if we knew them—but rather to demonstrate the validity of establishing limits for each of these periods. In the second place, only certain characteristics of these periods are noted, characteristics that appear to us as essential and related and for which sufficient data are available to describe them.

This work is not, therefore, a finished history of the Church, but rather a “problematization” of a method and a periodification which can be completed later by other historical and theological scientists working together .

At the same time, as will be observed, a certain “interpretation” is implicit in this study, and it is here that the dialogue begins regarding the ultimate meaning of history, especially of the history of the Church, and how one should understand this history in the light of faith. If *our* history has ultimate meaning, then all who are Christians in Latin America—and even those who are not—can begin to search for a source of contemporary understanding of their Christian existence. What began therefore as our hypothesis for a scientific endeavor is transformed into a particular *reading* of our history and is, or can be, beneficial to the common citizen, to the trade unionist, and even to the politician. Herein we see an essential point, namely, that history constitutes the cultural comprehension of a people when it is given “meaning,” and even more so in the Christian understanding when history is viewed as an eschatological teleology—the meaning of history that moves towards Christ who will come because he has come—for the people of the continent. In this way history can become our teacher .

One major problem is that the history of the Latin American Church is cloistered within the circle of scientific publications, and the public at large, Christian or otherwise, is never exposed to it. This leaves the Latin American bereft of one of the essential dimensions of his own cultural development.

When a Latin American Christian—or even one who is not Christian—becomes aware of the importance of discovering his role on this continent that is moving toward liberation, it becomes evident that as never before he needs to understand the function and continuity of his own tradition. When he is equipped with a new understanding of himself, he will be able to read basic and diverse works on the origins of Christianity and its development during the Patristic and medieval periods, the Reformation, and the modern era. Even so, all of these movements are European. And when he asks, “What has been the history of the Church in Latin America?” or “What is the background of my own Christianity?” a vacuum is immediately created because an authentic history of Latin American Christianity has not been written. Moreover, when one sets out to write such a history, it is possible to find only isolated anecdotes, while the central thread of development, the nucleus around which this history has moved, remains obscure. When a Latin American, therefore, wishes to understand himself as

a Christian in the written histories of the Church, he becomes hopelessly confused by the ambiguity of the historical accounts since their real meaning has not yet been explained. This is the situation in all dependent cultures deprived of their own histories.

We attempt to set forth therefore a historical hypothesis and a periodification with its essential elements so that we may begin discussing the method that should be utilized in the understanding of the history of the Church in Latin America. We also address ourselves to the militant in Latin America who is demanding a reasonable and understandable exposition of the present Christian phenomenon on which the future of our people evidently depends.

E.D.

*Institut für europäische Geschichte (Maguncia),
March 1964.*

PREFACE TO THE SECOND
SPANISH EDITION

In 1963, during a trip that I made from Maguncia to Paris, I wrote the outline that forms the basis of this work as published in Spanish in 1964. This second edition, rewritten in 1971, is the product of a more comprehensive knowledge of Latin America acquired from journeys through Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, Greater Colombia, the Andean Zone, and the River Plate to Brazil— knowledge I did not have when I was studying in Europe.

During these last eight years Latin America has moved to a new and crucial level in her history, one unforeseen a decade ago. Today in Europe as well as in Latin America there exists abundant information regarding our continent, but, to my knowledge, there does not exist a comprehensive description and interpretation of our history from the beginning in the fifteenth century until the present, one that includes the later developments of, Vatican Council II and of the 1968 Latin American Bishops Conference in Medellín. Paradoxically, only by seeing the total picture is it possible to have an adequate understanding of what is now taking place. Recent events, especially those since 1962, are in themselves incomprehensible unless they are placed within a framework that explains them.

