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SIGNIFICANT EVENTS OF THE LAST DECADE (1962-1972)

In this chapter we shall take a look at some of the events that have taken place since 1962. By examiningthem we maybe able to form some judgment about what is happening today.

VATICAN II (1962-1965)

Recent as it was, Vatican II seems to lie far behind us because so much has happened in Latin America in the past decade. I t is almost as if a century of history had been crammed into this short space of time. Indeed the participation-or lack of participation-of Latin American bishops in previous Councils is itself suggestive. One bishop at the Lateran Council of 1517 would later be bishop of Santo Domingo.1 This bishop, Alejandro de Qeraldini, happened to be in Rome at the time waiting for hi~ formal nomination. He had not yet set foot in Latin America, but he was the first American bishop to attend an ecumenical council. There were sixty-five Latin American bishops at Vatican I, but they did not take an active role and merely approved what Róme proposed. Some German participants and in particular the "Old Catholics" were shocked by the seeming ignorance of these representatives from the

"new" Churches of Latin America. The fact that the Churches of Latin America were hardly "new" compared to those in Africa and elsewhere did not register with some people-including the Church historian, Johannes Döllinger.

At Vatican II, the Latin American presence was much more substantial, even though it might well have been even greater in proportionate terms. Over six hundred Latin American bishops were present at the Council: i.e., 22 percent of the total. But the Catholic population of Latin America is 38 percent of the world Catholic population-hence considerably more than was proportionately represented.at the Co-uncil. The difference shows up even more clearly m the study commissions. There were only fifty Latin American *periti* on the staff ofthese commissions. Europe, which has about the same Catholic population, had 219 *periti*. Rome had 318 *periti*, six times the number of *periti* from Latin America. Latin American influence disappeared almost completely in the executive organs of the Council.

There was one Latin American, Cardinal Antonio Caggiano of Buenos Aires, on the presiding board of the Council. It was Cardinal Achille Liénart of Lille, however, who really got the Council started. He himself has described to me what happened. When he was presented with the agenda for the Council, he noticed that everything seemed to have been organized and fixed in advance. When itcame time for him to speak, he simply voiced what he felt without stopping to think about its possible impact. He said in Latin, "Mihi non placet." There was a thunderous burst of applause, and the Council began in earnest. It was the same sensitivity and awareness that Liénart had displayed back in 1930. He was in conflict with the business owners of Lille, and the latter requested that he be replaced. The Pope refused to do that; instead he made him a Cardinal when he was little more than forty-five years old.

Manuel Larraín, the Bishop of Talca, was the Latin American who exerted the most influence at the Council. He was never made a cardinal, but this great Chilean bishop certainly should have been one by virtue of his longstanding invo.vement in Catholic Action and his work for land reform in Chile. Many other bishops made their presence felt at the Council, but I would say that the involvement of the Latin American bishops could have been much greater . At any rate they did get to meet each other and to talk things over; and they had a chance to meet with other bishops from underdeveloped countries. One very interesting result of such meetings anc;l conversations was the message issued by the bishops of the Third World to their peoples[2] Dom Helder Camara of Brazil headed the list of signatories, and the message itself proclaimed that the peoples ofthe Third World were the proletariatoftoday's world. It also spoke on themes connected with the international imperialism of money. This text would subsequently have an impact on the Medellín Conference. But the fact remains that Vatican II itselfwas a reflection of postwar European neocapitalism.

THE MEDELLIN CONFERENCE (1968)

The Medellín Conference was the Second General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate. The first such conference had taken place in Río de Janeiro (1955), where the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM) was formed. The Medellín Conference might well be copsidered the Vatican II of Latin America, even as the Third Council of Lima (1582-83) is often considered the Latin American Trent.

It was the Medellín Conference that gave concrete form and application to Vatican II. The resultwas somewhatofa surprise, because a previous meeting had not produced much in the way of results and an air of scepticism sur-

rounded the upcoming meeting. The visit of Pope Paul VI to Latin America, however, alerted public opinion and created an atmosphere of hopefulness. His speeches in Latin America touched upon some key ideas and also helped to stir the thinking of our own bishops. He noted that "broad and courageous vision" would be required to put through the reforms "necessary for a more just and efficient social arrangement." He exhorted the people of Latin America not to place their trust in violence and revolution: "That is contrary to the Christian spirit, and can even delay, rather than advance, that social uplifting to which you lawfully aspire." It was a theme to which he returned: "Many ...insist on the need for urgent change in social structures ...and some conclude that Latin America's essential problem can be solved only by violence. ...We must say and reaffirm that violence is not in accord with the Gospel, that it is not Christian."[3]

These texts were interpreted within the overall context of his other addresses and encyclicals, and commentaries were worked up by various figures: Father Alfonso Gregory of Brazil; Bishop Marcos MacGrath of Panamá; Bishop Eduardo Pironio of CELAM; Bishop Samuel Ruíz of Chiapas, Mexico; Bishop Pablo M uñoz Vega of Ecuador; Bishop Luis Henríquez of Venezuela; and Bishop Leonidas Proaño of Riobamba, Ecuador. In the discussions and preparatory documents of the Medellín Conference, the teaching of Vatican II and the popes was fleshed out1in terms of the Latin American situation. The *Conclusions* gave voice to a new tone and a new idiom in the language of the Latin American Church: "It is the same God who, in the fullness of time, sends his Son in the flesh, so that he might come to liberate all men from the slavery to which sin has subjected them: hunger, misery, oppression, and ignorance, in a word, that injustice and hatred which have their origin in human selfishness."[4] And it went on to spell out some of the concrete implications of such a vision. Here is one example:

