

Theology of Liberation, Evangelization and Martial Law

THE QUESTIONS

There are three questions proposed for elucidation: "1. Our approach to evangelization and development. 2. Our approach to Martial Law. 3. Our approach to the theology of liberation." (From the letter of the CBCP's Secretary-General to the author)

THE FOCAL POINT

These questions are like the spokes of a wheel radiating from a common hub. That common hub, I take it, is the theology of liberation. Unless I am mistaken, it is this idea of liberation that determines the new concept of evangelization as development, and which also determines the opposition of certain people to the Martial Law regime.

On the other hand, "our" refers to the CBCP itself. Bishops' Conferences are bodies institutionalized by Vatican II. Although they have to be in communion with and subject to the Holy See, bishops are neither delegates nor vicars of the pope.¹ They receive the power by which they teach, sanctify and govern their portion of

¹ "Nor are they to be regarded as vicars of the Roman Pontiff." (*Lumen Gentium*, 27; Documents of Vatican II, ed. Walter M. Abbott, America Press, 1966, p. 52.)

the Universal Church directly from Christ the Lord.² Through the episcopal consecration Christ directly confers on the bishop the sacred power; but He gives it to them in the context of the hierarchical constitution of the Church ordained by Himself. Which is why the exercise of the episcopal power is conditioned by communion with, and subjection to, Peter's successor.³

Hence, bishops acting in their capacity as bishops, speak in the name of Christ and in the name of the Church. The institutionalization of Bishops' Conferences is the recognition of this truth. When the CBCP acts as a body, it commits and engages the Church.

These two considerations can be put together in the following terms: What is the nature of the liberation to which the Church, as such, is committed by her Founder, Christ Our Lord?

A CAPITAL DISTINCTION

However, the term as *such* can be taken in two senses, which are to be clearly distinguished. It is a truism that every Christian should always act *as such*, i.e., *as a Christian*. But to act *as a Christian* can mean two things: (1) that in anything he does the Christian must act *in consonance with* his Christian convictions, so that in whatever he does he must engage his Christian beliefs in such wise that the activity is animated by, and bears the stamp of, his Christian faith. (2) that the Christian engages in the activity *in virtue* of his being a Christian. Now, this is something altogether different. It is to say that being a Christian is what entitles or gives a man the right to perform the activity, or at least conditions the validity of the act.

To illustrate the distinction: when a Catholic exercises the right of suffrage, he votes as a Catholic in sense (1); but he does not and cannot vote as a Catholic in sense (2). He casts his

² "Bishops govern the particular churches entrusted to them as the vicars and ambassadors of Christ... This power, which they personally exercise *in Christ's name*, is proper, ordinary, and immediate..." (*Lumen Gentium*, 27, p. 51. Underscoring mine.)

³ "These [episcopal powers], however, *of their very nature*, can be exercised *only in hierarchical communion with the head and the members of the college*." (*Lumen Gentium*, 21, p. 41; underscoring mine)

ballot guided by and in accordance with his Catholic conscience. But he does not vote in virtue of being a Catholic; he votes in virtue of being a citizen. It is not his faith but his citizenship that confers on him the right of suffrage.

STATUS QUAESTIONIS

The question "What is the nature of the liberation to which the Church, *as such*, is committed by Christ?" is not to be understood in the broad sense of "What is the nature of the liberation to which the Church is committed *in accordance with* her institution by Christ?" It is to be understood in the strict sense of "What is the nature of the liberation to which the Church is committed *in virtue of* her institution or mission by Christ?"

To illustrate: the political sovereignty of the Holy See over Vatican City State is perfectly in accordance with the freedom in which Christ instituted His Church, altogether in accordance with the freedom inherent in the Papacy to govern Christ's Church. But the pope is not the sovereign of the Vatican *in virtue of* the Papacy, or *in virtue of* Christ's divine institution, as he is the Sovereign Pontiff *in virtue of* Our Lord's institution.

MEANINGS OF LIBERATION

Liberation is *freedom from*. The term is used to signify either the *state* of being free from, or the *process* or *action* of freeing from.

Freedom from necessarily refers to *evil*. Evil is not simply the negation of good; it is properly the *privation* of good.⁴ But the evil must be *perceived* as evil, i.e., there has to be an awareness that something in us or about us either prevents the presence and enjoyment of the good (state), or hinders us from obtaining the good (process). Since evil is a privation, its removal entails and requires the *possession* or *presence* of the good of which it is privation.

* "Malum distat et ab ente simpliciter, et non ente simpliciter; quia neque est sicut habitus neque sicut pura negatio, sed sicut privatio." (S. Theol., I, viii, 2, ad 1; also art. 3)

Thus, the three stages of liberation: (1) the term *a quo*, viz. the presence of a perceived evil. Where evil is present but not perceived there would not arise the urge of getting oneself rid of it. (2) the *process* of liberation or of removing the evil. (3) the term *ad quem*, which is the possession of presence of the good.

DIMENSIONS OF LIBERATION

There is a liberation that is *partial* or *particular* on either the level of the *body* or the level of the *spirit*.

On the level of the body we have, e.g., Roosevelt's famous four freedoms: freedom from hunger, from sickness, from poverty, from fear. In other words, freedom from insecurity, physical and economic. On the level of the spirit we have freedom from ignorance, from injustice (servitude, oppression), etc. It is on this level that we find the social and political freedoms.

Comparing the two levels, we find that the second is broader and more comprehensive than the first in two ways. (1) Quantitatively. One or two individuals can be poor, but this need not mean that there is social injustice in the land. On the other hand, if there is social injustice in the land, poverty will inevitably be the lot of a great many individuals. (2) Qualitatively. One man is poor, another hungry, a third sick, and a fourth in fear of his life. The poverty of one does not entail the hunger of the other, or the sickness of the third, or the fear of the fourth. But if oppression prevails in the country, there will eventually follow hunger and sickness and poverty and fear. These will not longer be isolated and unrelated cases. They all will be connected in one common root.

The fact that one evil can have a wider dimension than another entails that one liberation can be fuller than another. And eventually this brings the mind to consider a liberation that is not partial or particular but total or plenary or absolute. The ultimate liberation beyond which there is no other liberation. The idea or concept of partial liberation is immediately derived from the common everyday experience of the various evils besetting human life. We do experience hunger, fear, ignorance, oppression... The variety of evils plaguing our lives implies that these evils are

partial, and therefore their corresponding liberations are also partial.

But the concept of absolute or plenary liberation does not arise directly and immediately from experience, but from the metaphysical plumbing of the depths of *being* obscurely and confusedly intuited by human reason in the object of any concrete sensible experience. Only the intellect is capable of conceiving the *good as such*, the absolutely absolute good. Since the good is the *terminus ad quem* of the process of liberation, only the intellect can conceive of liberation in its absolute and total dimension. Hence it is that economists and statesmen qua economists and statesmen speak of partial liberations. Only philosophers and theologians qua philosophers and theologians speak of absolute and plenary liberation.

LIBERATION AS FULFILLMENT

The problem of liberation is usually stated from a negative viewpoint, as liberation from any form of evil. Stated in positive terms it is the problem of human *fulfillment*. Liberation from want is not achieved so long as the want is there, and the want will be there so long as it is not fulfilled. Fulfillment is the *terminus ad quem* of the liberating process. Seen from this angle, the problem and the question are posed on the anthropological plane but its plenary answer and definitive solution cannot be given except on the theological plane.⁵ The absolute good for which the human heart yearns irremediably and without which it cannot be plenarily fulfilled is found nowhere except in God.

The reality of positive and absolute liberation, thus, depends on the reality of God. Its possibility also depends on God. To affirm God is to reject the intrinsic absurdity of the world and of man; it is to affirm the intrinsic worth of both the world of nature and of human existence. It is to reject that the world of things and men is ruled by blind chance, and to affirm instead that the world is ruled by divine Providence, and the world of men, in particular, by divine Love — a Love which will not suffer the deepest aspirations implanted by that same Love in the human

⁵ Cf. S. Theol. I-II, ii, 8; iii, 8.

heart to end in frustration. At the same time, God seen as the plenary and absolute fulfillment of man preclude the mistake of proclaiming the affirmation of man himself as the road to fulfillment, and shows instead the necessity of opening the self to God by knowledge and love, and to all things insofar as they reflect God and lead to Him.⁶

BACKGROUND TO CHRISTIAN LIBERATION

To grasp the nature and scope of Christian liberation it is necessary to go back to the Garden of Paradise. For, as a task and process, liberation is the undertaking to free man from his present state in order to bring him to some future state of freedom from the ills which afflict him at present.

Now, the present state of mankind is a *fallen state*. The state from which he fell is one described as a state of *original*

⁶ The intrinsic dependence of plenary liberation, in the position sense of fulfillment, on God also appears negatively. Take God away and only two final outcomes become available. One is pessimism born out of the experience of human insignificance confronted with the vast, unfeeling, crushing mass of matter: either a pessimism disguised with a stiff upper lip — the Stoic variety —; or a pessimism openly wearing on its sleeve the pathos and *anost* of the helplessness — the Sartrean variety, "man is a useless passion."

The other is an optimism embodied in the myth of progress. This myth finds a relative and superficial warrant in the advance of science and technology. But its real roots are philosophical, to wit, evolutionistic monism either of an idealistic type (Hegel), or of a materialistic type (Marx). In Hegel, the Idea progressively returns to Itself in the human spirit; God is not yet, but will be. When in man It becomes fully conscious of Itself and of Its identity with all things, then God will come into being. In Marx, man progressively returns to matter. When all superstructures built by human ingenuity are finally recognized for what they are — mere expressions of the immanent dynamism of matter — then shall man, like earth's mythical child, finally return to mother earth, there to experience eternal rejuvenation in the everlasting embrace of, and harmony with, matter.

In the case of pessimism the centering of human fulfillment on God is made convincingly clear by the unutterable void created by his absence. In the case of optimism it is made clear by the substitute tin gods man is forced to create on which to anchor his optimism. Pessimism, of course, contains not even the shadow of liberation. It condemns man to anguish and despair, and the most man can do is to develop a sort of callosity to protect himself somewhat from the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," and when the going gets to be unbearable "his quietus make with a bare bodkin." The optimism, because it is actually groundless and false, raises hopes only to dash them eventually on the ground. Actually it does not liberate man, but enslaves him to his own paltriness in the case of Hegelian idealism, or to matter in the case of Marxism.

innocence. In that state there was perfect harmony between man and God. Man was subject to God, not as a slave to his lord, but as a child submits itself to its father by perfect love. There was also perfect harmony within man himself. His reason was filled with the knowledge of everything necessary or convenient for him to know for the guidance of his life and behaviour, nor was his reason subject to deception or error in such matters. His will was in perfect accord with the dictates of his reason. His emotions perfectly attuned to both will and reason. Since the roots of human dynamism lie proximately in the appetitive powers, and remotely in reason, the harmony between these principles effectively ensured the unity and peace within man himself. There was also complete harmony between the body and its physico-chemical energies on the one hand, and the *soul* and *spirit* of man, on the other hand.⁷ The body was a docile instrument for the tasks of right human living.

The state of original innocence was also a state of perfect harmony among men. Harmony does not necessarily mean equality. And granted that men are free agents, there would eventually have been differences among them owing to the variety of pursuits and occupations freely chosen by each individual and to the greater or lesser concentration and effort freely spent by each in his chosen pursuit. There would also have been political dominion of some over others — not a tyrannical or vicious dominion exercised for the benefit of the rulers, but a dominion exercised for the benefit of the subjects and the common good of the community, and thus a dominion founded on, and embodying, love, justice and service.⁸ In the political set-up of the state of original innocence there would have been no room for unjust structures of any sort.

Original innocence was also a state of perfect harmony between man and the world of nature both the animate — brute animals and plants —, and the inanimate. "In the state of innocence," says St. Thomas, "man dominated animals by command... On the other hand, he dominated plants and minerals not by command... but by making use of their help without any hindrance."⁹

⁷ *S. Theol.*, I, xcvi, 3.

⁸ *S. Theol.*, I, xcvi, 3 & 4.

⁹ *S. Theol.*, I, xcvi, 2.

Two things, however, must be firmly kept in mind. One is the fact that the *raison d'être*, the indispensable and unsubstitutable foundation for this happy state of innocence was none other than the supernatural grace of justification — hence the state of innocence is often known as the state of *justice* — and charity whereby, not only the persons of our first parents, but *human nature* itself in them as in its principle was elevated to the participation of divine life, and wholly oriented to God as to its first source and ultimate end.

This means — and this point deserves strong underscoring — that the harmony of man with himself, with his fellows, and with nature, is not the result of anything immanent in himself or in the world of nature. Hence, the state of liberation in which such universal harmony, unity and peace are to be restored, cannot be the outcome of laws immanent in human nature or in human history per se.