Latin America, situated on the outer and forgotten fringes of the Church, is now being transformed into an authentic laboratory of a new ecclesiastical experience, one with worldwide ramifications because the present confrontation and precariousness, as well as contradictions of a condition of dependence and of structural oppression is beginning to be recognized. Theological, ecclesiastical, or pastoral experiences of people in the oppressive cultures (in the United States or Europe, for example) are irrelevant for Latin Americans who now are reflecting on their own experiences. The cultural and theological awakening of Latin America as oppressed and dependent, forces us to rethink our situation in the light of faith as a means of escaping the apparent dead-end with its perpetual underdevelopment. But it brings the Christian face to face with the possibility of having to choose the way of revolution as an expedient for liberation and as a means of transforming the oppressed into free persons and at the same time liberating the oppressor who alienated himself by regarding the oppressed as nothing more than “things.”

If the youth of the world have taken “Che” Guevara as their model and if many Christians admire the Colombian priest Camilo Torres, it is because these two men gave their lives to liberate the oppressed. The meaning of their lives and deaths is not, however, readily apparent. It is necessary to reflect on the meaning and theological

significance within the history of the world and particularly within the history of the Latin American Church. What will emerge then will not be an historical oddity, but rather a new theology. Europeans are not even aware of this, and the time is coming when Latin American Christians will no longer depend on European theologians, but, struggling for liberation, will turn on them as the oppressed against their oppressors.

In this second edition we have modified our original periodification. Basically we have regarded the colonial period (1492 - 1808) as the time of the Christianizing of the Indies, which adapted Byzantine, medieval Latin, and principally the Spanish Christianity of the Catholic rulers and their descendents. The period that I call the agony of Christendom (from 1808 until 1962) has been subjected to a major revision. Finally, the period from 1850 to 1930 has been given new limits, especially the years from 1930 to 1962, which stand out as the time when consideration was given to the organization of a New Christendom; that is, to replacing the medieval and colonial "model" with a new one. The attempt was frustrated, however, because of the new attitude that Vatican Council II generated. The new spirit proceeding from the Council encountered the force of popular revolution that was slowly developing. The Church, therefore, came to a crucial time in her history, and Medellín (1968) was merely the beginning. Behind the superficial events, the military coups, terrorism by extremists, repression, and so forth, a profound movement developed in Latin America that now needs to be understood and described. In the introductory reflections and in those which conclude Part Four, we attempt to suggest solutions that will enable us to discover the *import* of these developments in the light of faith. In this way the history of the Church in Latin America acquires adequate form for being one moment in the unique history of salvation which is the history of liberation.

E.D.

National University of Cuyo (Mendoza, Argentina)

Latin American Pastoral Institute (Quito),

January, 1971.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD
SPANISH EDITION

This third edition appears only one year after the second and is a reprinting of it. The only changes we have made are in a few details; for example, the inclusion of some references to “Chicanos” (Mexican-Americans) and to “Latinos.” We have postponed a major revision until the fourth edition because such a modification would take several months, and the editors are asking that we fill the growing number of orders already on hand.

During the latter months of 1973, it became necessary to explain several important events in the Latin American Church that resulted from the November 1972 meeting in Sucre of CELAM,¹ and the changes that came about in the Southern Cone because the military coups in Uruguay and Bolivia, the fall of Allende in Chile, and the triumph of Peronism in Argentina. All these changes as well as an amplification of the treatment of the colonial period and of the events of the nineteenth century will have to be dealt with in a subsequent edition.

Finally, I have been personally affected in a concrete way by the reality of the struggle for liberation on our continent, for during the night of October 2 a large bomb destroyed part of my home—an experience that only reconfirmed my deepest convictions.

This written history is a lived history, day by day, step by step, which we have wanted to interpret in the light of the risk of faith and with a legitimate historical method.

