

ARTICLES

Paths of Liberation Towards Freedom

1. VATICAN'S INSTRUCTION ON CHRISTIAN FREEDOM AND LIBERATION

"Vatican gives okay to RP brand of civil disobedience." Thus, the Manila daily *Business Day* headlined its Associated Press (AP) dispatch from the Vatican reporting on the press conference that presented, on April 6, 1986, the second document of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on freedom and liberation. Indeed, this document favors "passive resistance" as a true Christian path of liberation.

Nineteen months after the publication of the *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation* (August 6, 1984), the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), headed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, issued the *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation* (March 22, 1986). Both instructions have been explicitly approved by Pope John Paul II and, therefore, are expressions of the Ordinary Magisterium of the Church.

While the first Instruction, *Libertatis Nuntius* (LN) discusses the theology of liberation and warns "on the serious deviations of some theologies of liberation," the second Instruction, *Libertatis Conscientia* (LC), highlights "the main elements of the Christian doctrine on freedom and liberation." Hence, Instruction 1 is purportedly negative in tone, while Instruction 2 is deliberate-

ly positive in approach. Both Instructions, however, complement each other, in such a way -we are told by CDF- that between the two documents there exists "an organic relationship" and are to be read in the light of each other (LC, no. 2). It adds that the "warnings" of *Libertatis Nuntius* are not outmoded, but rather "appear more timely and relevant" (LC, 1).¹

Introducing Instruction 1, the Sacred Congregation has promised Instruction 2, that is, a document which will detail in a positive fashion "the great richness of the theme Christian freedom and liberation for the doctrine and life of the Church" (LN, *Introd.*). Instruction 2, CDF states, limits itself to indicating *the principal theoretical and practical aspects of Christian freedom and liberation*. It adds that, although the document is not complete, it can really assist the disciples of Christ to respond to the dramatic and urgent call of millions of men and women who are asking because of poverty, injustice, oppression and repression for true liberation and authentic freedom (cf. LC, nos. 2, 3, 57, 99).

Libertatis Conscientia centers, then, on the message on and action for freedom and liberation; it describes the meaning of freedom and liberation and points out the liberating paths leading to full freedom (cf. LC, 3). Instruction 2 synthesizes dynamically the social teachings of the Church, particularly the corresponding doctrine of Vatican II, the Synods of Bishops, Popes Paul VI and John Paul II, including the Latin American Bishops' Conference (CELAM) documents of Medellin and Puebla. It presents cogently the Christian theory and practice of freedom and liberation and encourages every Christian and men of good will to commit themselves to the positive transformation of persons and structures of our societies.

The Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation develops its theme in five chapters, one hundred numbers, eighteen

¹ Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*: Vatican City, 1986, pp. 1-59; ID., *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation"*: Vatican City, 1984 pp. 1-36. By reason of the numerous references to the *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, we will place the precise reference, its number, within the text of the article.

thousand words, in 59 pages. After the Introduction, Chapter 1 presents *The State of Freedom in the World* as its main theme, with the following as sub-themes: achievements and dangers of the modern liberating process (I), and freedom in the experience of the People of God (II). Chapter 2 deals with *Man's Vocation to Freedom and the Tragedy of Sin*, and studies the following sub-topics: preliminary approaches to freedom (I), freedom and liberation (II), freedom and human society (III), human freedom and dominion over nature (IV), and sin as the source of division and oppression (V).

LC's Chapters 3, 4 and 5 analyze freedom and liberation in Christian perspective. *Liberation and Christian Freedom* are studied in Chapter 3 by developing the concept and experience of liberation in the Old and in the New Testaments (I-III), the new commandment of love (IV), and the Church as the People of God of the New Covenant (V). *The Liberating Mission of the Church* is taken up in Chapter 4, a mission directed towards the integral salvation of the world (I), and centered on a love of preference for the poor (II). Chapter 5 presents *The Social Doctrine of the Church—for a Christian Practice of Liberation* by reflecting on the nature of the social doctrine of the Church (I), the evangelical requirements for an indepth transformation (II), the promotion of solidarity (III), and the cultural and educational tasks (IV). Instruction 2 concludes by underlining the inspiring significance of Mary's *Magnificat* and the exemplary relevance of Mary as support of Christian hope and of liberating action for freedom.