The other thing to be kept in mind is that, notwithstanding its great excellence, the state of innocence was not the final state of liberation, taking this term in the positive sense of plenary fulfillment. It was a state of test and trial; thus a transition state. If the test was successfully hurdled, then the state of original justice was to be not merely confirmed, but superated, transcended, plenarily consummated by the beatific vision, which is the ultimate fulfillment of both man and God Himself.

THE FALL

Inasmuch as it was not the final state, but one of test and trial, the state of original justice was by the same token a state of *defectibility*, in which it was possible for something to go wrong. This possibility lay basically in man's free will not yet confirmed in grace by the beatific vision.¹⁰

As a matter of fact our first parents sinned. Since the state of original justice was founded on the grace and charity of God in which Adam was created, the loss of grace and charity by sin entailed the forfeiture of all the preternatural gifts of that state.

¹⁰ *S. Theol.*, I, xciv, 1.

The light of reason, although not extinguished, was obscured. The will was infected and weakened by malice, and the lower emotions no longer submitted themselves readily to the will's behests. Pain and death came in on the tails of sin. And just as everyone turns away from and against the erstwhile favourite fallen in disgrace, so did nature turn against fallen man. Driven from Paradise into a Valley of Tears, man became an exile on the earth which until then had been his lovely garden.

THE REDEMPTION

Even as God pronounced sentence on the sinner, He enkindled in the outcast a ray of hope by promising him a Saviour who would redeem or liberate him from both sin and the miserable state into which he had fallen through sin.

The scope of this redemption is the full reinstatement of man in the final destiny for which God had created him. This destiny was conceived by God in His infinite wisdom and willed by Him in His infinite love. Nothing can in the end thwart God's wisdom and love. "The word of the Lord endures forever."¹¹ Man's infidelity does not by any means make void the fidelity of God, so that where sin abounded grace has abounded even more.¹²

But the order of liberation has been changed. Life on earth still is, as it was, a time of test and trial. But it is one thing to speak of testing in the state of innocence; it is another thing to speak of testing in the state of fallen nature.

In the state of original justice or innocence there was no sin, no relics of sin, no effects of sin, no infection of nature by sin. There was no evil in the proper sense of the term, in the sense of the privation of a good that was due. "And God saw all the things that He had made [man included], and they were very good."¹³ There was only, where man was concerned, the absence of plenary fulfillment, which was not yet due, and hence not properly evil. Thus, in the state of innocence there was no room for liberation in the proper sense of the term.

¹¹ *I Pet.* 1:25.

¹² *Rom.* 3:3 and 5:20.

¹³ *Gen.* 1:31.

Things are very different in the state of fallen nature. Here we find sin, viz. evil in the strict sense, and evil in the broader sense, i.e., the wounds or relics of sin, the effects of sin in the world of men, and the infection of nature by sin. These three are evil only in the sense that they are contrary to man's will, but not quite evil in the strict sense since they are *due* as temporal punishment for sin. They do deprive man of some good, but it is a good *no longer due* to man.

Here, then, we can speak of liberation in a proper sense, viz. the freeing of man from the evils of his fallen state, a liberation effected by the only-begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, the promised Saviour. The scope of Christ's liberation is not a restricted or partial one: it is man's plenary liberation from sin and all that sin introduced into this world. Christ delivered man from sin itself, from the relics and effects of sin, from the universal infection of God's creation by sin. It is for this reason that all things are made subject to Him by His Father.¹⁴

GRADUAL DELIVERANCE

This deliverance, in the divine economy of redemption, is not effected all at once but by stages and degrees. First of all, as the foundation of all subsequent deliverance, comes the liberation from the slavery of sin itself. This fundamental liberation is not of man's own doing. It is done by God through Jesus Christ without man. Although it is done not without man's consent, this consent is nonetheless an effect of grace.¹⁵

The liberation from the relics or wounds left by sin in *human nature* is done through Christ's grace and merits together with human diligence and effort. Ignorance is cured by studious consideration of the works of God and His law; malice and concupiscence by self-denial, the practice of virtue and docility to the Holy Spirit. Here we find all the toil of ascetical and mystical life. And yet, the wounds of sin cannot be totally eradicated in this life. "For a just man shall fall seven times and shall rise again."¹⁶ With the exception of Our Lord and Our Lady, the

¹⁴ *I Cor.* 15:26-28.

¹⁵ Conc. Trid., De Iustificatione can. 1 & 5; Denz.-Schön. 1525, 1551, 1554.

¹⁶ *Prov.* 24:16

greatest saints are all subject to venial sins. They are subject to the frailty of human nature caused by sin. Plenary liberation from the wounds of sin is not for this life, but for the life to come.

The effects of sin on the feelings, attitudes and behaviour of men among themselves, i.e., the effects of sin in the community of men, are vividly dramatized in the story of Cain and Abel. Cain began by envying his brother, next came competition, then hatred, finally murder. The story is repeated in the children of Jacob: envy that led to the plotting of the murder of Joseph whose life was barely saved at the last moment and only at the price of his being sold into slavery. In other words, the effects of sin in the community of men are: injustices, oppression, servitude, murder...

Christ came to liberate men also from these effects of sin. But — and once again it is of capital importance to keep this in mind — these effects will not be completely obliterated during the time of our testing. Why not? Because in the divine pedagogy they are part and parcel of our testing. God wants us to learn from our mistakes. He intends the temporal punishments due to sin to be not merely punishment, but also medicine and even occasions for greater merit and glory. "We exult in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation works out endurance, and endurance tried virtue, and tried virtue hope. And hope does not disappoint because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."¹⁷ Christ categorically affirmed that "the poor you have always with you."¹⁸ There always will be a Dives feasting every day in opulence, and there always will be a Lazarus starving beside the table of Dives, and there always be those who refuse Lazarus even the crumbs falling from the table, and there always will be dogs better treated than men. The distinction to be made at the end of the world between the sheep and the goats will be based on whether or not they fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, visited the sick and the imprisoned.¹⁹

¹⁷ *Rom.* 5:3-5.

¹⁸ *John* 12:8.

¹⁹ *Matt.* 25:34-46.

Satan is the father of lies and the first murderer.²⁰ Lies, deception, murder — i.e., the whole spectrum of injustice from the milder forms (lies) to the gravest (murder) — will exist among men so long as Satan holds sway over them. For his last temptation the devil took Christ to a mountain peak and showed him all the kingdoms of the earth. "All this power and their glory will I give you, if you will adore me!"²¹ Power, domination! The subtlest and at the same time the strongest of the seductions with which Satan inveigles human hearts. Up to when will Satan hold sway over men? Christ's answer is explicit in the parable of the wheat and the cockle. Upon sprouting, cockle was found mingled with the wheat. The landlord's servants wanted to weed out the cockle and leave only wheat. But he told them to let both wheat and cockle be until harvest time. Then will the time be to separate the wheat from the cockle. When Christ was asked by the disciples to interpret the parable, He explicitly identified the field as the world, and the harvest time as the end of the world when the Son of Man comes to deliver the final universal judgment and to cast away Satan and his cohorts forever. "So will it be at the end of the world. The Son of Man will send forth his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all scandals and those who work iniquity."²² Only then shall the inhumanity, the oppression and the exploitation of man by man definitively and totally come to an end.

Now, this is not to say that in the meantime we are merely to stand by with folded arms and let injustice and oppression have a free run. By no means. But it is to say that we are not to fall into the naive optimism that injustice and exploitation can be eliminated within history. The effort to eliminate exploitation begins within history, and ever greater advances towards its elimination can be achieved within history, but its elimination will come only at the end of history, not before. The elimination of the distinction between owners and dispossessed, exploiters and exploited is not and will not be a historical reality. It is an eschatological reality. Let us not forget that.

²⁰ *John* 8:44.

²¹ *Luke* 4:507.

²² *Matt.* 13:24-42.

Finally, the liberation of nature from the curse laid upon it on account of man's sin is not to be expected at this time of testing. Genesis makes it absolutely clear. "Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee... In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth..."²³ Thus, the curse upon physical creation will not be lifted until the final victory over death is achieved. St. Paul is also explicit on this point. "For the eager longing of creation awaits the revelation of the sons of God. For creation was made subject to vanity... in hope, because creation itself will also be delivered from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God. For we know that all creation groans and travails in pain until now. And not only it, but we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption of sons, the *redemption of our body*."²⁴

It is clear, then that the liberation by Christ is a *plenary* liberation. But it is also clear that this plenary liberation is not to be accomplished all at once. Indeed, it is not to be accomplished during the time of mankind's testing, but after the testing is through. Plenary liberation began with Christ and exists within history *in hope*, to be consummated *in fact* after the consummation of history.

HOW UTOPIAN IS UTOPIA?

The ideal of total liberation is Utopian in one sense, and not Utopian in another sense.²⁵

It is not Utopian in one sense because the state of original justice was such a state of freedom from all evil, and it was a

²³ Gen. 3:18-19.

²⁴ "For the eager longing of creation awaits the revelation of the sons of God. For creation was made subject to vanity... in hope, because creation itself will also be delivered from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God. For we know that all creation groans and travails in pain until now. And not only it, but we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption of sons, the redemption of our body." (Rom. 8:20-23).

²⁵ I am speaking of Utopia in the ordinary sense of the term, into in the special sense employed by Gutiérrez (*A Theology of Liberation*, English translation by Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson. Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1973, pp. 232-239). But I do mean to say that Utopia in his special sense, considered as historically conquerable, is utopian in the ordinary sense of the term.

historical fact at the beginning of mankind's history. Utopia can therefore in some sense be thought of as a "race memory" made dim with the passage of centuries, but never totally forgotten. However, the state of innocence was not a state of *pure nature*, but a state of nature perfected with supernatural and preternatural gifts. What is theologically called the *integrity of nature* is not strictly supernatural, but neither is it inherently required by human nature. It was a gratuitous gift, *preternatural* in character, but linked to, and conditioned by, the strictly *supernatural* gift of sanctifying grace.

But it would be Utopian to consider this total freedom from all evil as something inherent in, or demanded by, human nature. What is preternatural, although natural in essence, is not inherent or immanent in, or demanded by, nature. Otherwise there would be nothing *preternatural* about it. It could, however, be argued that the preternatural refers only to the gratuitous and instantaneous possession of such integrity by divine donation, without any human effort on our part; but this does not preclude the achievement of the same integrity through human effort and industry. Thus, at the beginning mankind existed in a state of integrity of nature handed to it on a silver platter by God, but it still is possible to recapture that same state of integrity through our own natural industry and determination. The answer to this is quite simple. What is quite within the natural capability of man who is fit and healthy, is not within the capability of the same man weakened and ravaged by disease. The present condition of mankind is not that of an intact nature, but of a *fallen* nature, i.e. of a nature made chronically invalid by sin. So long as human nature is diseased and ravaged by sin, so long will a state of integrity of nature elude its best efforts. But, sin and its effects can be healed only by Christ's grace. Hence, the theological conclusion is that the state of natural integrity is indissolubly linked to the divine economy of mankind's redemption by Christ.

As previously stated, the complete and definitive liberation from sin, its relics, and infection of nature, awaits the triumphant return of Christ as universal Judge of mankind and history. It is, consequently, Utopian to expect that this total liberation will be effected: (a) by the operation of the natural laws immanent in history, and (b) within the span of human history. To assert

it entails the rejection of the whole Christian viewpoint and economy of salvation. The two positions are inconsistent.

CHRISTIAN ESCHATOLOGY

The plenary liberation of mankind, the total freedom from injustice, oppression and exploitation is not obtainable in time, but at the end of, and beyond, time. In other words, it is not a historical but an eschatological conquest.

This is a good place to consider briefly the meaning of Christian eschatology. There are two fundamental errors to be avoided here. One is the error of those who draw a sharp and fast line, a separation between history and eschatology. In this view eschatology does not enter history at all, it is *totally outside history*. Eschatology belongs to the future, not to the future of history, but to a future outside history. Eschatology begins where history ends. Those who adopt this view naturally look at history with jaundiced eyes. The remedy to the evils of history is not within history, but outside history. Thus, they tend to dissociate themselves from history and historical effort, and remain passive onlookers as history marches by.

The other error is the diametrical opposite. It is the error who draw no distinction between history and eschatology, who identify eschatology with history, or at least with a division of history. History, thus, effectively swallows up eschatology. For a such people eschatology indeed belongs to the future, but it is the future of time and history, within — not outside — history, a future that will at some later time be a historical present. Thus, eschatology, although absent at this historical now, will be a historical present, a historical now. Consequently, eschatology is defined and bounded by the dimensions of time and history. People who take this view naturally look at history with bright, hopeful eyes. Psychologically, they are not likely to be fence-sitters or bystanders, but doers, makers of history.