"As the Christian believes in the productiveness of peace in order to achieve justice, he also believes that justice is a prerequisite for peace. He recognizes that in many instances Latin America finds itself faced with a situation of injustice that can be called institutionalized violence. ...This situation demands all-embracing, courageous, urgent, and profoundly renovating transformations. We should not be surprised, therefore, that the 'temptation to violence' is surfacing in Latin America. One should not abuse the patience of a people that for years has borne a situation that would not be acceptable to anyone with any degree of awareness of human rights."[5]

These documents of the Me.dellín Conference speak in the idiom of liberation, talking about such matters as dependence, domination, and the international imperialism of money. Yet the thoUght of that Conference stands somewhere in the transitional phase between "developmentalism" and the "theology of liberation." Starting with the basic fact of a gap between the "developed" and the "underdeveloped" countries, the developmentalist approach suggests that the underdeveloped countries must catch up to the former countries by more or less imitating their way of doing things. This approach tended to dominate our thinking in the 60s, and it is still evident in the thinking o (the Medellín Conference. As time went on, however, it became evidef1t that the underdeveloped countries could never catch up with the develored nations by adopting that approach. The gap betweeri the two types grows greater every day. The belatedly indústrialized countries cannot gain their economic independence simply by following in the footsteps of the "advanced" nations. The price of manufactured products increases steadily while the price of raw materials provided by the underdeveloped countries declines. The resultant economic and political problems have graduallymade their impact felt in the field of theology also.

If the underdeveloped countries are to attain liberation, they must break the cycle of dependence on advanced industrialized countries. This fact began to be seen more , clearly right after the Medellín Conference, and theologians began to talk about a new model for the underdeveloped nations. Tying in this model with biblical thinking, they began to talk about a "theology of liberation." It was Augusto Salazar Bondy, a Peruvian philosopher, who called our attention to the fact that the domination exerted over us was not only economic and political but also cultural in the broad sense. His work attracted the attention of Gustavo Gutiérrez, who has done much to spell out the basic underpinnings of liberation theology.[6] W.e shall return to thlS whole matter m the next chapter. Rlght now I should like to sketch some of the reactions of the Church and Christians to recent events in Latin America.

THE COUPS D'ET A T IN BRAZIL AND PERU

Between 1962 and 1972 there have been significant political overthrows in Latin America. The coups in Brazil (1964), Argentina (1966), and Peru (1968) were major events because they affected more than half of the total Latin American population. Towards these events the Church adopted different and sometimes contradictory stances, and I should like to touch on those which occurred in Brazil and Peru as examples of what is going on.

The Church had organized various social mpvements in Brazil before Goulart was deposed and the ni.litary junta took over. One of the most interesting was the development movement in Natal, which was concerned with the growth of the northeast section of the country. This movement, known as SUDENE (Superinterulencia delDesenvolvimiento del N.E.), eventuall y would end in failure, but basically it was a continuation of the peasant leagues (Ligas camponesas) of Francisco Juliao. There would also begin in Brazil the

movement for basic education (MEB) based on the approach of Paulo Freire. The Church was progressively making its presence known in Brazilian sdciety. The weakness of the Goulart government paved the wí1y for the military coup of March 31, 1964, and a new phase began in the life of that nation.

Twelve days after the military coup Dom Helder Camara, a friend ofPaul VI, was nominated Bishop of Olinda and Recife. He had been in Rome when the bishop of a small diocese in Brazil died. Paul VI wanted to make him the bishop of a dioc.ese, but he also wanted him to take over a larger and more lmportant one. Right around that tlme the bishop of Olinda and Recife also died, and Camara was nominated to replace him.

On April 12, 1964, Dom Helder Camara 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. Camara is a prophet and a poet who uses a dialectical approach which we shall explore in detail in the next chapter. 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 wlio, 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 Christr"[7]

No clearer statemdnt has been made since Vatican II. Camara takes his standpoint as a native of his own region, and then lets his horizons open up to encompass broader realities. His is a truly "catholic" vision encompassing the whole world, the eschatological totality of the kingdom. The concluding remarks of his address are truly pro-

phetic ones: "It would be wrong to suppose that our opposition to atheistic communism implies a defense of liberal capitalism. It would be erroneous to conclude that we are communist because we as Christians vigorously criticize the egotistical position of economic liberalism." This is the classic stance of the Christian prophet. He will oppose the unjust use of power and bourgeois liberalism, but he will also oppose orthodox Marxism. The latter is unacceptable because it is atheistic -or rather, pantheistic, as we have noted earlier. It turns its own world into an absolute whole and dernes the Other. It ends up denymg God and proposing a fatal, egotistical totalitarianism.