Taking the second Instruction as point of departure and main reference, we shall try to present in the following pages the theory and the practice of liberation in man's journey to full freedom. Within the Christian vision, and from the perspective of social ethics, we will attempt at answering the following interrelated questions: What is the mission of the Church concerning freedom and liberation? What is the meaning of freedom and liberation? Facing the reality of oppression-liberation, slavery-freedom, what are the wrong paths of liberation to be avoided and the right paths to be pursued in the route to freedom? Taking into account that

CDF's Instruction 1 centered on Liberation Theology, and Instruction 2 on Christian Liberation, what is the place of the former within the wider framework of the latter? We shall end our notes and comments on *Paths of Liberation Towards Freedom* with a Christian's word; that is, a word of Hope.²

2. THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH, FREEDOM AND LIBERATION

To describe the mission of the Church, *Libertatis Conscientia* synthesizes the Church's teaching on the subject, in particular from the Documents of Vatican II, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* by Paul VI, and the Final Report of the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops '85.

The Church continues Christ's salvific work. Her mission, then, is a mission of evangelization and salvation: evangelization is the proclamation of salvation, which is a gift of God to the world through Jesus Christ, the Savior (1 Tim 1:15).

Integral liberation (Paul VI), or integral salvation (Synod of Bishops '85), or the complete liberation of man (LC), or the Church's ministry of salvation (John Paul II) comprises two necessary parts; that is, one spiritual and the other temporal, or two aspects; that is, one supernatural and the other, natural. Both parts or aspects must be distinguished, but not separated, because -Instruction 2 says- "the work of salvation is indissolubly linked to the task of improving the conditions of human life in this world" (no. 64). In the *Final Report*, the Synod of Bishops '85 explains:

The salvific mission of the Church in relation to the world must be understood as an integral whole. Though it is spiritual, the mission of the Church involves human promotion even in its temporal aspects... In this mission there is certainly a clear distinction -but not a separation-

² For our comments on Instruction 1, *Libertatis Nuntius*, see "The Theology of Liberation on Trial," *Unitas*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (December 1984), pp. 351-367. See also A. ROSSA, C. M. F. (Ed.), *Liberation Theology and The Vatican Document* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications 1984); F. NEPOMUCENO, O.M.I., D.D., "Reflections on Liberation Theology," *Philippine Concerns*, Vol. 3, No. 12 (December 1984), pp. 2-3; "Some Reactions to Instruction on Liberation Theology," *Info on Human Development*, Vol. II, No. 12 (December 1984), pp. 8-9.

between the natural and the supernatural aspects. This duality is not a *dualism*. It is thus necessary to put aside the false and useless opposition between, for example, the Church's spiritual mission and the "diaconia" for the world.³

The *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation* does not oppose the spiritual to the temporal aspect of integral salvation or liberation. It does emphasize, however, the priority of importance and significance of spiritual, religious salvation and liberation: "The Church desires the good of man in all his dimensions, first of all as a member of the city of God, and then as a member of the earthly city" (no. 62).

Certainly the mission of the Church cannot be reduced to the temporal order and should not be absorbed by temporal preoccupations (no. 64); the Gospel the Church proclaims -we read in *Instruction 1-* is not a purely earthly Gospel (VI, 4). But, likewise -we add- it is not a purely spiritual or religious Gospel either. We, then, distinguish two aspects, not to separate them but to unite them: the spiritual and the temporal are the two necessary dimensions of evangelization, of the mission of the Church. Paul VI affirmed that the first belongs to it essentially and the second integrally; the Synod of Bishops '71 declared that the social aspect (as action for justice and participation in the transformation of the world) is a constitutive element of evangelization. A few days after the publication of *Libertatis Conscientia*, John Paul II said that the ministry of salvation is essentially religious, because it is born of God's initiative and finds its completion in the absolute of God; it is, at the same time -the Pope added- service to man (the person and society), to his and her spiritual and temporal needs, fundamental human rights, and human and civil life in common.⁴

³ SYNOD OF BISHOPS' 85, *Final Report*: II, D, 6; cf. VATICAN II, *Gaudium et Spes*, Nos. 37 and 42; PAUL VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 14; SYNOD OF BISHOPS' '71, *Justice in the World*, 6; CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE OF THE PHILIPPINES, *The Bond of Love in Proclaiming the Good News*: January 1977.