Christian eschatology, as I see it, avoids both errors. It is the mean between these extremes. Christian eschatology is outside history, but not so totally outside that it does not also enter history. Christian eschatology enters history, exists within

history, but is not swallowed up in history so that it simultaneously transcends history. Christian eschatology, like its correlative Christian hope, is something of the present, given here and now. Sanctifying grace *in via* is essentially and substantially one and the same as sanctifying grace *in patria*. It is on that sanctifying grace, that participation of one and the same divine nature that Christian hope is grounded; it is from it that it draws its sustenance and its certainty. Thus Christian hope and eschatology are something of the present but looking towards the future. If, furthermore, grace is *life*, as it is, then grace is something dynamic in the present. And if grace is *divine* life, then it is divinely, i.e., infinitely dynamic.²⁶ As the parable of the talents tells us, divine grace is not something to be possessed statically, to be merely kept and buried, but something to be continuously put to good use and profit. And as the metaphors of the salt and the leaven instruct us, grace is a divine dynamism actually penetrating history and working internally in it.

All of which means that Christian eschatology and hope hold no brief for comfortable fence-sitting and onlooking, but require actively to be committed to the task of redemption and the process of liberation from sin and all its effects in the here and now. "What is lacking of the sufferings of Christ I fill up in my flesh for His body which is the Church."²⁷ But Christian hope also knows and understands that, no matter how much we advance the task of liberation, it cannot reach its plenitude and its definitive consummation in the here and now. Plenary and final liberation is reached only beyond time and history, in the "new heaven and earth" which God will create after the Judgment, when his angels will "gather out of his kingdom all scandals and those who work iniquity."

Thus, Christian eschatology and hope do not share the heady intoxication of those who envision a complete liberation just around the corner provided we heave and strain with sufficient determination. In one word, Christian eschatology and hope are optimist without being optimistic, active without being activist.

²⁶ "Non est impossibile apud Deum omne verbum." (Luke 1:37) "Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat." (Philip. 4:13) "Sufficit tibi gratia mea." 2 Cor. 12:9).

²⁷ Coloss. 1:24.

THE NEW THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION

The following synthesis is based on *A Theology of Liberation*, a book by Gustavo Gutiérrez, one of the best theorists of this new theology.²⁸

In the introduction the author begins by saying that it is "based on the Gospel and the experiences of men and women committed to the process of liberation in the oppressed and exploited land of Latin America."²⁹

In chapter 2, he introduces the fundamental distinction between three levels of liberation: (a) partial liberations viz. economic, social, political; (b) the philosophico-historical or Utopia; (c) the theological or Christian, viz. the liberation from sin and communion with God.³⁰

Of these three, the second level is central and determining in Gutiérrez' thought. It is described as having to do with a "much more integral and profound understanding of human existence and its *historical* future... a liberation from *all that limits or keeps man from self-fulfillment*, liberation from *all impediments to the exercise of his freedom*."³¹

The roots of the dynamism towards this liberation are to be found principally in Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Freud, down to Marcuse and Teilhard de Chardin. Here "the goal is not only better living conditions, a radical change of structures, a social revolution; it is much more: the continuous creation, never ending, of a new way to be man, a permanent cultural revolution... Teilhard de Chardin has remarked that man has taken hold of the reins of revolution. History, contrary to essentialist and static thinking, is not the development of potentialities preexistent in man; it is rather the conquest of new, qualitatively different ways

²⁸ English translation by Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson. Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1973. All quotations will be taken from this source. The Spanish original is entitled *Teología de la liberación, Perspectivas*, published by CEP, Lima, 1971.

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, Introduction, p. ix.

³⁰ *Op. cit.*, ch. 9, p. 176; ch. 11, p. 235.

³¹ *Op. cit.*, ch. 2, p. 27; underscoring mine. Two paragraphs later the author refers to this liberation as "*related to history as a conquest*." (*Ibid.*, p. 28; underscoring mine)

of being a man in order to achieve an ever more *total* and *complete* fulfillment of the individual in solidarity with all mankind."³²

In other words, liberation in the *philosophico-historical* sense aims at a *total* or *plenary liberation* of man. Speaking of the historical liberation movement in Latin America, Gutiérrez asserts that it "means more than overcoming economic, social and political dependence... It is to see man in search of a qualitatively different society in which he will be free from ALL servitude... It is to seek the building up of a *new man*."³³

Gutiérrez takes care, of course, to distinguish the theological or eschatological liberation from the philosophico-historical. "Sin appears as the fundamental alienation, the root of a situation of injustice and exploitation."³⁴ It is only through God's gift that man is liberated from sin. Similarly, "while liberation [second level] is implemented in liberating historical events, it also denounces their limitations and ambiguities, proclaims their fulfillment, and impels them effectively towards total communion... it is not *the* coming of the Kingdom, not *all* of salvation."³⁵

But when the chips are down, it is the intrahistorical liberation that emerges as the central and dominant factor. "It [sin] cannot be encountered in itself, but only in concrete instances, in particular alienations... Sin demands a radical liberation, which in turn necessarily implies a political liberation. Only by participating in the historical process of liberation will it be possible to show the fundamental alienation present in every partial alienation... The growth of the Kingdom is a process which occurs historically *in* liberation... Without liberating historical events, there would be no growth of the Kingdom."³⁶ "Our conversion to the Lord implies this conversion to the neighbor." From this correct theological premise Gutiérrez argues to the conclusion that "a spirituality of liberation will center [—note the word *center*—] on a conversion to the oppressed person, the exploited social class, the despised race, the dominated country."³⁷

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33; author's italics.

³³ *Op. cit.*, ch. 6, p. 91; author's italics, capitals mine.

³⁴ *Op. cit.*, ch. 9, p. 175.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 175-177.

³⁷ *Op. cit.*, ch. 10, pp. 204-205.

Note again the identification of the neighbor with the oppressed, to the seeming exclusion of everybody else. Given such premises, Gutiérrez then concludes: "Without a change in these structures [socio-economic, political, cultural], there is no authentic conversion... Only thus, and not through purely interior and spiritual attitudes, will the 'new man' arise from the ashes of the 'old'."³⁸

In short, the thrust of Gutiérrez thinking can be summarized in these four theses: (a) Apart from the eschatological liberation of mankind, there also exists an intrahistorical, immanent total liberation defined as "liberation from all that limits or keeps man from self-fulfillment," "freedom from all servitude." (b) The scientific understanding and description of the laws that govern this intrahistorical liberation and furnish us the key to the science of history have been given to us by Hegel and Marx. In them we find the stages whereby man achieves his intrahistorical liberation.³⁹ (c) *Vis-à-vis* this historical process and evolution, it is the Church's role and duty to take upon herself the historical process, denounce its limitations, and impel it forward to new heights. Therein consists the very meaning of Christianity, the essence of the Church's mission. "The theological meaning of liberation is, in truth, a question about the very meaning of Christianity and about the mission of the Church. ... Today the seriousness and scope of the process which we call liberation [second level] is such that *Christian faith* and *the Church* are being *radically challenged*. They are asked to show what significance they have for a human task which has reached adulthood."⁴⁰ "If we look more deeply into the question of the value of salvation which emerges from our understanding of history — that is, a liberating praxis — we see that at issue is a question concerning *the very meaning of Christianity*."⁴¹ We see here the Church's mission identified as theological salvation [third level]. Then that mission is radically defined by reference to the human task or process of liberation [second level]. Finally, this human task is defined by our understanding of history as provided, no doubt, by Marx.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

³⁹ "Basing his thought on these first intuitions, he went on to construct a *scientific understanding* of historical reality... Marx created categories which allowed for the elaboration of a *science of history*..." (*Op. cit.*, ch. 2, pp. 29-30; underscoring mine).

⁴⁰ *Op. cit.*, *Introd.*, p. xi; underscoring mine.

⁴¹ *Op. cit.*, ch. 3, p. 49; underscoring mine.

(d) Lastly, theology becomes a reflection on the historical praxis in order to capture the meaning and direction of the historical present with the view to pouring into it the entire resources and commitment of Christianity.⁴²

Gutiérrez indeed explicitly says that "the political is grafted into the eternal."⁴³ However, his book more likely leaves one with the impression of the contrary message: the eternal is grafted into the temporal and political.

Once this view of theology and of the meaning of Christianity is accepted, it eventually follows that the preaching of the Gospel or evangelization is reduced to the preaching of the historical liberation of mankind, viz.: (a) the denunciation of the structures; (b) the planning of their overthrow; (c) the actual overthrowing of the structures.

In the concrete situation of the Philippines it would mean in certain quarters: (a) the denunciation of the Martial Law regime; (b) the call for opposition to, or confrontation with, the regime; (c) underground activities, not excluding armed violence.

AN APPRAISAL OF THE NEW THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION

To begin with, the new theology has its merits. In the first place, it has grasped and internalized the great contemporary phenomenon of the Third World, its needs and aspirations. Simultaneously it has also felt intensely the imperative of Christianizing these needs and aspirations. In the 2nd place, it has rightly stressed the *dynamic* nature and the *social* dimension of justice, aspects that had been rather obscured by a casuistic morality. In the 3rd place, it has — as also others have — called attention to

⁴² "Theology must be man's critical reflection on himself, on his own basic principles... We also refer to a clear and critical attitude regarding economic and socio-cultural issues in the life and reflection of the Christian community... But above all, we intend this term to express the theory of a definite practice... The Christian community professes a 'faith which works through charity'. It is — at least ought to be — real charity, action and commitment to the service of man. Theology is reflection, a critical attitude. Theology *follows*; it is the second step... 'Instead of using only revelation and tradition as starting points, as classical theology has generally done, it must start with facts and questions derived from the world and from history.'" (*Op. cit.*, ch. 1, pp. 11-12; author's italics)

⁴³ *Op. cit.*, ch. 11, p. 232.

the fact that temporal and historical things also have an intrinsic value and are governed by their own proper laws. In the 4th place, in an era characterized by the violence of two World Wars, Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East, the two Chinas and the two Germanys, it has posed the question whether or not armed revolution might be justifiable, a question analogous to questions previously raised concerning the justice of war and the morality of tyrannicide. In the 5th place, it has correctly adverted to the fact that history has to have a meaning, and it has posed this problem in all its amplitude: the relationship between history and eternity.

However, it seems to me, that the answers it gives are vitiated through and through by an all-pervading ambiguousness and equivocation.

The equivocation starts with the very first lines: "This book is an attempt at reflection, based on the Gospel and the experiences of men and women committed to the process of liberation..."⁴⁴ Two questions immediately suggest themselves: (a) Are these two bases, the Gospel and human experiences, placed on equal footing? (b) Do we judge the human experiences by the Gospel, or do we modify the Gospel by the human experiences? No explicit answer is given, but perhaps a good hint appears in the last sentence of the same first paragraph: "Our greatest desire is not to betray their experiences and efforts to elucidate the meaning of their solidarity with the oppressed." And Gutiérrez immediately adds: "Our purpose is not to elaborate an ideology [or theology] to justify postures already taken."⁴⁵

I submit that the author here adopts an ambiguous, — not to say inconsistent — position. If his *greatest desire* is not to betray the experiences of these *committed* men and women, then the claim that he does not intend to elaborate an ideology (or theology) to justify postures already taken would seem to be a pretense. This pretense surfaces 143 pages later: "Any recourse to the Word of the Lord as well as all references to contemporary theology will be made with reference to this praxis." And in the corresponding footnote he explains: "...the reflections which follow do not add to these commitments to the process of liberation

⁴⁴ *Op. cit.*, Introd., p. ix.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. ix

which is under way in Latin America. On the contrary, *these commitments substantially and permanently nourish these reflections; moreover they constitute their arena of verification.*"⁴⁶

Gutiérrez is fond of saying that Christian praxis and experience is a *locus theologicus*, but seems to overlook two things. One is that the various *loci theologici* do not have equal weight. The other is that Christian praxis is a *locus theologicus* only so long as it conforms to the deposit of revelation as interpreted by the living Magisterium, and therefore only in so far as it is authenticated, at least tacitly or implicitly, by the Church's Magisterium. Otherwise, heretical and schismatic praxis would also be genuine *loci theologici*.

A second ambiguity and equivocation concerns the very nature of sacred theology. "The essential feature of St. Thomas Aquinas' work is that theology is an intellectual discipline, born of the meeting of faith and reason. From this point of view, therefore, it is more accurate to regard the theological task not as a science, but as rational knowledge."⁴⁷ The same ambiguity as in the first lines of the introduction: are faith and reason co-equal principles of theology? Gutiérrez here betrays two things: his superficial reading of Aquinas, and the ever-present, but never explicitly acknowledged, bias towards weighing the human element more than revelation. For Aquinas theology is rational only with respect to the *mode of knowing*, viz, through reasoning or deduction, which is the characteristic mode of knowing of the human mind. It is exactly this mode of deduction which makes sacred theology a science, since science is the knowledge of conclusions by means of deduction. But sacred theology with respect to its principles is rational neither as to its mode, since principles are not known through deduction but through simple understanding, nor as to the content or object of those principles, since the principles of sacred theology are the articles of faith disclosed through revelation and accepted by faith. Consequently, neither is the content or object of theological conclusions rational in nature for the

⁴⁶ *Op. cit.*, part 4, p. 143; footnote 1, p. 144; underscoring mine. It would appear to be highly symptomatic that all doctrinal theological references are of contemporary theologians. Earlier theologians are cited only as a matter of historical interest.