The Christian is forced to move forward in history, buffeted by the storm around him and removed from the established order. As Jesus said to Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world." In other words, the Christian keeps moving into the future, drawing the whole process of history in his wake. He fights and struggles for the poor, and the poor do not have any institutions to defend them. Hence he must die as a martyr for the kingdom.
It seems to me that there have been great figures in the various stages of Latin American Church history. In the early colonial period there was Bartolomé de Las Casas and Toribio de Mogrovejo. In the nineteenth century there was Bishop Mariano Casanova, and then the long line of great Chilean bishops which culminated with Bishop Larraín. In the last decade we have figures like Dom Helder Camara in Brazil and Sergio Méndez Arceo, the Bishop of Cuernavaca, Mexico.

On May 7, 1964, Tristáo de Atayde spoke outin the pages of the *Folha de Sao Paulo*. In his youth he had been a great student of Maritain but, unlike the latter, he did not backtrack on his opinions in later years. Unlike the author of the *Peasant of the Garonne*, he continued to follow the process of history even in his later years. In his article, he spoke out against the cultural terrorism that had taken over in Brazil.

What else is it, he asked, "when men of international stature are deprived of their posts ...simply because they express opinions contrary to the new prevailing ideology; when purely metaphysical philosoph'ers are jailed ...along with young intellectuals simply because their methods of teaching literacy are regarded as subversive; when the organs of Catholic Action ...are exhorted to abstain from activities that are 'incompatible with the interests of the nation and its people' as if they were underi the tutelage of the State?"

My point here is a simple one. Our young people sometimes wonder where we will find martyrs to match those of old. Well, we may not have had them for awhile, but there have been many, indeed hundr,ds, in Latin America in the last ten years, And there probably will be many more. A clear case in point is the young priest of the diocese of Olinda y Recife in Brazil, who was assassinated at the age of twenty-eight. His life was threatened, but he continued his work as adviser to a Catholic Action group of university students. On the night of May 27, 1969, he was abducted, tortured, stripped, tied to a stake, and shot. This young priest, Henrique Pereira Neto, was a martyr as surely as any in the Roman empire. And there have been many others like him in Latin America. Something extraordinary and important is going on in our lands.

When the average European of today utters a prayer, he or she does it calmly and simply. Only once or twice in a lifetime is the European faced with a critical choice that will affect his or her whole life. The European decides to pursue a certain line of work, to get married, to enter the religious life. After that, life goes on for forty or fiftyyears without any life-or-death opqon entering the picture. The moral intensity of life is experienced in one or two moments. In Latin America, by contrast, we may be faced with life-or-death options over and over again. I t is ha ppening in Brazil, and we must face the reality of the situation.
A military government also took over in Peru in 1968, but

it began to tackle things in a very different manner. The Church, too, adopted a different posture when faced with the new scituation. The new military government adopted a nationalistic policy that entailed some degree of socializing the economic capacity of the country .A say in the government was granted to Christians and to others who have been traditionally anti-Christian: e.g., socialists and communists. Towards this policy the Church has adopted a very positive attitude-quite in contrast to the situation in Brazil.

Up to 1962, in short, the Church tended to defend its own rights and its own institutions vis-a-vis the State. Since then the Church has tended to defend the rights of the poor and the common people, the Other, and the ensuing conflicts stem mainly from that fact. A radical change in attitude has taken place, more akin to the pro-Indian attitude of some colonial bishops.

THE CHURCH CONFRONTS SOCIALISM IN CUBA

I want to consider briefly the situation of the Church in Cuba since Castro's forces entered Havana on January 8, 1959. Initial relations between Castro and the Church were very cordial, but estrangement soon set in. By February of 1960 Castro was saying that anyone opposed to communism was also opposed to the revolution. The Church began to take a stance openly against the government, and this trend culminated in a statement by the Cupan episcopate on August 7, 1960: "Let no one ask us Gatholics to silence our opposition to such doctrines out of afalse sense of civilloyalty. We cannot agree to that without; betraying our deepest principIes, which are opposed to materialistic and atheistic communism. The vast majority of the Cuban people are Catholic, and only by deceit can they be won over to a communist regime." Open persecution then began. By 1970 the number of nuns in Cuba had dropped from 1200

to 200, the number of diocesan priests from 745 to 230. For almost ten years it was a Church of silence.

Then Bishop Cesare Zacchi, who had long experience in socialist countries, was appointed Apostolic Nuncio to Cuba. He made it clear that another attitude was possible. The Church changed its stance, and subsequently the government did also. The prime minister of Cuba would admit that an entirely new situation was at hand: "We are faced with a paradox of history. When we see many priests becoming a force for revolution, how can we resign ourselves to seeing Marxist sectors infected with an ecclesiastical kind of conservatism?" The whole situation would have been unthinkable a few short years before. The attitude of the Church began to change, particularly after Medellin.