E. D.

*Mexican American Cultural Center (San Antonio, Texas),
November, 1973.*

Abbreviations

ACO	Workers' Catholic Action
APRA	American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (International political party founded in 1924 by Peruvian leader, Victor Raul Haya de la Torre.)
ASO	Catholic Action in Cuba
BID	Inter-American Development Bank
CAL	Pontifical Commission for Latin America
CASC	Autonomous Confederation of Catholic Trade Unions
CEAS	Center for Studies and Social Action (Ecuador)
CECLA	Special Commission of Latin American Coordination
CEHILA	Commission for Latin American Church History
CELAM	Conference of the Latin American Episcopate
CEPAL	(U.N.) Economic Commission for Latin America
CESA	Ecuadorian Education Center of Agricultural Services
CGT	General Confederation of Labor (Argentina)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (USA)
CIASC	Inter-American Confederation of Catholic Social Action
CICOP	Catholic Interamerican Cooperation Program
CIDOC	Inter-Cultural Center for Documentation (Cuernavaca, Mexico) (Founded and directed for fifteen years by Ivan Illich. Closed in 1976.)
CIEC	Interamerican Confederation of Catholic Education
CLAR	Latin American Confederation of Religious Orders
CLASC	Latin American Confederation of Trade Unionists
CNBB	National Conference of Brazilian Bishops
COGECAL	General Council of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America
COMIBOL	National Corporation of Mines (Bolivia)
CONFREGUA	Confederation of Guatemalan Religious Orders
COPEI	Christian Democratic Party (Venezuela)
COSDEGUA	Confederation of Diocesan Priests of Guatemala
DAS	Administrative Department of Security (Colombia)
DEOPS	Brazilian National Security Police
DESAL	Center for Economic and Social Development

ECLA	Economic Commission for Latin America
FCLA	Latin American Peasant Federation
FERES	Federation for Religious and Sociological Studies
FEUC	Federation of Students of the Catholic Universities (Chile)
ICLA	Latin American Catechetical Institute
ILADES	Latin American Institute of Doctrine and Social Studies
ILPES	Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning (An organ of the U.N. for educating economists for entire continent)
INCORA	Colombian Agrarian Reform Institute
INPROA	Institute for Agrarian Promotion (Chile)
IPLA	Latin America Pastoral Institute
ISAL	Church and Society in Latin America (An entity of the World Council of Churches)
ISPLA	See IPLA. Became IPLA (Pastoral Institute of Latin America) in 1968
JAC	Young Catholic Action
JAC	Young Catholic Agrarian Movement
JEC	Young Catholic Students
JECI	Young International Catholic Student Movement
JOC	Young Catholic Workers
JUC	Young Catholic University Students
JUDCA	Christian Democratic Youth of America
LADOC	Latin American Bureau Documentary Service, U.S. Catholic Conference
LAFTA	Latin American Free Trade Association
MAPU	Movement of United Popular Action (Chile). A coalition political party formed by Jacques Chonchol in 1970 to attract left-leaning members of the PDC (Christian Democrats).
MEB	Brazilian Educational Movement of Paulo Freire
MIEC- JECI	MIEC -International Movement of Catholic Students JECI -International Catholic Student Youth
MNR	National Revolutionary Movement (Bolivia)
MURO	University Movement for Renewed Orientation (Mexico)
NADOC	Latin American Service of Documentation for Development (Lima, Peru)
OAS	Organization of American States
OCSHA	Spanish Organization for Collaboration
ODECA	Organization of Central American States
ODUCAL	Organization of Latin American Catholic Universities
OLAS	Organization of Latin America Solidarity (Castro's counterpart to the OAS)
ONIS	National Office for Sociological Investigation (Peru)
ORMEU	Office of Relations of University Student Movements
OSLAM	Organization of Latin American Seminaries
PRSC	Christian Democratic Party (Colombia and Ecuador)

PSDC	Christian Democratic Party (Dominican Republic)
SAL	Priests for Latin America or Priests for Liberation (Colombia)
SIAC	Interamerican Secretariat of Catholic Action
SUDENE	Superintendency of the Development of the Northeast (Brazil)
TFP	The Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property (Brazil, Argentina, Chile)
UECA	Union of American Christian Educators
ULAPC	Latin American Union of Catholic Press
UMAS	United Mexican American Students
UNELAM	Latin American Evangelical Pro-Unity Movement (An entity of the World Council of Churches)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNIAPAC	Union of Catholic Professionals (Doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc.)
UNIP	Interamerican Union of Parents
UPI	United Press International