⁴⁷ *Op. cit.*, ch. 1, p. 5.

simple reason that, although the conclusions are derived *through* reasoning, they are nonetheless not derived *from* the natural principles of reason, but *from* the principles of faith. "Cum tota scientia virtute contineatur in principiis."⁴⁸ And "doctrina sacra credit principia revelata sibi a Deo."⁴⁹

CONSEQUENCES OF THE EQUIVOCATION

The characterization of theology as rational knowledge without proper distinctions explains why "theology must be man's critical reflection on himself, on his own basic principles."⁵⁰ Gutiérrez quotes Rahner with approval: "Dogmatic theology has to be theological anthropology, and . . . such anthropocentric orientation is both necessary and fruitful."⁵¹ Let us observe, in passing, the confusion of thought evidenced by Rahner in passing from "Theological anthropology" to anthropocentric orientation of theology." We can legitimately speak of a theological anthropology since God has in fact revealed many things concerning man, his nature and destiny. But an anthropocentric theology is a contradiction in terms. Gutiérrez also quotes Barth: "Man is the measure of all things, since God became man"⁵² and forgets the pointed reminder that effectively obliterates all anthropocentrism from the Incarnation.

Apropos this Barthian text Gutiérrez confidently proclaims: "There is no *horizontalism* in this approach."⁵³ But logic will out. Not too many pages later he writes: "Human reason has become political reason. . . . The construction — from its economic bases — of the 'polis' . . . is the universal determinant and the collective for human fulfillment. [This statement is of the purest Marxian pedigree] Only within this broad meaning of the political sphere can we situate the more precise notion of 'politics', as an orientation to power. . . . The concrete forms taken on by this quest for and exercise of political power are varied. But they are all based

⁴⁸ "Doctrina sacra credit principia revelata sibi a Deo." (*S. Theol.*, I, i, 2) "... ex principiis huius scientiae, quae sunt articuli fidei." (*Ibid.*, art. 7)

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, art. 7.

⁵⁰ *A Theology of Liberation*, ch. 1, p. 11.

⁵¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 17, footnote 23.

⁵² *Op. cit.*, ch. 1, p. 7.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 8, author's italics.

on the profound aspiration of man, who wants to take hold of the reins of his own life and be the artisan of his own destiny. Nothing lies outside the political sphere understood in this way. Everything has a political color. It is *always in the political fabric — and never outside of it — that a person emerges as a free and responsible being*, as a person in relationship with other people, as someone who takes on historical task.”⁵⁴ If Gutiérrez means what he says, he denies the worth of the individual since it is impossible for the individual as such to be a person. It is even impossible for the individual to respond freely to God. Response to God is essentially and necessarily mediated thru the polls. God then, can never be encountered except in the political society. The building of the Kingdom of God is the building of the City of Man. If this is not horizontalism, one that even flattens and pulls God down, I wonder what it is.

The ambiguity of the characterization of sacred theology as rational knowledge, which allows and leads to the anthropocentrism of theology, naturally places socio-political history at the very center of theology. When theology is reduced to human reason, and “human reason becomes political reason,” then the history of salvation becomes political history. There naturally follows a “crisis of the distinction of planes model”, to which Gutiérrez devotes all of chapter 5. Vatican II’s “integral vocation” and *Populorum Progressio*’s “integral development” are then taken to mean “that the frontiers between the life of faith and temporal works, between Church and world, become more fluid... Some even ask if they are really two different things...”⁵⁵ “Since God has become man, humanity, every man, *history*, is the living temple of God. The ‘pro-fane’, that which is located outside the temple, no longer exists... If humanity, each man, is the living temple of God, we meet God in our encounter with men; we encounter him in the commitment to the *historical process* of mankind.”⁵⁶

If salvation history becomes political history, and the scientific understanding of political history and of its laws has been revealed by Marx, then Christian brotherhood and Christian love “becomes concrete and effective by becoming incarnate in the struggle for

⁵⁴ *Op. cit.*, ch. 3, p. 47; underscoring mine.

⁵⁵ *Op. cit.*, ch. 5, p. 72.

⁵⁶ *Op. cit.*, ch. 10, p. 194; underscoring mine.

the liberation of the oppressed... Our love is not authentic if it does not take the path of class solidarity and social struggle. To participate in class struggle not only is not opposed to universal love; this commitment is today the necessary and inescapable means of making this love concrete. For this participation is what leads to a classless society without owners and dispossessed, without oppressors and oppressed."⁵⁷

All this, of course, tends to obscure — not to say, deny — the distinction between the natural and the supernatural. "The temporal-spiritual and profane-sacred antithesis are based on the natural-supernatural distinction. But the theological evolution of this last term has tended to stress the unity which eliminates all dualism."⁵⁸ Gutiérrez even quotes Paul VI for this view. The quotation is rather long but deserves to be quoted in full because it makes clear the lengths to which Gutiérrez is driven by his premises.

"Populorum Progressio goes a step further. Integral development is regarded as the change from less human to more human living conditions; 'Less human conditions first affect those who are so poor as to lack the minimum essentials for life; ... then they affect those who are oppressed by social structures which have been created by abuses of ownership or by abuses of power, by the exploitation of the workers or by unfair business deals.' This subhuman condition is characterized by sin and injustice. It is necessary to rise gradually from this position toward a more human state of things: 'More human conditions of life clearly imply passage from want to the possession of necessities, overcoming social evils, increase of knowledge and acquisition of culture. Other more human conditions are increased esteem for the dignity of others, a turning toward the spirit of poverty, cooperation for the common good, and the will for peace. Then comes the acknowledgment by man of supreme values and of God, their source and finality.' Then comes the most important text, expressed in new terms: 'Finally, and above all, are faith, a gift of God accepted by man's good-will, and unity in the charity of Christ, who calls us all to share as sons in the life of the living God, the Father of all men' (no. 21). 'More human... finally, and above all,' —

⁵⁷ *Op. cit.*, ch. 12, p. 276.

⁵⁸ *Op. cit.*, ch. 5, p. 69.

not superhuman or supernatural. This is a fuller idea of what is human, the reaffirmation of the single vocation to the grace of communion with God. This is why there is no solution based on a continuity between what is 'natural' and grace; rather there is a profound integration and an ordering toward the fullness of all that is human in the free gift of the self-communication of God."⁵⁹

It is rather obvious that Gutiérrez has chosen to twist the last statement of Paul VI giving it a naturalist meaning and dimension. There also is in this interpretation an equivocation of the term *fully human*. There is, indeed, a sense in which sanctifying grace and the beatific vision are the fullness of man. Aquinas — whom Gutiérrez sees only as a stage in the theological evolution leading to the elimination of the dualism natural-supernatural — stressed the profound aspiration, the innate desire of the human soul to see God. True. But Aquinas also stressed the fact that this was not an active capacity, not even a natural capacity in the strict sense.⁶⁰ It is merely an *obediential* capacity, which is defined as the readiness of the creature to receive from God anything that is not inconsistent with its own nature. This is the only sense in which divine grace can be said to be *natural*, viz., in the sense that it is in accordance with nature, but never in the sense that man has it in virtue of, or because it is demanded by nature. This is the absolute line of demarcation, which may not be transgressed under pain of confusing the natural and the supernatural. The "recovery of the *historical* and *existential* viewpoint"⁶¹ does not invalidate the distinction nor does it introduce any confusion, except in minds already confused. From this existential viewpoint, "devoid of supernatural life, man is nevertheless oriented to it by necessity."⁶² True. But this necessary orientation is not in virtue of his human nature, but in virtue of the fact that human nature has *ab initio* been gratuitously elevated to the supernatural order. The supernatural becomes "natural" and "a necessity" to supernaturally elevated man. Elementary.

Gutiérrez does have trouble, as was to be expected, fitting his conception of human history with Christian eschatology.

⁵⁹ *Op. cit.*, ch. 9, p. 172.

⁶⁰ *S. Theol.*, I-II, v. 5

⁶¹ *A Theology of Liberation*, ch. 5, p. 70.

⁶² *Ibid.*

"*Temporal progress* — or, to avoid this aseptic term, the liberation of man — and the *growth of the Kingdom* both are directed toward complete communion of men with God and of men among themselves. They have the same goal, but they do not follow parallel roads, not even convergent ones."⁶³ If they have the same goal, and do not reach it by either parallel or convergent roads, the inevitable conclusion is that they reach it by the *same* road: they are identical. But Vatican II says unambiguously that "earthly progress must be carefully distinguished from the growth of Christ's kingdom."⁶⁴ And so Gutiérrez says: "This is not an identification," Why not? Because "we can say that the historical, political liberating event *is* the growth of the Kingdom and *is* a salvific event; but it is not *the* coming of the Kingdom, not *all* of salvation."⁶⁵ Two chapters later he explains: "It [Christian hope] keeps us from any, confusion of the Kingdom with any one historical stage, from any idolatry toward unavoidably ambiguous human achievement, from any absolutizing of revolution."⁶⁶ All this simply means that the Kingdom cannot be confused with any one *particular* stage of history, that it bursts through *any one phase* of history. But does it burst through the *whole* of history? Or does it take place *in history* considered as a whole? Gutiérrez answer follows: "The eschatological promises are being fulfilled throughout history, but this does not mean that they can be identified clearly and completely with one or another social reality; their liberating effect goes far beyond the foreseeable and opens up new and unsuspected possibilities. The complete encounter with the Lord will mark an end to history, but *it will take place in history*."⁶⁷

I might add that this last sentence clearly contains the two strains of thought in Gutiérrez' thinking: the Christian, which leads him to say that the complete encounter with the Lord will mark an end to history, and the Marxian, which impels him to modify and correct the Christian strain: "but" — not the *adversative* conjunction — "it will take place in history." Needless to say, the two parts of the statement are inconsistent. History is

⁶³ *Op. cit.*, ch. 9, p. 177.

⁶⁴ *Gaudium et Spes*, 39, p. 237.

⁶⁵ *Op. cit.*, ch. 9, p. 177.

⁶⁶ *Op. cit.*, ch. 11, p. 238.

⁶⁷ *Op. cit.*, ch. 9, 9, p. 168; underscoring mine.

a process, more so in the Hegel-Marx tradition. The completion is not part of the process. It is the *term* of the process: not intrinsic, but *extrinsic* to the process. *Factum est, become* is no intrinsic part of *fieri, becoming*. To say then that the complete encounter with the Lord will take place in history is to say that the encounter with the Lord will never be complete. Is Gutiérrez aware of what his assertion entails? If he is, he is implicitly denying Christian hope and faith. If he is not, it shows a glib lack of penetration.

Earlier I said that of the three levels of liberation distinguished by Gutiérrez, the second — viz., the philosophico-historical was central and decisive. His flat assertion that the complete encounter with the Lord will take place in history provides final, conclusive, and explicit proof.

This historicist view of the Kingdom becomes more and more apparent as Gutiérrez develops its implications. "There is more than one indication that 'that community called Church' — to use the expression of Juan Luis Segundo — has a persistent life. But this will be so only if there is a *substantial transformation*."⁶⁸ Substantial transformation in what? In the deposit of the faith? In the divine-apostolic institutions? That would be heresy pure and simple.⁶⁹ Or is it in merely disciplinary matters? In the field of mere discipline it is possible to have substantial transformation. But the theology of liberation as mentioned earlier, aims at more than just matters of discipline. It aims at fundamental matters, at matters that affect the very meaning of Christianity and the mission of the Church.

Equivocation is bound to trap one eventually in inconsistencies. Gutiérrez is no exception. "Sin... is according to the Bible the ultimate cause of poverty, injustice, and the oppression in which men live... It suggests, likewise [what? no more than suggest?], that a social transformation, no matter how radical it may, does

⁶⁸ *Op. cit.*, sec. 2, p. 252; underscoring mine.

⁶⁹ Pius IX's *Syllabus* condemns the following proposition: "Divina revelatio est imperfecta et idcirco subiecta continuo et indefinito progressui, qui humanae rationis progressui respondeat." (Denz.-Schön. 2095). And Vatican I: "Si quis dixerit, fieri posse, ut dogmatibus ab Ecclesia propositis aliquando secundum progressum scientiae sensus tribuendus sit alius ab eo, quem intellexit et intelligit Ecclesia; A.S." (Denz.-Schön. 3043).

not automatically achieve the suppression of all evils."⁷⁰ Seven pages later he seems to have forgotten what he had just written. "To support the social revolution means to abolish the present status quo and to attempt to replace it with a qualitatively different one; it means to build a just society based on *new relationships of production*; . . ."⁷¹ No mention at all of the internal healing of sin by the grace of God. The only thing mentioned as the basis of justice is simply the grace of Marx, i.e. the new relationships of production. Seek ye this first, and all the rest shall be added unto you.