On April 10, 1969, the Cuban episcopate issued a statement in which it denounced the economic blockade of Cuba: "In the interests of our people and in service to the poor, faithful to the mandate of Jesus Christ and the commitments made at the Medellin Conference, we denounce the injustice of this blockade. For it causes a great increase in unnecessary suffering, and greatly impedes the quest for development." This message marked the start of a new phase in which the problem of contemporary atheism was faced directly. A statement of September 3, 1969, explored the issue in concrete terms: "In the betterment of the whole man and of all mankind there is' an enormous area of shared commitment between people of good will, be they atheists or believers." It noted the critical importance of every moment in history: "In this hour, as in every hour, we must be wise enough to detect the presence of God's kingdom in the positive features of the critical situation through which we are living."

The thought of the Cuban episcopate is crystal clear. Their words reveal a true prophetic sense and a vital faith. The Church of Cuba is going through a crisis and facing up

to it; it will not have to face that crisis in some future century. If one faces u p to the crisis of today, he will be over the worst when tomorrow comes.

Here I cannot review the older revolution which took place in Mexico and the attitude of Christians during it. But I do want to say something about Chile, even though I must be very brief and overlook recent happenings. The important point to note here is that the Church did not set itself up in adamant opposition to the socialist government of Allende and the Popular Front. The episcopate continued the process of dialogue to see where and how things would go. Moreover, substantial groups of Christians participated in the Popular Front coalition.

In this respect Chileans have demonstrated much more maturity than other Christians when it comes to politics. In 1936 a group of Christians left the Conservative Party to form the Christian Democratic Party. Members of the latter left to form MAPU [Movimiento de Acción Popular U nido, United Movement for Peoples' Action], a Marxist party composed of Christians, which took part in the Popular Front. And some members of MAPU left that party to form MIC [Movimiento Izquierdista Cristiano, Movement of the Christian Left], a leftist but non-Marxist party of Christian socialists. I think this distinction between a Marxist party made up of Christians and a non- Marxist party of Christian socialists will be most important in the immediate future of Latin America.

THE REALITY OF VIOLENCE IN LA TIN AMERICA

The physiognomy of events is different to some extent in every country of Latin America, but we cannot explore every country here. So let us try to examine the problem of violence in terms of a couple of countries.

Colombia is a country in which violence has reigned since the first days of Spanish conquest. The conquistadores

slaughtered Indians in wholesale fashion as they went about looking for gold. One bishop noted that the lndians had come to assume that gold was the god of the Spaniard, and they had reason. Gold was almost an idol for many Spaniards, and they went about sacking Chibcha tombs to find it. The Chibchas buried gold objects with their dead, and the Spaniards desecrated their burial areas in search of the wealth which was needed in Spain to combat the "Lutheran heretics."

Violence-ridden Colombia is also the Colombia which produced a most significant figure in the last decade. I cannot explore his whole history here,[8] but I must allude to the basic outlines of his intellectual and spiritual itinerary. Camilo Torres received his degree in sociology from the University of Louvain. Four months before his death he expressed his admiration for dedicated Marxists but noted that he would never join their ranks: "They are sincerely seeking the truth and they love their neighbor in an efficacious way, but they must know very well that I will never enter their ranks. I will never be a communist-neither as a Colombian, a sociologist, a Christian, or a priest."

Camilo Torres was an intelligent Christian who confronted sociology, history, and his faith in his own way. One ideal dominated his thinking and writing: *love.* He believed it was the one and only Christian commandment, but he also believed it had to be *efficacious* love. This thought, which appears repeatedly in his writings and statements, gradually effected a change in his own approach and life. In 1963, for example, he wrote these negative comments on violence: "Violence has effected all these changes through pathological channels which in no way dovetail with the country's process of economic development." He was opposed to violence, yet gradually this attitude would change.

The Church displayed a lack of comprehension which gradually shackled him. The university professor was prevented from becoming university rector. He was asked to withdraw his name from the nominations for the post. Then he was asked to stop speaking and writing. Desiring to pursue the demands of his Christian faith, he asked to be l aicized so that he might be involved in politics; but the doors of the political world were closed to him. He was shunted aside and gradually forced to make a definitive commitment. And then his corpse was found. We do not know for sure whether he died as a guerrilla fighter, or whether he was assassinated first and then passed off as such.

When we read some of his writings, we cannot help but think of some of the earlier bishops and other present-day martyrs. He wrote: "After analyzing Colombian society. I have come to the conclusion that a revolution is necessary if we are to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and bring well-being to the majority of our people. The supreme gauge of our decisions should be charity: supernatural love. I will take all the risks that this ideal imposes on me."It is the underlying attitude of such men as Valdivieso, who was assassinated by Contreras; Pereira Neto, who was killed on his way to a meeting of Catholic Action; and Father Hector Gallegos of Panama, who was first threatened and then killed for his work with peasant cooperatives. Since we have not yet given our own lives, we most respect those who did.

The situation in Guatemala is depicted in powerful terms by Thomas Melville, who was a Maryknoll missioner there. His words speak for themselves: "During the last eighteen months, these three rightist groups have slain more than 2800 people: intellectuals, students, union and peasant leaders, and others who have tried in one way or another to organize the people and combat the evils of Guatemalan society. I personally know a man, a good friend and daily communicant, who accused a Christian union leader of

being a communist because he was trying to organize a union in his sugar plantation. He thus got him shot by the army. When the cooperative I had organized among the Indians of Quezaltenango was finally able to buy its own truck, the rich people tried to bribe the driver so that he would wreck the vehicle. He refused their overtures, so they tried several times to force him off the road and over a cliff. They were successful on the fourth try. In the parish of San Antonio Huista where my brother-also a Maryknoller-was pastor, the president of the agrarian cooperative was assassinated by the people in power-the mayor included. When the case was brought to the capital city of Huehuetenango, the judge had already been bought off and nothing came of it."