⁴ JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to Brazilian Episcopal Conference*: The Vatican, April 9, 1986; in *L'Osservatore Romano* (April 28), 1986, p. 6. We studied this in our *The Praxis of Justice* (Unitas, Manila: UST Press, 1984), pp. 20-24.

Both dimensions of evangelization are necessarily linked, and, therefore, essential components of integral liberation. The teaching of the Church underlines the principal importance of the spiritual-personal-eschatological dimension; but, perhaps, the temporal-social-historical aspect is more urgent, in the sense that the Church's credibility hinges today largely on her witnessing of this aspect. The best to do, perhaps, is to distinguish both dimensions, but without contrasting them. Writes theologian Edward Schillebeeckx:

Man's whole salvation includes both socio-political and mystical dimensions; the two cannot be contrasted with each other. A religion which has the effect of dehumanizing people -in whatever way- is either a false religion or a religion which understands itself wrongly. The criterion of "humanizing" is not a reduction of true Christianity; in modern times, it is, in fact, the first condition of the possibility and credibility of the Christian faith.⁵

In her mission, the Church, Mystery and Communion, proclaims the Gospel of salvation of Jesus Christ centered on the Kingdom of God -intra-personal, inter-personal and eschatological- and the way to enter it, the Beatitudes, which manifest the spirit of the Kingdom, are the foundation of justice in the temporal order, and prevent those who possess them from worshipping earthly goods and from committing injustices (LC, 62). The Church's teaching extends to the whole moral order (including the economic, political and cultural dimensions of social life), and notably to justice, which, according to *Libertatic Conscientia*, must regulate human relations (no. 63). This teaching, an integral part of the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus, is contained since almost one hundred years ago, in the so-called "social doctrine" or "social teachings" of the Church.

After Vatican II, the radical voices of some theologians were repeatedly heard announcing "the timely demise" of the social doctrine or teachings of the Church. The final chapter of the *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation* shows clearly and cogently why there cannot be a timely demise of the social doc-

⁵ E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *Interim Report on the Books "Jesus" and "Christ"* (New York: Cross Road, 1981), p. 105.

trine of the Church or -as we prefer- of her social teachings. Furthermore, there is already a very wide and often bold social teaching of the local Churches. Indeed, Instruction 2 speaks of the obligation of the local Churches to reflect theologically and pastorally on freedom and liberation from the experience and in the context of local situations (cf. nos. 2, 70, 75, 96).

The Social Doctrine of the Church -for a Christian Practice of Liberation is presented in Chapter 5 of Instruction 2. It appears to us as a brief, coherent and dynamic presentation of the basic social teachings of the Magisterium and their practical impact on the needed indepth transformation of our peoples and societies. Hence, we cannot agree with some theologians of liberation, who continue speaking negatively and derogatorily of the social teachings of the Church.

Libertatis Conscientia develops briefly the principles for reflection, the criteria for judgment and the directives for action of the social doctrine (cf. no. 72). This is founded upon the dignity of the human person, based on the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity, and built on the four columns of the social order envisioned and promoted by the People of God, namely, truth, justice, freedom and love.