How is this amazing about face accomplished? Conversion, it appears, is a change of structures effected by the grace of social revolution. "Without a change in these structures there is no authentic conversion."⁷² Why? "Because communion with God and others presupposes the abolition of all injustice and exploitation."⁷³ Notice that the abolition of unjust structures is no longer the result but the prerequisite — not to say the cause — of communion with God. Thus, the People of God, the Church, becomes identical existentially and historically with the "classless society without owners and dispossessed, without oppressors and oppressed."⁷⁴ Now, if this contention were true, the primitive Apostolic Church could not have been Christ's true Church. In the primitive Church there were rich and poor, owners and dispossessed; worse still, there were masters and slaves. It was by no means a classless society without oppressors and oppressed. Yet, we do not find the Apostles preaching social revolution, urging the slaves to rise against their masters, the poor and dispossessed against the owners and the rich. If in the Church of Jerusalem we find the rich divesting themselves of their wealth in favour of the poor, it was done voluntarily as a result of inner conversion; it was not demanded as a prerequisite for conversion and acceptance into the communion of Baptism and the Eucharist. St. Paul, the preacher of the freedom of all men in Christ, returned the Christian run-away slave Onesimus to his Christian master Philemon, not with the command to manumit Onesimus from slavery,

⁷⁰ *Op. cit.*, ch. 2, p. 35.

⁷¹ *Op. cit.*, ch. 3, p. 48, underscoring mine.

⁷² *Op. cit.*, ch. 10, p. 205.

⁷³ *Op. cit.*, ch. 12, p. 263.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

but with the plea to receive him as a brother in Christ. In terms of the new theology of liberation we would have to brand the Apostles as traitors to, or at least as ignorant of, their faith and mission. Or, we would have to say that this is one of those points in which a "substantial transformation" is necessary. More likely it is the new theologians who, mesmerized by the Marxian Utopia, have missed the point.

Christian brotherhood is a communion with God and with other men. True. But this communion is essentially based not on new relationships of production, but on the participation of God's divine nature through sanctifying grace merited for us by Christ. It is tragic that those two words *sanctifying grace*, and the whole idea of *participation of the divine nature*, are conspicuously absent from Gutiérrez's book. He prefers to use the more neutral, and therefore more maneuverable, term *gift*. Let us state it clearly and unambiguously: man is made a child of God by the gratuitous infusion of supernatural sanctifying grace into his soul. It is sanctifying grace alone, in virtue of its being a participation of God's own transcendent nature, that lifts men above all temporal inequalities and unites them in a communion of saints despite their various stations in life. Grace is not meant to remain purely in the interior of man's heart. It is meant to fructify in his behaviour and to permeate all the dimensions of that behaviour. But let us not forget what the parable tells us: the seed of grace can be trampled under foot; it can be devoured by the birds of the air; it might fall on stony ground, sprout and wither away; it can be choked by thorns and weeds. Even if it should fall on good ground it does not bear equal fruit: some will bear only thirty, others sixty, others a hundredfold.⁷⁵ No doubt the grace of God is dynamic, but its dynamics is neither Hegelian nor Marxian dialectics. To use it to fuel either kind of dialectics seems to me a blasphemy. Grace on earth is the grace of the wayfarer, not the grace of the blessed. That is, it heals man from sin, but does not stabilize him in the orientation toward, and the pursuit of, the good. In short, sanctifying grace does not work moral miracles overnight.

⁷⁵ Mark 4:1-20.

But let us take a closer look at the confusion underlying the fundamental conclusion of the new theology of liberation. Gutiérrez states it succinctly in the following terms: "Sin is evident in oppressive structures, in the exploitation of man by man, in the domination and slavery of peoples, races, and social classes. Sin appears, therefore, as the fundamental alienation, the root of a situation of injustice and exploitation. It cannot be encountered in itself, but only in concrete instances, in particular alienations. It is impossible to understand the concrete manifestations without understanding the underlying basis and viceversa. Sin demands a radical liberation, which in turn necessarily implies a political liberation."⁷⁶

To perceive clearly the nature of the argumentation, let us recast it in bare logical form and sequence:

- (1) Sin is the fundamental alienation, the root of all evil and injustice and exploitation.
- (2) Sin is evident in oppressive structures.
- (3) Oppressive structures are the root of all evil, injustice, and exploitation.
- (4) Liberation from oppressive structures is liberation from sin.
- (5) Liberation from oppressive structures is radical liberation.
- (6) In other words, socio-political liberation is radical liberation.
- (7) Liberation by Christ is the radical liberation.
- (8) Christian liberation is socio-political liberation.
- (9) "Without a change in structures there is no true conversion."

The argumentation is convincing to anyone who is unaware of the equivocation running rampant through it all and turning it into a piece of pseudo-theology.

(1) When in theology we say that sin is the fundamental alienation, we are speaking of sin *formally*, as the *aversio a Deo*. Sin in this *formal* sense is the root of all evil: moral and physical, individual and social. Genesis bears witness to it.

⁷⁶ *Op. cit.*, ch. 9, pp. 175-176.

(2) When in the next breath it is said that sin is evident in oppressive structures, sin is no longer taken in its formal sense, as the aversio of the individual person *a Deo*. The term *sin* is now taken to name the *external effects* of a will and behavior turned away from God. We could call this sin in an *objective* and *material* sense.

(3) Hence, when it is said that oppressive structures are the root of all evil, etc., the phrase *root of all evil* does not have the same sense as in (1). Sin in the subjective and formal sense is the *primary* root of all evil, or the root of all evil *simpliciter*. On the other hand, oppressive structures are only the *secondary* root, or the root *secundum quid* of evil, in as much as an effect can be followed by other effects.

(4) Therefore, liberation from oppressive structures is liberation from sin is true only of sin in the *objective* and *material* sense of (2). But it is not true of sin in the *subjective* and *formal* sense of (1).

(5) and (6) Thus, socio-political liberation from oppressive structures is radical liberation is true only if the term radical is taken in a *secondary* sense and *secundum quid*, but false if understood of liberation that is radical in a *primary* sense and *simpliciter*.

(7) Liberation by Christ is the radical liberation. Liberation by Christ is essentially and foremost liberation from sin in its *subjective* and *formal* sense. Sanctifying grace infused through Christ's merits effects formally man's *conversio ad Deum*. Christ's liberation is therefore, radical liberation *simpliciter* and *primarily*. It is also, consequently, liberation from the effects of sin. But this secondary liberation is not effected on a par with the primary liberation from formal sin. It is effected in the order and the manner determined in the divine economy of redemption, which, as the parable of the cockle gives to understand, allows for both the cockle and the wheat to grow together in the field of this world until their separation is effected on Judgment Day.

(8) Therefore, Christian liberation is socio-political liberation. *Simpliciter* false. Although it is true that Christian principles extend their efficaciousness even to the socio-political area, still the renovation of the socio-political order is not the *direct*

objective of Christ's mission. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and all the rest shall be added unto you." Liberation theologians seem to think contrariwise. Seek ye first the city of earth and the Kingdom of God shall be added unto you.

(9) Without a change in structures there is no true conversion. This is such an equivocal and ambiguous statement that several distinctions are called for. The change can refer to the *external order* of structures or to the *internal order* of the will. And the will can be either *my* will or the will of *others*. Conversion, of course, is taken theologically to mean formally the *conversio ad Deum* through the grace of justification. a) If the proposition is taken to mean that the *conversio ad Deum* is formally the *actual* change of *external structures*, the absurdity of the proposition is immediately obvious. b) It is equally false to say that an *actual* change in *external structures* is in *every case* a *pre-requisite* to the *infusion of sanctifying grace* which formally *converts man to God*. c) The statement is true in any of the following cases: (i) in the case where the external unjust structures are *willed by me*, there can be no true conversion and justification without *my ceasing to will* such unjust structures. (ii) In the case where the external unjust structures are *willed by me*, my conversion also entails the will *actually to change* the *external structures* in so far as such change is possible to and dependent on me. Such a will must, of course, be an *efficacious* will. (iii) In the case where the unjust external structures are not willed by me but *by others*, my continuing in the state of grace entails *my readiness of will actually* to change or to help change the structures as prudence, justice, and charity may require of me.

It should be clear that there is throughout a persistent equivocation between sin itself, ie., sin in its internal and formal aspect, and the external effect or consequences of sin. Both are signified by the one term *sin*. Consistently, there is a persistent equivocation between liberation from sin understood internal and formally, and liberation from sin understood externally, materially, and objectively. Again one term is used, *radical liberation*. In consequence there also is a persistent equivocation between changing the internal order or structure of the will, and the external order or structure of things or of behavior. One term is again employed, *conversion*.

Only such equivocations enable one to speak of Christian liberation as equivalent to political liberation; of conversion from sin as equivalent to change of social structures; of liberation from sin as equivalent to class struggle; of the communion of the People of God as equivalent to solidarity of men in a classless society free from owners and dispossessed from exploiters and exploited. But such equivocations do not make for theological wisdom but for theological sophistry, not for genuine theology but for pseudo-theology.

Earlier, commenting on the opening lines of Gutiérrez' introduction, I asked two questions: Are the Gospel and the human experiences, on which he claims to base his reflections, placed on equal footing? Are the human experiences judged by the Gospel, or is the Gospel judged and modified by the human experiences? The answers ought to be clear by now. The Gospel and the human experiences are not placed on equal footing. The human experiences are not judged by the Gospel, but the Gospel is modified by the human experiences. Gutiérrez does not, as he claims, follow Vatican II's bidding to scrutinize the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the Gospel. What he does is to scrutinize the Gospel and interpret it in the light of the signs of the times. He has kept faith with his greatest desire not to betray the experiences of the men and women committed to the process of liberation in Latin America, but in so doing, I am not so sure that he has succeeded in keeping faith with the Faith itself.

EVANGELIZATION

By evangelization is meant not only the sowing of the Gospel message, but also the tending of it to ensure its growth and fruit bearing. Evangelization seeks not only to proclaim the "new man" but to transform the "old man" into the "new man" in Christ. It is not only the preaching of Christ, but the formation of Christ in the *whole* man, so that each one can truly say: "It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me."⁷⁷ He lives in my personal individual life, in my business, in my community, in my

⁷⁷ Galat. 2:20.

country, on my earth — the same Christ who “pertransiit benefaciendo”⁷⁸ and who “omnia bene fecit.”⁷⁹

Evangelization is carried out on both the individual and the social levels. On the former level, the object is the individual person who may be either a non-Catholic, or a fallen away Catholic, or a practising Catholic. In the first two cases the term *mission* is used, and its direct purpose is the conversion of the individual. The third case has no special name except the general term *pastoral care*, and its direct purpose is the strengthening and maturing of the life of grace in the individual.

On the social level, evangelization may mean the establishment of the Church in non-Catholic territory — mission —; or the promotion and full development of the ecclesial community — pastoral care. Or it may mean the christianization of the civil community — the apostolate of the social milieu.

THE “NEW EVANGELIZATION”

The new theology of liberation has serious consequences on the notion and conduct of evangelization.

We have just seen that the “complete encounter with Christ will take place in history.” The logical conclusion from this premise is that the historical sphere is the paramount, proper, direct, if not the exclusive sphere of evangelization and apostolate. This leads directly to the further conclusion that the historical task is the paradigm, the very core of evangelization. “Without a change in structures there is no true conversion.” To convert to Christ is to change structures. Now, what is the proper historical task of the 20th century? This is revealed in the gospel according to Marx as the establishment of the classless society through class struggle. Therefore, a final conclusion: participation in the class struggle is the style of evangelization and apostolate proper of the present times; everything else is passé. “To build a just society today necessarily implies the active and conscious participation in the class struggle that is occurring before

⁷⁸ *Acts* 10:38.

⁷⁹ *Mark* 7:37.

our eyes... We must see clearly that to deny the fact of class struggle is really to put oneself on the side of the dominant sectors... When the Church rejects the class struggle, it is objectively operating as a part of the prevailing system."⁸⁰

Gutiérrez, it is obvious, fails to take into account the supernatural, and thus transcendent, nature of the Church and of her mission. It is only a Church immersed and immanent in history that cannot escape the dialectic of class struggle. But if the Church is transcendent, as she is, then she is not caught in the dialectic, she is beyond and above it and judges it in the name of Christ.

CONSCIENTIZATION

The same Marxian inspiration is apparent in Freire's conscientization. If evangelization aims to convert the sinner, it is to be addressed to the sinner to make him conscious of his sin, to call him to repentance and to the grace of God that beckons to him. *True* repentance and inner conversion of the will, in turn, have as their necessary consequence the external reparation of the evil done. Conscientization, thus, ought to be properly addressed to the evil doer, the oppressor.

Strangely enough, conscientization is not to be addressed to the oppressor; it is to be mainly, if not exclusively, a pedagogy of the oppressed in order to make them conscious of their state of oppression and to impel them to rise against it. "Consequently, the Church feels compelled to address itself directly to the oppressed — instead of appealing to the oppressors — calling on them to assume control of their own destiny, committing itself to support their demands, giving them an opportunity to express these demands, and even articulating them itself."⁸¹ This sleight of mind is possible again by equivocating on the meaning of sin.