Melville goes on to say: "The American government has sent jeeps, helicopters, armaments, doctors, and military advisers to the government in power. This merely strengthens their control over the peasant masses. In 1967 salaries, uniforms, arms, and vehicles for two thousand additional police were paid for by the Alliance For progress. When twenty-five priests got together to organize farm workers on the large haciendas along the southern coast, the bishops of Huehuetenango, San Marcos, Quezaltenango and Sololá dispatched a harsh letter forbidding us to get involved in such a project. It said that it was none of our business, and that we should be content with preaching the Gospel message."[9]

Hundreds of comments of this sort could be presented here. But instead I want to reflect briefly on the whole matter of violence in the Latin American context.

When Cain killed Abel, he set up a "totality" in which the Other came to be at best a slave under his domination. Everything goes well so long as the slave does not advert to his situation or feel any self-worth. If I feel I am worth nothing, it is because I have been subjected to a pedagogy that has driven that point home to me. But if I suddenly

begin to think that I am worth something, if I suddenly place myself outside totality fashioned by my master and oppressor, then a process of liberation begins and the situation becomes quite serious. The oppressor will try to prevent me from taking the step to freedom; he will try to keep me in his totality by force. This is what Dom Helder Camara calls the "first violence." It is the violence of an unjust situation which prevents the reified man from being free. This first sin is the gravest of all because it reifies human beings, turning them into things. The person en route to freedom, the person in the "exodus," must defend himself from this first violence .

The defense is just. It seeks to prevent the exercise of a violence that would keep the process of liberation from taking place. The J esuit Reductions in Paraguay offer us an example here. The Jesuits organized the Indians of the Gran Chaco area into civilized communities. Then colonists came and attacked these Indians, robbing them and killing them. The Jesuits asked the king for permission to arm the Indians. The king did not want to grant this permission, but they went ahead and armed the Indians. The incursions stopped, and the Jesuit Red\;tctions went on existing for at least a century and a half. When the J esuits left, the Indians gradually lost their supply of arms. Soon the Reductions were no more. It is sad to visit the ruins of those edifices today, which were really destroyed by the "first violence" of which I spoke above. The Jesuit'defense of the Indians was the defense of the Other, of the poor .

If someone wants to kill my child, I am not going to let him. If the aggressor has a knife, then I must get a knife to defend the child. If I do not, then I am an irresponsible parent. I am committing a sin.

So there is a "first violence": organized, legal violence. And there is a "second" violence: the violence that sets out to establish a new "whole." The second violence is the violence of San Martin, for example. He organized his soldiers

and followers. When the Spaniards came to destroy the new homeland, he went out to fight them-paving the way for a new whole that is present-day Argentina. If that conflict had not taken place, there would not be any Argentina today.

Thomas Aquinas never said that force as such is evil. He said that force, like all the passions, is equivocal. The essential question is: For what purpose are they used? If I love something, but it truly belongs to another, then I commit a sin. If I love my neighbor as such, however, that is very fine indeed. "Violence" is associated with the Latin word *vis*, which means "strength" or "force" or "power." I may use "violence" or "force"-not that of arms, needless to say-to preach the Gospel message; such was the "violence" of the prophets, for example. In short, the "second violence" of which we spoke above can be virtue insofar as it is the defense of the Other. The "first violence," however, is always sinful. It is the violence of unjust law and established disorder. If the Christian opposes violence, then he must oppose all violence. In particular, he must oppose the "first violence," which is the violence of the pharaoh rather than that of the plagues.

This justification of violence is a theological and ineradicable aspect of the Christian faith. Many passages from the Church Fathers and other theologians could be introduced to prove the point. Thomas Aquinas justified the death penalty; Saint Bernard justified crusades to recapture the Lord's sepulcher in Israel; Christians have waged many wars in defense ofwhat they regarded as their just rights. I am not suggesting that all these wars were truly in defense of the poor, of course. Christian crusaders sacked and exploited Byzantium when they went to recapture the holy sepulcher. That was not virtue but injustice.

But there is also the violence of the spoken word, the violence of the prophet and martyr. It is the distinctive and peculiar violence of the Church as such. Violence in de-

fense of a new political order is not the proper violence of the Church as such, even though it may be proper to the committed Christian individual. The Church as such is a prophetic body which dies for the sake of the Other but which, as Church, never kills anyone. In the throes of his passion and death, Jesus pardoned his persecutors. That is the only way to respect one's persecutor as a human being. If I abuse or insult him, then I am treating him as a thing. I must realize that he does not know what he is doing; if he did, he would not do it.

THE ATTITUDE OF BISHOPS AND PRIESTS

The Chilean episcopate provided the model for Latin America in the decades which preceded Vatican II. Since Vatican II, it is the Brazilian episcopate that has pointed out the road for us. They have found themselves at a very difficult crossroad, and many of them have played an important role. Among them, of course, stands Dom Helder Camara.