The social teachings of the Church can surely be criticized -negatively- particularly, and easily, from hindsight. Its main problem, however, is not theoretical but practical. Commenting on Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno*, priest sociologist Andrew Greeley writes: "The fundamental weakness of *Quadragesimo Anno* and the Catholic social theory that it articulates formally is not that it has been tried and found wanting, but found hard and not tried."⁶

The social mission of the Church is part of the integral mission; there is one mission and various ministries, namely the ministries of the pastors, the religious and the lay persons. The specific role of the pastors is the sacred ministry of communion

⁶ A. M. GREELEY, "Quadragesimo Anno After Forty Years," *America* (August 8, 1981), p. 47; cf. C. BOFF, "The Social Teaching of the Church and the Theology of Liberation: Opposing Social Practices?" *Concilium*, 150 (December 1981), pp. 17-22. See D. DORR, *Option for the Poor. A Hundred Years of Vatican Social Teaching* (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1983).

and reconciliation, which includes proclaiming freedom and liberation and being the voice of the voiceless of our societies; the religious men and women are to witness the spirit of the beatitudes and imitate closely the Jesus of history and faith -they are asked to witness solidarity with the poor in a very radical way; the proper function, the vocation of the laity is the transformation of the secular order according to God's plan of true freedom and authentic liberation.⁷

Vatican II and the subsequent teaching of the Church underline that, for example, direct political activities to transform the social order belong to the laity, and therefore, pastors -and religious- should not intervene directly in those activities. They have however to intervene even in the political life by being always the spokesmen of the moral order, by illuminating the earthly realities with the light of the Gospel and faith, by forming consciences and educating the people in faith, justice and freedom, and above all, by witnessing a love, which includes justice, which entails freedom, which implies truth.

The Church's mission, then, does not properly belong to the economic, political or technical order, but she has to judge and transform this temporal order in the light of the Gospel and the grace and love of God.

Evangelization, salvation: integral liberation! The Church proclaims, and offers, to the world the liberation and freedom of Christ. With Christ's means given her -Word and Sacrament-, and the power of his Spirit, she can effect, through Christ's grace and man's free cooperation, the liberation of men throughout the ages. Hence, the Church must be, and shall try to become more, a community of liberation and freedom (Gal 4:21-31): she has to be the liberating way to full freedom -the way of Exodus to and from Sinai (Ex 19:6). The message and life of the Church originate from Jesus, the Redeemer and Liberator of humankind. From Christ Redeemer, what is the message of the Church on freedom and liberation?

⁷ Cf. VATICAN II, *Lumen Gentium*, 31; *ID Gaudium et Spes*, 43 and 75; see F. GOMEZ, O.P., "Some Notes on the Philippine Revolution, the Involvement of the Church and Politics," *Philippiniana Sacra*, Vol. XXI, No. 61 (January-April, 1986), pp. 101-114.

3. THE MEANING OF FREEDOM AND LIBERATION

Every revolution, Lenin said, "demands a theory of revolution." Pope Paul VI affirmed: "All social action involves a doctrine." The journey of liberation implies a theory and a practice of freedom and liberation, or reflection and action.

Christian faith, to be saving must be both correct theory or doctrine (orthodoxy) and correct practice or action (orthopraxis). The community of Christ, the Church, and each follower, are asked by Him to imitate His way of doing (practice) and His teaching (theory). What is the Christian theory or doctrine of freedom and liberation?

3.1 THE MEANING OF FREEDOM

Today everybody talks about freedom: pastors, theologians, politicians, social activists -even dictators! No wonder that freedom often means different things to different people and, therefore, it is an ambiguous term with a blurred meaning.

Man has freedom. He was created free (cf. Si 15:14). Freedom is a fundamental dimension of being human. It is an excellent sign of human dignity: *The essential prerogative of the human person* (LC, 73); in fact, man is a person because he is free, and viceversa. By his free will, man is master of his own life and of his own acts.

Although he is the master of his own life, man is a master under God: his freedom is the freedom of a creature, and, therefore, not absolute but relative and limited and imperfect. Human freedom is "shared freedom" (LC, 37), truly realized in dependence from and communion with God. It is individual freedom, but also social freedom: man is a social being, a being-with-others and for-others.⁸

⁸ D. BOBHOEFFER wrote: "In the language of the Bible freedom is not something man has for himself but something he has for others... It is not a possession, a presence, an object... but a relationship and nothing else. In truth, freedom is a relationship between two persons. Being free means 'being free for the other', because the other has bound me to him. Only in relationship with the other am I free" (*Creation and Fall/Temptation* [New York: Macmillan, 1959], p. 37; cited by G. GUTIERREZ, *We Drink from Our Own Wells* [Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1984], p. 159).