The equivocation is clearly seen in the following passage: "Universal love is that which in solidarity with the oppressed seeks also to liberate the oppressors from their own power, from

⁸⁰ *A Theology of Liberation*, ch. 12, pp. 274-275.

⁸¹ *Op. cit.*, ch. 7, p. 114. See also ch. 6, pp. 91-92.

their ambition, and from their selfishness: 'Love for those who live in a condition of objective sin demands that we struggle to liberate them from it. The liberation of the poor and the liberation of the rich is achieved simultaneously.'"⁸² Ambition and selfishness are clearly sinful in their formal and subjective sense; but the sin of the poor is not sin in the formal and subjective sense, but "a condition of *objective* sin". The simultaneous liberation of the poor and the rich is inconceivable unless sin in both cases is understood *objectively* in terms of oppressive structures of power, ambition, and selfishness. Such a description of sin obviously leaves the poor lily-white and spotless subjectively, while the rich are damned both subjectively and objectively. Now, of course, it is naive to think that the poor and oppressed are free from subjective ambition, selfishness and lust for power; just as it is equally naive to assert that by liberating the rich from their objective structures of power and selfishness they are ipso facto liberated from subjective ambition and selfishness.

THE DYNAMIC OF SOCIAL ACTION: HATE vs. LOVE

Gutiérrez continues: "One loves the oppressors by liberating them from their inhuman condition [objective sin] as oppressors, by liberating them from themselves [subjective sin]. But this cannot be achieved except by resolutely opting for the oppressed, that is, by *combatting* the oppressive class. It must be a real and effective *combat*, not *hate*. This is the challenge, as new as the Gospel: to love our enemies."⁸³

This is exactly the fundamental Christian value, ethic, dynamic: love, or more precisely, charity. But the dynamic of class struggle in the present historical moment is precisely the opposite: hate. I get the impression that Gutiérrez is caught in a difficult balancing act between Christianity and Marxism, and seeks to elude the embarrassment by substituting the more neutral and colorless — and therefore more maneuverable — word *combat* in lieu of the clearly loaded Marxian term *class struggle*.

⁸² *Op. cit.*, ch. 12, pp. 275-276.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, underscoring mine.

Or it might be charitably said that he seeks to Christianize Marx by replacing the Marxian dynamic of hate with the Christian dynamic of love. This can be done, of course, but only on condition that we see in the oppressor not the enemy, but Christ the Image of the Father, in whose image even we ourselves were created. So long as we concentrate on that divine image, blurred as it may be by sin, it is possible to love the oppressor, but not if we view him as the enemy. St. Thomas himself admitted that the enemy as enemy cannot be loved but only hated. To love the enemy as enemy, in St. Thomas' view, is repugnant both to nature and to charity.⁸⁴ Thus, the very insistence on painting the rich and the upper classes with the black colour of oppression makes impossible the universal charity which is the hallmark and vivifying spirit of Christianity. It is impossible to Christianize Marxism by insisting on the dialectic of oppressor-oppressed.

THE APOSTOLATE OF THE SOCIAL MILIEU

But all this aside, the problem, as I see it, is not precisely whether apostolic evangelization can take on the form of social service and political action. It can. And it ought. "Christ's redemptive work, while of itself directed toward the salvation of men, involves also the renewal of the whole temporal order. Hence the mission of the Church is not only to bring to men the message and grace of Christ, but also to penetrate and perfect the temporal sphere with the spirit of the gospel... It is the task of the whole Church to labor vigorously so that men may become capable of constructing the temporal order right and directing it to God through Christ."⁸⁵ "Civic and political education is today supremely necessary for the people, especially young people. Such education should be painstakingly provided, so that all citizens can make their contribution to the political community. Let those who are suited for it, or can become so, prepare themselves for the difficult but most honorable art of politics. Let them work to exercise this art without thought of personal convenience... Let

⁸⁴ Cfr. *S. Theol.*, II-II, xxv, 8.

⁸⁵ *Apost. Actuositatem*, 7, p. 497.

them devote themselves to the welfare of all sincerely and fairly, indeed, with charity and political courage..”⁸⁶

But Vatican II makes it clear that there can be no simplistic reductionism of evangelization to social service and/or political action.

“Christ’s redemptive work” — which is exactly the work He entrusted to the Church to continue till the end of time — “is of itself [i.e. essentially and per se] directed toward the *salvation* of men.” And salvation is to be understood in the essentially transcendent sense of the beatific vision of God, and not simply as the renewal of the temporal order since we have here no abiding city. Hence “earthly progress must be carefully distinguished from the growth of Christ’s kingdom”.⁸⁷

THE APOSTOLATE OF SOCIO-POLITICAL ACTION IS A LAY APOSTOLATE

There is no question that evangelization extends also to the temporal socio-political sphere, that it can take on the form of social service and political action. The precise problem is, Who is the *proper subject* that is to exercise this special form of evangelization?

The People of God is not simply an invisible community, nor is it an externally amorphous mass united only through the internal bonds of faith, hope, and charity. The spiritual community of the People of God is simultaneously a visible hierarchical society. The hierarchical distinction is divinely instituted, and is not a mere distinction in degree, but a distinction *in essence*.⁸⁸ In virtue of this divinely instituted essential distinction there is in the Church “diversity of service but unity of purpose.”⁸⁹ This one purpose is the salvation of men. However, this one purpose is accomplished through diverse services and functions exercised by the different sectors of the ecclesial community.

⁸⁶ *Gaudium et Spes*, 75, p. 287.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 39, p. 237.

⁸⁸ *Lumen Gentium*, 8, p. 22; 10, p. 27.

⁸⁹ *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 2, p. 491.

Holy Orders, the plenitude of which exists in the bishops, "together with the office of sanctifying, also confers the offices of teaching and of governing." The bishops as such, in virtue of "the grace of the Holy Spirit so conferred, and the sacred character so impressed... in an eminent and visible way undertake Christ's own role as Teacher, Shepherd and High Priest, and that they act in His Person."⁹⁰ Bishops and their assisting clergy, therefore, as such, have for their proper, specific and direct service the teaching, sanctifying, and governing of the people of God. In virtue of their distinctive vocation their direct concern is with the ministry of the Word and of the Sacraments.

In the early Church, love among the faithful prompted the wealthy voluntarily to divest themselves of their riches and to lay the proceeds in the hands of the apostles for distribution among the dispossessed in the Christian community. Soon, however, the apostles were faced with the choice between serving the poor and the ministry of the Word... They did not hesitate. "It is not desirable that we should forsake the word of God and serve at tables. Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation... that we may put them in charge of this work. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word."⁹¹

Vatican II merely echoes the Acts when it teaches that "the ministry of the Word and of the sacraments... are entrusted in a special way to the clergy."⁹² On the other hand, as the Acts make clear, the service of temporal needs is entrusted to the laity itself. Again Vatican II echoes the primitive Church when it says that "Pastors know that they themselves were not meant by Christ to shoulder the entire saving mission of the Church toward the word. [For] there are certain things which pertain in a particular way to the laity [thus not to the clergy nor to the religious], both men and women, by reason of their situation *and mission*."⁹³ Observe that these things are proper of the laity not merely in virtue of their peculiar situation, but *formally* in virtue of their *lay mission*. The Council continues: "A secular quality is proper and special

⁹⁰ *Lumen Gentium*, 21, pp. 43-44.

⁹¹ *Acts* 6:2-4.

⁹² *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 6, p. 496; underscoring mine.

⁹³ *Lumen Gentium*, 30, pp. 56-57; underscoring mine.

to laymen. It is true that those in holy orders can *at times*⁹⁴ engage in secular activities, and even have a secular profession. But by reason of their particular vocation they are chiefly and professedly ordained to the sacred ministry."⁹⁵

More significantly, Vatican II further acknowledges that there are areas in which the Church cannot make herself present and exercise her mission except through the laity. "The *laity* are called in a special way to make the Church *present and operative* in those places and circumstances where *only through them* can she become the salt of the earth."⁹⁶ This area reserved to the laity, in which only through the laity the Church can be present and operative, is described by Vatican II as follows: "The laity, *by their very vocation*, seek the kingdom of God by *engaging in temporal affairs* and by *ordering them according to the plan of God*... It is therefore his [the layman's] special task to *illumine and organize these affairs*... according to Christ's mind."⁹⁷ "The laity must take on the *renewal of the temporal order as their own special obligation*. Led by the light of the Gospel and the mind of the Church, and motivated by Christian love, let them *act directly and definitively in the temporal sphere*."⁹⁸

The change in structures is directly committed to the apostolate of the laity. "By their competence in secular fields and by their personal activity, elevated from within by the grace of Christ, let them labor vigorously so that by *human labor, technical skill and civic culture* created goods may be perfected *for the benefit of every last man*, according to the design of the Creator and the light of His word. *Let them work* to see that *created goods are more fittingly distributed among men*... Let the *laity* also by their combined efforts *remedy any institutions and conditions of the world which are customarily an inducement to sin*, so that all

⁹⁴ "At times," i.e., by way of exception, in a temporary emergency, to fill a gap, or even by a special mandate of the hierarchy as in the case of Don Luigi Sturzo. This is the proper interpretation of that other passage: "Secular duties and activities belong properly although not exclusively to laymen" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 43, p. 243), i.e., not so exclusively that *at times* they may not be undertaken by men in holy orders.

⁹⁵ *Lumen Gentium*, 31, p. 57; underscoring mine.

⁹⁶ *Lumen Gentium*, 31, p. 59; underscoring mine.

⁹⁷ *Lumen Gentium*, 31, pp. 57-58; underscoring mine.

⁹⁸ *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 7, p. 498; underscoring mine.

such things may be *conformed to the norms of justice* and may favor the practice of virtue rather than hinder it."⁹⁹

And Vatican II concludes trenchantly: "The *apostolate of the social milieu*, that is, the effort to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws and *structures of the community* in which a person lives is so much the *duty and responsibility* of the *laity* that IT CAN NEVER BE PROPERLY PERFORMED BY OTHERS."¹⁰⁰ Not by the clergy. Not by the religious. Let not bishops, priests, and religious fool themselves into thinking that they can replace the laity in this field of apostolate. Vatican II here reminds them forcefully that the apostolate of the social milieu, the saving mission of the Church in the temporal sphere "can never be properly performed" by either clergy or religious. In the light of this pronouncement by Vatican II, the efforts by clergymen and religious to take upon themselves the initiative and leadership of the apostolate of the social milieu can be viewed only as a determined effort to reinstate a new species of *clericalism*, which is inconsistent with the much proclaimed statements by the same quarters of the coming of the age of the layman. Such new clericalism can only obstruct the saving of the temporal sphere. The judgment of the Council is the judgment of the Holy Spirit enlightening it. Let them hear who have ears to hear.

THE SERVICE OF THE HIERARCHY IN THE TEMPORAL SPHERE

Vatican II is quite clear on the service to be rendered by the hierarchy in the temporal order. "As regards activities and institutions in the temporal order, the role of the ecclesiastical hierarchy is to *teach and authentically interpret the moral principles* to be followed in temporal affairs. Furthermore, it has the right to *judge*, after *careful consideration* of all related matters and *consultation* with experts, whether or not such activities and institutions *conform to moral principles*. It also has the right to *decide* what is required for the *protection and promotion* of values of the *supernatural order*."¹⁰¹ It is clear that the direct

⁹⁹ *Lumen Gentium*, 36, p. 63; underscoring mine.

¹⁰⁰ *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 13, p. 504; underscoring and capital mine.

¹⁰¹ *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 24, p. 514; underscoring mine.

service of the hierarchy is not concerned with action in the temporal order, but with the *doctrine* concerning temporal affairs and institutions or structures. The direct service rendered by the hierarchy is threefold: (a) to *authentically teach* the moral principles governing temporal affairs; (b) to pass a *critical judgment* on actually existing states of affairs and institutions with regard to whether or not they conform to moral principles. Such a critical judgment must be characterized with prudence and circumspection; (c) to make a *practical judgment* and *decision* on whatever is necessary to protect and promote *supernatural* values.

It should be noted that the *critical* function is undertaken in the light of *moral* principles. On the other hand, the *practical* judgment and *decision*-making functions are undertaken in the light of *supernatural* values. *Moral* principles is broader than *supernatural* values. Moral principles regulating temporal affairs may be either natural or supernatural. Vatican II asserts the right of the Church to make *decisions solely* when the protection and furtherance of *supernatural* values require it. The reason is clear: the Church is the sole custodian and interpreter of supernatural truths and values. On the other hand, Vatican II claims no right for the Church to make decisions, but only to make a *critical judgment* where moral principles are stake. The reason is equally clear: moral principles are either supernatural or natural. With respect to natural moral principles the Church has no exclusive claim, since they belong per se to the public domain of natural reason.