His life has been most interesting. He is the son of a public school teacher, and hence he grew up in an educaional atmosphere. He was ordained at the age of twenty-three, and was immediately entrusted with a task that was practically political in nature. Certain parties had agreed to include the Church and its rights in their program, and Helder Camara was to serve as the spokesman of the Church in connection with these groups. Being a great organizer, he did much to shape the whole structure of this coalition. Afterwards he was appointed Minister of Education in his own province, and then later in Rio de Janeiro. In short, up to the age of thirty he spent most of his working life in civil organisms of the State.

Camara got the idea of organizing an episcopal conference in Brazil. He went to speak to the papal Secretary of

State, who would later become Paul VI. The papal secretary of State liked the idea and appointed Camara Secretary of the new organism.

In 1955 Cardinal Gerlier of Lyons, a great missionary bishop in the tradition of Lienart and Suhard, asked Camara why he did not turn his organizing talents to the whole problem of the slums, the *Brazilianfavelas*. **It** was Gerlier's questioning that awoke the social conscience of Camara, as he himself has admitted.

The Brazilian episcopate is an exemplary one, and so it is not surprising that there have not been many priestly protest movements in Brazil. The top leadership has led the way, and the rest have followed. The lack of episcopal leadership in Argentina, on the other hand, explains why one of the major priestly movements in Latin America arose there: the movement of Priests for the Third World.[10] The history of the Church in the Argentinian nation has been very conformist. Rarely if ever has it broken new ground or played a prophetic role. But this priestly movement is truly something new and extraordinary in Argentina.

The beginning of this priestly group goes back to meetings that took place in 1965 and 1966. At them priests discussed Vatican 11's pastoral constitution on the Church in the World of Today (*Gaudium et spes*), and the message of eighteen bishops from the Third World. The press referred to the discussion group as "Priests for the Third World," and the name stuck when it officially organized in Cordoba, Argentina, on May 1, 1968.

The most important fact about this movement is that its Members are exploring new ways to live the priestly life. he secular priesthood is the ecclesial institution which is most severely affected by the difficulties of the present-day situation. Bishops and members of religious orders have a certain "internal" environment within the Church which

enables them, to a certain extent, to forget the outside world and its problems. The layman may suffer exclusion from the Church if he chooses to live his life in certain ways, but his life will still go on as before. The one who is caught in the middle is really the simple priest. He is a man of the Church, yet he is directly confronted with the world situation too. It is in connection with the institution of the priesthood that the most difficult problems have arisen during the course of Church history, and it is there that the most basic crisis is evident today.

In a strident article I van Illich has voiced the opinion that we shall soon see the end of the clerical state ("The Vanishing Clergyman," *Critic,* June-July 1967). His point is that within the context of what I have called "Christendom" the priesthood has been a profession similar to other accepted professions. But once Christianity separates itself from this cultural setting and prophetically confronts secular society, the clerical "profession" will no longer be a real possibility. The priest will have some other profession, but he will also officiate as a pastor of souls at the liturgy .The clerical *status* will disappear in the secular city, and indeed the process has been going on for some time already. It is evident among the priests who belong to the Argentinian movement, among priests in Peru who are part of the ONIS group, among the Golconda group in Colombia, and among the priests who were members of the Christians for Socialism movement in Chile. In all these groups we can see an attempt to explore and redefine the priesdy function in the Church and world of today.

The Roman Synod of 1971 discussed some secondary aspects of this w hole question. The question itself, however, will persist for some years to come because the priesdy institution is a central one. Only a solid theology of the ministry will be able to point out a pathway that is truly missionary and prophetic.

CHANGING STRUCTURES AND THE A TTITUDE OF THE LAITY

In this section and the next one I want to say something about the attitude of the laity towards events which have aken place in the last few years. Before I mention the whole question of Christian commitment in'the field of politics and social issues, however, I want to mention the matter of "basic communities" or "grass-roots communities" [*comunidades de base*] and people's varying attitudes towards them.

These "basic communities" are an invention of the Latin American Church. In reality they derive from the Movement for Basic Education (MEB) in Brazil. We have gradually come to discover the importance of a concrete community in which the faith of the Christian finds real affective ties. Such basic communities are now being discussed in Europe, and they may represent a major trend in the pastoral work of the future.

The individual living in urban Christendom is a lonely figure lost in a huge impersonal crowd. When he goes to Church, he often does not know the people on either side of him. There is no intermediary between the concrete individual and the impersonal Church. Something is needed to bridge the gap between the two, and that is what the "basic community" seeks to do. It is a small cominunity in which the participants render each other concrete help and thus empirically experience their fellowship with one another. The impersonal parish community at Sunday Mass is tq be transformed into a collection of many such basic communities.

In his small Brazilian diocese of Creteus, Bishop Antonio Fragoso has 150 basic communities in each of his ten parishes. They are the basis upon which parochial and diocesan life is built. Such concrete experiments and ex-

periences are testing grounds for the future. When the proper balance is found, they will be spread to the whole Church. We sometimes feel bewildered by the variety of seemingly atomistic experiments-thatwe hear of, but that is no cause for pessimism. It takes time to develop organisms that will meet the challenge of the historical moment. It is very much a matter of trial and error because there is no ready-made path set out before us.