Man, then, is a free being by nature and, therefore, responsible: he has to respond, through his life and activities to God, to himself, to others. Ontologically free, he is ethically responsible (cf. LC, 30, 35, 37, 73).

Traditional theology as well as philosophy defines freedom as *the power to elect the means while safeguarding the order to the end*. Instruction 2 puts it thus: "By his free action, man must tend towards the supreme good through lesser goods which conform to the exigencies of his nature and his divine vocation" (no. 27). The true meaning of human freedom is realized in *the choice of moral good*. In this context, it is easy to understand the simple as well as profound definition of St. Thomas Aquinas of a virtuous act: it is the good use of freedom. He adds that to act virtuously is to act according to nature.⁹ Freedom, then, "is not liberty to do anything whatsoever; it is the freedom to do good, and in this alone is happiness to be found" (LC, 26).

Authentic freedom cannot be found in the illusory emancipation from moral evil. Indeed, the deepest slavery of man is the slavery, oppression, bondage of sin, which is the breaking away from the love of God and neighbor (cf. Jn 8:34). To act from sinful attitudes or to act sinfully, is to act contrary to human nature and dignity, and according to a corruption added to nature: to exercise freedom by sinning is a defective, enslaving exercise; indeed, to choose an apparent good (evil or sin) is to fail in freedom.¹⁰

⁹ Cf. I-II, 55, 1, ad 2; I-II, 71, 2; B. H. MERKELBACH, O.P., *Summa Theologiae Moralis*, I (Brugis-Belgica; Desclee de Brouwer, 1956) pp. 85-87. In his thought provoking book *Le volontaire et l'involontaire* (Paris, 1963), philosopher P. RICOEUR speaks of the dialectical structure of human actions, of the "dramatic" duality of what is voluntary (non-determined) and what is non-voluntary (determined) in human decisions, actions and consensus: our freedom, he says, "is only human" (o.c., pp. 212-214, 253-256; quoted by M. VIDAL, *Moral de Actitudes*, I [Madrid; PS Ed., 1974], p. 202).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, I-II, 108, 1, ad 2; CDF, *Libertatis Conscientia*, Nos. 54, 37 and 30. Theologian B. HARING writes: "In essence, freedom is the power to do good... The power to do good derives from the likeness of man to God, from the created participation in divine freedom... Sin as a defeat of freedom is a diminution of the sharing of divine freedom and therefore a lessening of human freedom itself" (*The Law of Christ*, Vol. I [Cork: The Mercier Press, 1963], pp. 99 & 101). See also F. BOCKLE, *Fundamental Concepts of Moral Theology* (New York, N.Y. & Paramus, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1968), pp. 25-27; L. MONDEN, S.J., *Sin, Liberty and Law* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965), pp. 19 & ff.

Freedom, then, is *freedom from sin, and freedom for the good*. It is basic to man's nature, but it is not everything, for truth, justice and love are also fundamental dimensions of human dignity and life. Thus, freedom is measured by truth and exercised in justice and love.

Libertatis Conscientia, following the teachings of John Paul II since his Inaugural Address at Puebla, emphasizes repeatedly the need of truth in the exercise of freedom: the truth will make man free (Jn 8:32). The knowledge of truth is a necessary condition of freedom; it is its measuring rod (no. 19), the sure guide of authentic freedom (no. 3): "Man becomes free to the extent that he comes to the knowledge of the truth, and to the extent that this truth -and not any other forces- guides his will" (no. 26). This needed knowledge of truth as a condition, measure and guide of freedom has to be emphasized; but, likewise, the "doing" of the truth: to become a free person, one has to be true and truthful. This is very significant in a spirituality of freedom and liberation; even in classical spirituality. Kempis wrote: "I would rather feel compunction than know its definition."¹¹

As a social being, man achieves his vocation to freedom in relation with others: with truth, justice is the measure of true freedom (no. 26). An unjust social order is a threat and an obstacle to the realization of his freedom, while a just social order gives man an irreplaceable assistance towards the realization of his personality and the attainment of his destiny (no. 32). Justice respects and promotes human rights, often called "the freedoms of man" (no. 32). Justice orders free human relationships. And, more and better than justice, love.