Another observation needs be made regarding the difference between *critical judgment* and *decision*. The two must not be confused. A critical judgment has no per se and immediate reference to action. On the other hand, a decision is per se and immediately connected with action. In the temporal order *action* belongs to *temporal* agents, to men *as men*. Consequently, in the temporal order the decision-making belongs properly to the temporal authorities. The Church, therefore, does not, and cannot arrogate to herself the proper right to make decisions in the temporal order, except in the sole case where *supernatural* values are involved.

SERVICE OF THE HIERARCHY TO THE APOSTOLATE OF THE LAITY

Vatican II is equally clear on this subject. "The Hierarchy should promote the apostolate of the laity, provide it with spiritual principles and support, direct the exercise of this apostolate to the common good of the Church, and attend to the preservation of doctrine and order."¹⁰² Once more it is clear that no direct action in the temporal order is contemplated for the hierarchy, and in general for the clergy. This is entirely in consonance with the doctrine earlier laid down that the clergy as such is directly called to action in the field of the ministry of the Word and of the sacraments.

With respect to the apostolate of the laity in the temporal order the hierarchy's role is *indirect*, viz.: (a) to promote lay apostolic activity, i.e., to prod the laity actively to undertake their distinctive and proper apostolate. (b) to provide the lay apostle with *spiritual* principles and support. "The laity have the right, as do all Christians, to receive in abundance from their sacred pastors the spiritual goods of the Church, especially the assistance of the Word of God and the sacraments."¹⁰³ (c) to direct the exercise of the lay apostolate to the common good of the Church. The lay apostle is engaged not merely in the building of the earthly city, but in building the earthly city according to God's salvific plan, and God's plan for the earthly city integrates both the natural and the supernatural values. This is the inevitable consequence of the elevation of human *nature* to a supernatural destiny. Consequently, in so far as the activity of laymen is not simply temporal activity, but temporal *apostolic* activity it must look to the common good of the People of God, and in this respect it is directed by those to whom the *common good of the Kingdom* is entrusted, viz. the hierarchy. (d) to attend to the preservation of doctrine and order. The order mentioned here is not the order to the common good of the Church already spoken of in (c). It is the order among the various activities and fields of the lay apostolate.

The implication here is that there is no one temporal activity, institution or structure that is *the* activity, *the* institution or

¹⁰² *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 24, p. 514.

¹⁰³ *Lumen Gentium*, 37, p. 64.

structure required by the supernatural values or by the common good of the Church. These ends can be served in the temporal sphere in a variety of ways and by a variety of structures. "Often enough the Christian view will itself suggest some specific solution in certain circumstances. Yet it happens rather *frequently, legitimately* so, that with equal sincerity some of the faithful will *disagree* with others on a certain matter."¹⁰⁴ Hence there is need to coordinate, integrate, consolidate all such varied endeavours into a suitable order. Otherwise different lay groups will be working at cross purposes with, at the very least, duplication and wastage of effort, and quite likely with a breach of unity and of charity, and scandal inviting behaviour.

A THORNY PROBLEM

There is here a thorny problem which in certain, not to say many, cases does not lend itself to an easy solution. On the one hand, the assertion that direct apostolic activity in the temporal order is proper and specific to the laity entails the recognition of the principle that in such a field the laity has both the initiative and the responsibility. "Let sacred pastors recognize and promote the dignity as well as the *responsibility* of the layman in the Church... allowing him freedom and room for action. Further, let them encourage the layman so that he may undertake tasks *on his own initiative*."¹⁰⁵ So true is this, that even in those forms of lay apostolate characterized especially as "Catholic Action" Vatican II asserts that "the laity contribute... to the running of these organizations, to the weighing of the conditions in which the pastoral activity of the Church has to be conducted, and to the *hammering out and carrying out of a program of action*. In all such matters, they assume responsibility."¹⁰⁶

In only one instance is the lay apostle fully subject to the hierarchy. "Finally, the hierarchy entrusts to the laity some functions which are *more closely connected with pastoral duties*,

¹⁰⁴ *Gaudium et Spes*, 43, p. 244.

¹⁰⁵ *Lumen Gentium*, 37, pp. 64-65; underscoring mine.

¹⁰⁶ *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 20, pp. 510-511; underscoring mine.

such as the teaching of Christian doctrine, certain liturgical actions, and the care of souls. By virtue of this mission, the laity are fully subject to higher ecclesiastical direction in the performance of such work."¹⁰⁷ But it is obvious that in this case we are not dealing with apostolic temporal activity in the strict sense of the term.

The recognition of the layman's initiative and responsibility explains Vatican II's insistence that the laity in the exercise of its proper apostolate is not allowed "to appropriate the Church's authority," or to "claim the name 'Catholic'."¹⁰⁸

On the other hand, the variety of temporal solutions compatible with the Gospel and Christian tradition inevitably impose the necessity of achieving a degree of unification in the exercise of the lay apostolate, which would otherwise degenerate into scandal-giving internal squabbles. Hence the same Council, after stressing that the layman is not only permitted but be "even obliged to express his opinion on things which concern the good of the Church," nevertheless also asserts that "with ready Christian obedience, laymen as well as all disciples of Christ should accept whatever their sacred pastors as representatives of Christ, decree in their role as teachers and rulers in his Church."¹⁰⁹

As I said, the combination of these two principles is often not easy to achieve. Nonetheless, faithfulness to both is necessary in order: (a) to achieve order and unity, and (b) to preclude the emergence of neo-clericalism or clerical elitism in the temporal sphere itself.

THE ANTIDOTE TO REDUCTIONISM

A word on the risk of reductionism on the part of laymen engaged in the apostolate of social service and political action. The pressing problem of the laymen engaged in the apostolate of the social milieu is the problem of informing and vivifying temporal activities with a supernatural vision and spirit. This

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 24, pp. 513-514; underscoring mine.

¹⁰⁸ *Gaudium et Spes*, 43, p. 244; *Apost. Actuositatem*, 23, p. 513.

¹⁰⁹ *Lumen Gentium*, 37, p. 64.

is possible only by living an intense spiritual life nourished by the sacraments and daily meditation.

It remains eternally true that the soul of every genuine apostolate is the internal life of prayer. Without it laymen, religious, priests, and bishops soon lose their bearings. And the risk is especially imminent with respect to those engaged and immersed in temporal and worldly activities. Without the horizons opened up in prayer and meditation, their horizon shrinks by degrees until it is reduced and becomes coterminus with this world, time, and history.

It is true that we encounter God in history, and Christ in the neighbor. But the encounter is not realized without a life of prayer. "Only by the light of faith and by *meditation* on the word of God can one always and everywhere recognize God in whom 'we live and move, and have our being' (Acts 17:28), see His will in every event, see Christ in all men... and make correct judgments about the true meaning and value of temporal things, both in themselves and in their relation to man's final goal."¹¹⁰ Christ himself made it a practice to retire by Himself to pray.

The emphasis on social service and political action as a form of apostolate must be accompanied by an equal emphasis on a life of meditation and prayer. This is why priests are appointed as *spiritual directors* to Catholic organizations: not to wrest from the layman initiative and responsibility, but so that, in the words of Vatican II, "they should devote themselves to *nourishing the spiritual life* and an *apostolic mentality* in the Catholic societies entrusted to them."¹¹¹

Without an intense spiritual life rooted in the eucharistic liturgy and meditative prayer the lay apostle will eventually discern only time in history, only man in his neighbour. The lay apostolate ceases to be the evangelical salt and leaven and reduces itself entirely to social service and political action.

¹¹⁰ *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 4, p. 493; underscoring mine.

¹¹¹ *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 25, p. 514; underscoring mine.

THE GOSPEL AND POLITICS

The term *politics* can be taken in three senses: (a) the *science* of statecraft; (b) the *exercise* or praxis of statecraft; (c) the *game* of politics, i.e., the strategies, tactics, maneuvers and tricks to obtain political power. Aristotle's *Politics* is politics in the first sense. The governing of a nation is politics in the second sense. The maneuvering to get oneself nominated, appointed, or elected to public office is politics in the third sense.

Now, divine revelation has many things to say about the nature of man, his origin, his destiny, human behavior, good and evil, justice and love, authority, etc., all of which have a profound bearing on the basic concepts of statecraft such as the common good, civil power, human rights, etc. Gutiérrez is correct in saying that the Gospel has political dimensions in sense (a) of politics.

But politics in sense (b), and a fortiori politics in sense (c), are alien to the Gospel. St. Luke records that on one occasion "one of the crowd said to Him, 'Master, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.' But He said to him, 'Man, who has appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?'"¹¹² St. Matthew records that on another occasion the Temple tax collectors came demanding the tax. Jesus made it clear that He as such was exempt, but nonetheless submitted to the law and paid.¹¹³ All the Synoptics mention the famous episode on paying tribute to the Romans. Jesus was fully aware that He was going against the grain of Jewish nationalism, that He was outraging their sense of oppression. Nonetheless He answered forthrightly, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." He, too, knew full well that Caesar was but a creature of God, that Caesar's authority derived from God. But He did not seize on that pretext to say, e.g., "Give to God both the things that are God's and the things that are Caesar's."

The Jews delivered Jesus to Pilate on a charge of political treason. This was a serious accusation, and Pilate, recounts St. John, re-entered the Praetorium to investigate it. Bluntly

¹¹² *Luke* 12:13-14.

¹¹³ *Matt.* 17:23-26.

he asked, "Art thou the king of the Jews?" Jesus did not deny that he was king, but took pains to enlighten the Roman as to the nature of the kingdom of which he was king. "My kingdom is not of this world." The Vulgate has: *Regnum meum non est de hoc mundo*. The Latin *de* denotes consubstantiality, equality of nature. "My kingdom, then, is not of the same nature as the kingdoms of this world. If my kingdom were of this world [de hoc mundo], my followers would have fought that I might not be delivered to the Jews. [Which was in fact what Peter did on account of a mistaken notion of the Messianic kingdom] I am a king. That is why I was born, and why I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth, hears my voice." No doubt, John's account is a highly condensed version of what actually transpired in Pilate's investigation of the charge of political treason. In any case, the outcome of the investigation was that Pilate went out and proclaimed the official finding: "I find no guilt in him."¹¹⁴

In short, Jesus not only did not claim the right to inject Himself into political praxis, He refused to get Himself involved in it. After the miracle of the loaves, St. John remarks that "the people... said, 'This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world.' So when Jesus perceived that they would come to take Him by force and make Him king, he fled again to the mountain, Himself alone." But the crowds were not to be deprived so easily of the king they wanted for themselves. They set out to look for Him. "And when they had found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, 'Rabbi, when didst thou come here?' Jesus answered them and said, 'Amen, amen, I say to you, you seek me, not because you have seen signs, but because you have eaten of the loaves and have been filled. Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for that which endures unto life everlasting, which the Son of Man will give you.'¹¹⁵ Meaning to say: I have multiplied the loaves as a sign of my true mission, but you have seen in it nothing but the filling of your bellies. You want

¹¹⁴ *John* 18:33-38. In the light of this categorical finding of Pilate, it is downright funny to find Gutiérrez and Cullman endeavoring to find evidence of political guilt in the inscription "King of the Jews" affixed to the cross of Jesus. (cf. *A Theology of Liberation*, ch. 11, p. 229) To such extreme does he go pursuing his idea of political liberationism!

¹¹⁵ *John* 6:14-27.

to make me king because I filled your bellies with bread [because I gave you temporal well-being, security...]. But that is not what I came for: not to give bread for your bellies, but to give you the Bread of Life for your souls.

This great insight seems lost on today's liberationists. It is true that temporal deprivation can be a hindrance to the message of the Gospel. When the crowds began to worry about their lunch, they were not likely to pay attention to what Jesus was saying, and so He multiplied the loaves and the fish. But it is equally false to say that temporal welfare and security are never a hindrance to the Gospel message. The aftermath of the multiplication of the loaves is eloquent evidence. When the people had their fill, they looked for nothing more beyond.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH THE EARTHLY CITY

In any case, the mission of Christ, His Kingdom, are to be kept clearly distinct from the cities and kingdoms of earth. In spite of the opportunities offered Him, the Lord never took a direct hand in political praxis in order to safeguard that distinction.¹¹⁶ Which is why Vatican II stresses that "the role and competence of the Church being what it is, she must *in no way* be confused with the political community, *nor bound to any political system*."¹¹⁷ As to political systems the same Council pointedly states: "The choice of government and the method of selecting leaders is left to the free will of citizens."¹¹⁸

In other words, no one form of government, no one social or political institution or structure can claim any necessary connection with the Gospel. None can claim to be *the* requirement of the Gospel, or *the* requirement of human nature, or *the* requirement of human dignity. The great St. Theresa once said that *lo mejor es enemigo de lo bueno*. It seems that this shortsightedness is

¹¹⁶ So true is this that Gutiérrez himself, after a long chapter on Eschatology and Politics, has to confess: "The Gospel does not provide a utopia for us; this is a human work." (*Op. cit.*, ch. 11, p. 238).