Some people can only follow a road that has already been paved for them. Other people now realize that following Jesus entails something different. It is a response to one who calls us forth into the desert so that we may build a new future for his poor. That, at least, seems to be the fundamental aspect of the Christian vocation today.

Pastoral activity is not a set of ready-made formulas, telling us how to sing the liturgy or organize a community. It is basically an attitude-an attitude of faith, hope, and charity. If we wish to know how to act pastorally on a given day, we must open our eyes and ears to what is going on around us. Itisin the midstofreal-Iife events that we will hear God's summons. Our response to this call may result in a hundred abortive experiments. But one or two may work, providing a model for the immediate future. And the "basic communities" now operating in Latin America seem to offer promise for the future. They may prove to be one of the successful models we are now looking for.

CHRISTIAN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL COMMITMENT

Many Christians in Latin America switched from being political conservatives to being Christian Democrats. As we mentioned in an earlier chapter, the rise of Christian Democratic Parties was bound up with the overall effort to establish a "new" Christendom. Such parties were professedly "Christian." The problem is that while Christianity

can criticize a political system, it can never be identified with anyone political system. Whenlit is, we end up with some version of Christendom and all the ambiguity it entails.

A Christian can say that a given political party and its platform is more compatible with the Christian faith than any other concrete party. But he must be ready to change that opinion in a year or two if it no longer accords with the real situation. We must not eternalize temporal realities. There are two aspects involved here: the Christian faith and socio-political interpretation of the real-Iife situation. Let us see what has gone on in Latin America in certain Instances.

The notion of Christian Democratic political parties developed with such figures as Alside De Gasperi in Italy, Konrad Adenauer in West Germany, and Eduardo Frei in Chile. Where Christians were well organized, and where there were strong leftist groups in opposition, Christian Democratic parties have managed to win political power. In other countries, such as Argentina and Colombia, where populist groups tended to be centrist, Christian Democratic parties have never really won power. Today it seems unlikely that such parties will exert the same influence they once did, for many people now feel that they have failed to effect the social revolution they proclaimed. Many Christians are moving towards Marxism as a purely political and economic interpretation of reality. Following the line of thinking espoused by people like Louis Althusser, they feel that they can dissociate Marx's thinking as an economist and social observer from his anthropological and ontological underpinnings. In other words, they feel they can be Marxists in economics and Christians in their faith.

This feeling is open to serious question, I think. If one moves from *Das Kapital* to other writings of Marx-e. g., *Misère de la philosophie, Die deutsche ldeologie,* and the manuscripts of 1844-one finds that a whole anthropology, ontology, and theology underlie his economics. Marx is a

panontist, who affirms the totality as divine. This is a fact, it seems to me, and most critiques of Marx are superficial because they fail to take this into account.[11]

The implications of this basic fact are becoming clearer, I think. Some Christians in Chile left the Christian Democratic Party to form MAPU, a Marxist party of Christians. When a Cubfln visitor expressed delight at meeting Christian Marxists, the MAPU delegates insisted that in their political gatherings they were Marxists. The Cuban delegate then asked them why they did not join the Communist Party if that were the case. The MAPU members resisted that idea because somehow they also felt that they were Christians. It is the implicit contradiction in all this that has led some to leave MAPU and form MIC, a leftist but non-Marxist Christian political party. Here again, however, they have felt obliged to append the label "Christian" to their political party. To do this is, in my opinion, to use the Church as a tool for one's own political ends.

This is not to suggest that the Christian cannot be involved in efforts to implement socialism in Latin America. The whole question of socialism has been opened up once again by certain Latin American bishops: Ccindido Padim, Carlos Gonzalez, Helder Camara, Sergio Mendez Arceo, and so forth. They have pointed out that there can be a humanistic and Christian version of socialism. The bishops of Peru formulated a strong statement along these lines at their 1971 Synod: "Christians ought to opt for socialism. We do not mean a bureaucratic, totalitarian, or atheistic socialism; we mean a socialism that is both humanistic and Christian." Note that they say "ought to,"not "may," opt for socialism; four times in their statement they refer to the "desirability" of such an option today. In his recent letter to Cardinal Roy of Canada, Pope Paul VI noted that certain versions of socialism are incompatible with Christianity. It would seem, then, that some forms of socialism are compatible with Christianity. We have broken through the theoret-

ical knot that once tied up our thinking on this matter.

Back in 1850 "democracy" was a bad word in the Church. Men like Lammenais and Lacordaire were looked upon with disfavor for mentioning such things. Many churchmen came from upper-class families, and talk about democracy and the workingman's rights smacked too much of the French Revolution. Today we are far beyond that ontroversy, so much so that talk about Christian Democracy seems to be somewhat behind the times. In some circles the Christian Democrat is viewed as a member of the elite who wants to continue discredited "developmentalist" ideas and policies. We seem to be moving towards more serious consideration of socialism.