All real life, after all, is, as Martin Buber explained, encountering others in love: "I only exist in the measure I exist for others; really, to be is to love" (E. Mounier). To share in humanity is to share in brotherhood. Man is a rational being, a free being and a loving being — *ens amans*, as Max Scheler put it. Thus, love is described with truth as the principle and purpose of freedom (no. 32), and with justice, as its perfection.

¹¹ A. NOLAN, O.P., "Truth in the Bible," in *Justice and Truth Shall Meet* (Sinsinawa, Wisconsin: Parable, 1984), p. 30: "To have one standard for oneself and another for others is the basic hypocrisy, the lie behind all immorality and injustice."

To contrast the love of neighbor and the desire for justice, however, is to distort both love and justice (no. 57).

Authentic freedom is freedom for the good -the claim of all good. Radically, it is freedom to love; and, in love, freedom to be virtuous, for virtues, including justice, are mediations of love. Freedom, therefore, is not the absolute principle of being and becoming for the human person. Love is: love of God and love of neighbor, particularly love of the poor and dispossessed. St. Augustine said: "The law of freedom is the law of love." And St. John of the Cross: "For the just man, there is no law."

Man has freedom and is free. He was created free by God and raised to communion with Him. Through his sin, however, man broke away from God and, thus, became alienated from God, from himself and from others -even from the cosmos. Thus alienated, he sowed oppression and injustice and self-love in social life, including the economic, political and cultural structures of society. But God, who created man free and raised him gratuitously to friendship with Him, continually calls man back to freedom through his Son and a Man-for-others, Jesus Christ, who freed him through His life, death and resurrection, from sin (Rom 6:1-23; 8:2), from death (1 Cor 5:54-58; Rom 8:2), and from the law (Gal 2:4; 4:21-25); and free for love (Gal 5:14) — for loving service to others (Mk 10:42-45).

In the community of believers, the Church of Christ, man is offered the grace of God, which erases sin and raises him to become a child of God: "The heart of the Christian experience of freedom is justification by grace received through faith and the Church's sacraments" (no. 52). This Christian freedom is at the heart of the Gospel message, which reveals "unexpected depths" of human freedom (no. 5).

The freedom of the Christian is the freedom of the children of God: the freedom won by Christ, shared in grace, and expressed in compassionate love for all men, principally for the little ones and the poor and the oppressed. Freed by Christ, in his community of faith, hope and love, every Christian is called to freedom: this is his vocation (Gal 5:1). He is called to become,

more and more, personally free and to work, with all men and women of good will, for freedom among all peoples and in all social structures.

In Christian perspective, truth "beginning with the truth about redemption is the root and the rule of freedom, the foundation and the measure of all liberating action" (no. 3). But, as in human perspective, love is the perfection of human freedom, in Christian perspective, love -undividedly love of God and neighbor- is the ultimate value of life. Fraternal love, moreover, "is the touchstone of love of God" (no. 56). Thus, -we can add-, freedom can even be freedom from the exercise of freedom by reason of love: "You have been called to live in freedom; out of love, place yourselves at one another's service" (Gal 5:13; cf. 1 Cor 8:13).

Without justice, however, this love cannot be authentic. The demands of the Gospel, the root of the social teachings of the Church, are summarized "in the supreme commandment of love of God and neighbor in justice" (no. 72). Therefore, "the love of God and freedom in truth and justice should mark relations between individuals and peoples and animate the life of culture" (no. 24).