¹¹⁷ *Gaudium et Spes*, 75, p. 287; underscoring mine.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 284.

today a common affliction among political pundits. Some political forms of government, some political structures might, indeed, be more in accordance with human nature or with human dignity. But that does not mean that such forms or structures are *the* requirement of human nature or of human dignity. Much less does it mean that the other forms and structures go *against* human nature or dignity, or are *positively unjust and evil*. Even if we, e.g., grant that democracy is more in accordance with human dignity, it is by no means valid to conclude that *therefore* aristocracy and monarchy are *not* in accordance with human dignity and *violate* that dignity.

THE CHURCH AND THE MARTIAL LAW REGIME

Is the Church competent to take a stand for or against the declaration of martial law? On what basis? Certainly not on the basis of constitutionality, or legality, or political wisdom. On what grounds then?

Let me recall here the rights claimed for the Church by Vatican II with respect to "activities and institutions in the temporal order." They are three: (a) *doctrinal*, viz. the right "to *teach and authentically interpret* the moral principles to be followed in temporal affairs." (b) *Critical*, viz., "the right to *judge...* whether or not such activities and institutions *conform to moral principles.*" (c) *Practical or decision making*, viz "the right to *decide* what is required for the protection and promotion of values of the *supernatural* order."¹¹⁹ These rights extend even to the *political* order. The Church "also has the right to *pass moral judgments*, even on matters touching the *political* order, whenever *basic personal rights* or the *salvation of souls* make such judgments necessary."¹²⁰

In the light of these rights the question is asked: Is it within the Church's competence to take a stand for or against martial law?

¹¹⁹ *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 24, p. 514. It should be noted that the critical function is to be exercised with prudence and circumspection. It is not lightly to be made, but only "after careful consideration of all related matters and consultation with experts." (*Ibid.*)

¹²⁰ *Gaudium et Spes*, 76, p. 289; underscoring mine.

In the first place, *to take a stand* is ambiguous. Does it mean a *decision* for action? Or simply *passing a critical judgment*? If it means a *decision for action*, the Church is competent to make such a decision only in one case: when the promotion or protection of *supernatural* values require it. In such a case the decision is hers, and hers alone. However, I wish to be enlightened on the supernatural values at stake in the present martial law regime.

Does taking a stand mean *passing a critical judgment*? The Church is certainly incompetent to pass a critical judgment on the basis of constitutionality, or legality, or political wisdom. She claims competence to pass a critical judgment on a *moral* basis alone, i.e., on the basis of *human rights*.

But, in the second place, the term *human rights* is itself ambiguous. Nor is the ambiguity removed by qualifying the term as *basic human rights*. A human right is either a *natural* right, or a *juridical* right, taking this latter term to mean a right of positive human enactment. The essential and crucial difference between a natural and a juridical right is the following: the obligatory force of a natural right is independent of human legislation, but the obligatory force of a juridical right depends on human enactment. A juridical right can be *in accordance with*, or *deduced from*, or a *determination of*, a natural right. But all this notwithstanding, it comes into juridical being and becomes juridically binding only when *enacted into law*. Positive human enactment is either merely statutory, or constitutional. If we compare statutory law with constitutional law, the latter is basic or fundamental. But if we compare constitutional law with natural law, natural law is basic or fundamental. So, when we speak of basic human rights, are we speaking of constitutional or of natural rights?

To me it is obvious that when the Church claims the right to pass judgments on the basis of basic human rights, this term is not to be construed in the sense of juridical rights, i.e., in the sense of constitutional — and much less of merely statutory — human rights. It should be clear that constitutions and statutes are man-made, not God-made enactments, and that they form no part of the deposit of revelation entrusted to the Church for safekeeping and authentic interpretation.

The basic human rights which form the basis for the Church to pass a critical judgment are the *clear natural rights* of man. Thus she is perfectly entitled to pass critical judgments on laws concerning abortion, euthanasia, contraception, compulsory sterilization, divorce, statutory limitation of children, and such like.

On what grounds, then, is the Church to pass a moral judgment on the martial law regime? On grounds that it denies basic human rights? Such as what? That it detains persons without due process of law? But the due process of law referred to is a juridical right. That it *de facto* denies freedom of the press? That there are no free elections? But these are constitutional rights. That detainees are subjected to torture? Then the Church might as well morally condemn all governments. Law enforcers in all and any regime *de facto* employ torture and third degree, notwithstanding the fact that their respective governments do not — as the martial law regime does not — in principle countenance third degree. Is it on the ground that the referendums are a farce and do not reflect the people's will? But this is a question not of doctrine, but of fact, and the Church has no competence over questions of fact unless they are *doctrinal* or *dogmatic* facts. Surely the farcical nature of the referendums, if a fact, is not a dogmatic fact. Furthermore, is it even a *certain* fact? Good and circumspect men are found on either side, pro and con. So that rather than certain it would seem to be a *dubious* fact, which is to say not a fact.

Is it on the basis that martial law ought to be lifted since there is no longer an emergency? But is the Church the proper and competent agency empowered to determine whether the emergency has passed or not? I am not saying that the bishops cannot use their reason to find out whether the emergency that prompted martial law still exists or not. What I am saying is that their competence in this matter is purely a *private* competence with *no juridical consequence* whatsoever.

But does it have a *moral* consequence? If we distinguish between the *juridical* and the *moral* — as I think we ought to in view of the fact that the moral order is broader than the juridical order — then the passing of the emergency will mean that no juridical reasons exist for continuing the martial law, but that is

far from saying that there are *no moral* reasons for its continuation.

Lastly, there is the question of whether the proper circumspection has been observed. Has there been "careful consideration of *all* related matters?" Has there been "consultation with experts?" It seems to me that the experts are divided in their opinion. Whether or not careful consideration of all related matters has been taken, is a question that can best be answered by the bishops themselves.

INDIVIDUAL BISHOPS AND THE MARTIAL LAW REGIME

A Filipino citizen does not cease to be a citizen by episcopal consecration. As citizens, bishops individually have exactly the same options open to all other citizens. However, because there is no necessary connection between the Gospel or human dignity and any of the several political options available, Vatican II seriously admonishes that there must be "a clear distinction between what a Christian conscience leads them [the faithful] to do *in their own name* as citizens, and what they do *in the name of the Church* and in union with her shepherds."¹²¹

The same strictures apply to the bishops themselves: they ought to distinguish clearly between what they do *in their own individual name* as plain citizens, and what they do *in the name of the Church* in virtue of their sacred office. This is exactly the same distinction made earlier between the two senses of *Catholic as such*, viz., in accordance with a Catholic conscience, and in virtue of being a Catholic. A Catholic bishop may criticize the martial law regime in accordance with his Catholic conscience, i.e., in accordance with what, according to his lights, he takes to be the teaching of the Gospel, but he does so in virtue of being a Filipino citizen, and not in virtue of his episcopal office.

As I see it, a bishop may publicly express his opinion for or contrary to the regime, but he should make it crystal clear that he is acting in his personal and private capacity as a citizen concerned for the common good of the country, and not in any way acting

¹²¹ *Gaudium et Spes*, 76, p. 287; underscoring mine.

in the name of the Church, or in behalf of the Philippine Hierarchy unless expressly authorized by the latter.

Just as a bishop should respect the political views of a layman, no matter if they are contrary to his own politics, so too, must bishops be respectful of the contrary political opinions of their fellow bishops. As I see it, this respect must include three things: in the first place, there must be no belittling — much less public belittling — of the political options of the others. “Let *pastors respectfully acknowledge that just freedom* which belongs to *everyone* in this earthly city.”¹²² (b) Pressure tactics are to be shunned. The game of politics is a rotten game. That it should be introduced into the hierarchy is execrable, a cause of scandal to the faithful, a source of division, and of incredible harm to the fold of Christ. Where the Church authorities engage in partisan behaviour, they become estranged from one another, and the common good entrusted to their concerted effort and vigilance necessarily suffers. Where the shepherds are divided, the sheep, too, are necessarily divided and the seamless garment of the Church is rent. (c) If as a result of his individual stance a bishop gets into hot waters with the civil authorities, I think he should neither expect, nor much less demand, the intervention of his fellow bishops or of the hierarchy as a body to bail him out of trouble. The courage of one’s convictions requires the courage to take the consequences without hiding behind others.

There is one more pointed warning by Vatican II, which bears repeating here. “It happens rather frequently, and legitimately so, that with equal sincerity some of the faithful will disagree with others on a given matter. Even against the intentions of their proponents, however, solutions proposed on one side or another may be *easily confused by many people with the gospel message*. Hence it is necessary for people to remember that no one in the aforementioned situations is allowed to appropriate the Church’s authority for his opinion.”¹²³ This passage speaks of the laity; nonetheless, I think that it applies with even greater relevance and force to bishops when they act in their individual capacity.

¹²² *Lumen Gentium*, 37, p. 65; underscoring mine.

¹²³ *Gaudium et Spes*, 43, p. 244; underscoring mine.

When an ordinary layman exercises a political option, everybody understands he is acting on his own. No one takes his action as embodying the official position of the hierarchy, much less of the Universal Church. When an officer of a so-called *mandated* Catholic organization takes a stand, he is easily believed to express the so-called "unofficial" position of the hierarchy, unless he takes special pains to make it clear that he is acting only in his own name. But when a bishop acts, it is almost impossible for the people not to take it as the position of the Church, or at least of the hierarchy. It is a fact that the sacred office outweighs and overshadows the private man. So true is this, that even the civil authorities are apt to think twice before moving against an individual bishop. His sacred character protects him and gives him a sort of immunity even in the temporal and political sphere. In this context, then — which is the context of the Philippines — it behooves the individual bishop to be more responsible and circumspect in his utterances and behavior. His sacred office was given him in order to feed the sheep of Christ by means of the ministry of the Word and of the sacraments, not as a rostrum and shield for his politics. By being indiscreet in his socio-political behavior he mixes his roles to the detriment of the souls confided to his pastoral care, giving them bread of the earth instead of the bread of heaven. If he gets picked up, he deprives a section of Christ's fold of a shepherd.

FINAL OBSERVATIONS

I wish to conclude with two observations. In the first place, the demand for political action, even for violent revolution, is, generally speaking, the result of impatience. One is impatient for results. One wants to see results at once. It is, perhaps, symptomatic of the dizzying pace of modern life. One has no time to spare; one has continually to catch up with something or another. So... instant coffee, instant milk, instant everything... Instant evangelization, instant Church, instant Kingdom. In one word, one wants instant success.

But the Gospel holds no brief for instant success. Our Lord Himself was not such success. Judged by contemporary standards

He was a failure who ended His life on a gibbet reserved for the lowest scum of the criminal world. The Gospel formula for success is not one which smothers the opposition by sheer force of money, or of pressure, or of arms... The Gospel formula for success is one that begins paradoxically with apparent defeat. "Now is the judgment of the world; now will the prince of the world be cast out." Now? That "now" has taken twenty centuries and it is not yet come. But more important, how? "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself. Now he said this signifying by what death he was to die."¹²⁴ "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falls into the ground and die, it remains alone. But if it dies, it brings forth much fruit."¹²⁵ It is thus that Christ's body and kingdom, His Church, is to be built up. "What is lacking in the sufferings of Christ *I fill up in my flesh* for his body, which is the Church..."¹²⁶

The Church was not built upon the ruins of overturned societies and empires. It was built upon the blood shed by Christ, by His Apostles, by countless martyrs. This is the secret of her strength. *Sanguis martyrum, semen Christianorum.*

In the second place, the idea of helping the Kingdom to grow by socio-political action seems to me to stem not only from impatience but more fundamentally from a weak faith — a faith that needs to borrow its efficaciousness, in part at least, from external temporal conditions and forces.

Before Pilate, Jesus defined His Kingdom as the Kingdom of Truth. Now, truth does not make its way into a man's mind and heart by external dynamics. Anyone who accepts the truth on the strength of such external inducements — call it security, better living conditions, equal distribution of wealth — has not seen the light but succumbs to some subtle form of bribery.

In the presence of Pilate, Jesus rejected the notion of His Kingdom being established and spread in the manner of the kingdoms of this world: by direct temporal action, by political measures, by force of arms... Instead He relied on the intrinsic

¹²⁴ *John* 12:31-33.

¹²⁵ *John* 12:24-25.

¹²⁶ *Coloss.* 1:24; underscoring mine.

power of the Word of God itself. "Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice... He who is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear is that you are not of God."¹²⁷ This was the same intrinsic power St. Paul relied on: "The doctrine of the cross is foolishness to those who perish, but... to us it is the power of God... For we preach a crucified Christ — to the Jews indeed a stumbling block and to the Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."¹²⁸

Across twenty centuries the echoes of Paul's exultant challenge resound in Vatican II: "For those who dedicate themselves to the ministry of God's Word should use *means and helps proper* to the Gospel. In many respects *these differ from the supports* of the earthly city."¹²⁹

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¹²⁷ *John* 18:37, 8:47.

¹²⁸ *1 Cor.* 1:18-25.

¹²⁹ *Gaudium et Spes*, 76, p. 288.