Some people, of course, may sharply disagree with what I am saying here. My main point, however, is the same one brought out by the Peruvian bishops: "The mission of the Church is to open people's minds and hearts to a consideration of the most pressing and urgent problems."

PRIVATE PROPERTY

Let us briefly consider the whole issue of private property as an example of the problems we now confront. You will hear people say that private property is a natural right, hence inviolable. The formulation is not correct, however, and Thomas Aquinas would shudder to hear it. To begin with, there is something that is the common possession of mankind. According to the oldest line of tradition in the Church, which would include the Fathers of the Church and people like Thomas Aquinas, the created universe is the common possession of all. This possession comes first, and Aquinas calls it a natural right. We are the stewards and administrators of the cosmos, possessing it in common. The stewardship is not private or exclusivist.

What are we to say about private possession? Saint Basil said that private property was the result of original sin. If

human beings had not committed sin, they would share everything with each other and live in a state of justice-without private property. Basil was a monk, and the monks lived a life in common as opposed to the system of private ownership that prevailed in civilized towns and cities.

According to Thomas Aquinas, private property is a *jus gentium,* not a *natural right.* The notion of the "right of peoples or nations" is discussed by a scholastic professor of Salamanca, the late Santiago Ramirez. He explains that private property is a *secondary* natural right. I have a *natural* right to those means and resources which are necessary if I am to achieve my end or goal. The end of man is happiness, and he has a right to those means which will enable him to attain that end: i. e., to food, clothing, shelter, education, and so forth. But what about those means that are not necessary? What about the second car, the second house, and so forth? I do not have a natural right to those things, because I do not need them to attain my end. This is the clear and unmistakable doctrine of Christian tradition. My power over secondary, non-necessary means is merely a positive right; it is not a natural right.

Consider for a moment the Amerindians living on the Argentinian *pampas* before these areas were incorporated into the present nation. Those Indians lived there by natural right because the land and its basic resources were necessary for them. Then General Roca came along, drove out the Indians with his army, and handed the land over to people living in Buenos Aires. Was his action peaceable and just? Who really had a right to those lands-the native Indians or his soldiers? Doesn't it seem clear that the Indians had a natural right to those lands, whereas the soldiers merely obtained a positive right to them?

When someone says that private property is inalienable, he may well be wrong. Private property held merely by *positive* right is not inalienable. Only what is necessary for

man's end is a *natural* right; all else is not. As medieval commentators put it: "In case of necessity, everything is common." And here we might well ask the same question that Thomas Melville asked: "If we are not dealing with a case of necessity in Latin America, where in the world can we talk about cases of necessity at all?"

The point is that we do not have to introduce innovations in doctrine here. We have traditions which go back to the Acts of the Apostles that can be applied to our present situation. In theory, then, there is no reason why we cannot contemplate the implementation of socialism. It may not be the best course. It may prove to be a failure. But speaking theologically, we can say that there is no legitimate objection to it in principle.

Some months ago I stressed this point at a meeting of Latin American bishops, and I stress it here today. I do not hink that Marxism should be identified with Latin American socialism. Socialism is very much a possibility for Christians on our continent, but it need not be Marxist.

NOTES

[1].See my article, "The Appointment of Bishops in the First Century of 'Patronage' in Latin America (1504-1620)," in *Concilium,* no.77 (New York: Herder, 1972), pp. 113-21.

[2].See *Temoignage Chretien,* July 31, 1966; English translation: "A letter to the Peoples of the Third World," in *Between Honesty and Hope* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Maryknoll Publications, 1970), pp. 3-12.

[3].For Paul VI's talks in Latin America see *The Pope SPeaks* Magazine (Washington, D.C.), 13:229-60.

[4].The documents of the Medellin Conference have been published in an official English edition: *The Church in the Present-Day Traniformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council,* edited by Louis Michael Colonnese, Latin American Division of United States Catholic Conference, Washington, D.C. Vol. I, Position Papers; Vol. II, Conclusions. The quote here is from the concluding document *on Justice,* no.3.

[5]. *lbid.,* concluding document on *Peace,* no.16.

[6].Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation,* Eng. trans. (N ew York: Orbis Books, 1973), pp. 21-42.

[7].See Jose de Broucker, *Dom Helder Camara: The Violence of a Peacemaker* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1970), pp. 101-02.

[8].See Enrique *Dussel, Historia de la Iglesia en Am'ericaLatina: Coloniaje y liberación* (1492-1972) (Barcelona: Nova Terra, 1972).

[9].See Alain Gheerbrant,L *'Eglise rebelle d'Am'erique Latine* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), pp. 237-67.

[10]. *Sacerdotes para el Tercer Mundo,* 3rd ed. (Buenos Aires: Edic. del. Movimiento, 1972); *Nuestra reflexion* (Buenos Aires: Edic. del Movimiento, 1970).

[11].See my book, *La dialectica hegeliana* (Mendoza: Ser y Tiempo, 1972). Another book on this general topic will soon be published: *La dialéctica de Karl Marx;* in it I shall try to explore and prove this thesis. See also Enrique Dussel, "El ateismo de los profetas y de Marx," in *Segunda semana de teologos argentinos* (Buenos Aires: Guadalupe, 1972).