Like perfect truth and justice and love -its inseparable companions-, freedom cannot be wholly realized until the end of time: it is eschatological. It will be fully accomplished in the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of freedom (no. 60): the greatest freedom is God's gift of eternal happiness. The journey of his life is a journey towards that freedom by the way of truth, justice and love. By the path of liberation. Freedom, thus, is a gift; but, it is also a task -the continuing task of liberation. What then is liberation?

3.2 THE MEANING OF LIBERATION

Man has freedom; this is a fundamental dimension of being human. His freedom, however, must be developed, nurtured, matured so that he becomes truly free — and more free. As being and becoming are the two poles of human, and Christian exis-

tence, being and becoming free are the two poles of freedom. The passage from being free to becoming truly free is done by the paths of liberation. Liberation, then, is the action for freedom, the continuing process of freedom.

The human person, moreover -as we have said earlier- is a free social being: he achieves his freedom not in solitariness, but with other human beings; that is, in community, and acting collectively towards the liberation of all, particularly of those who are more oppressed and marginalized. Liberation, to be integral, to be complete, must be a dynamic process, which embraces all the dimensions of human life: personal as well as social, religious as well as temporal, economic-political-cultural as well as ecological. Liberation, writes Gustavo Gutierrez, "is an all-embracing process that leaves no dimension of human life untouched, because when all is said and done, it expresses the saving action of God in history."¹²

From the perspective of total human and Christian liberation, we can see that the dominant ideologies today give us an incomplete meaning of liberation and freedom. While liberalism-capitalism emphasizes the liberation of the individual, collectivism-Marxism underlines social liberation; while the former is individualistic and materialistic and, thus, fails in social freedom, in the realization of the basic principle of solidarity, the latter is atheistic and materialistic, and, thus, fails in personal freedom, in the realization of the principle of subsidiarity (cf. no. 73). Furthermore, the Doctrine of National Security curtails personal and social freedom and the just struggles for liberation on the anvil of security and dictatorship.¹³

Again, as the inseparable companions of authentic freedom are truth, justice and love, likewise, liberation is done in the names of truth, justice and love. Therefore, authentic liberation is anathema to freedom without justice and solidarity, and to justice

¹² G. GUTIERREZ, *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, I.c., p. 2; ID., *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis 1973), pp. 36-37, 143-144.

¹³ Cf. CELAM, *The Puebla Document*, Nos. 47, 437, 542 (on liberal capitalism); 48, 437, 543 (on collectivism-Marxism); 49, 547-549 (on national security).

and love without freedom, and freedom, justice and love without truth.

To participate fully in the liberating process of freedom, man needs to liberate himself from the most radical oppression; that is, the bondage of sin in the depth of his heart. Being a slave of sin, of self-centeredness, of injustice, of falsehood, he can perform, to be sure, some liberating activities, but he cannot liberate himself: he needs God's initiative and His healing grace and love. God, through Christ, in the Spirit, offers the possibility of freedom/liberation to those united to Him in his Community by faith and baptism. By denying his sin, man is untrue to himself; by denying God and his compassionate love for his creatures, he becomes radically alienated. The truth about redemption, then, is *the foundation and the measure of all liberating action* (no. 3). Liberation, therefore, is salvific liberation, the liberation accomplished by Christ, the Redeemer (no. 99): Christ's liberation is sufficient in itself to liberate all peoples throughout the ages; to make it individually efficient for himself, man has to accept it freely and cooperate with it committedly. In the Community of Christ, the Church, he becomes a child of God, bound to behave as such, filially and fraternally.

As a dynamic process of freedom, liberation is a movement. A movement from sin to grace and love. A movement -in the adult person- of God and man, of grace and freedom. Traditional theology speaks of justification as the primary effect of grace (a share in God's nature and the Blessed Trinity's indwelling in man). With theologians of liberation, we can say that justification is liberation in Christian perspective; that is, the movement of a creature from sin to grace and love. This is the most radical meaning of liberation for a Christian, for the most basic oppression is the bondage of sin: of personal sin, in the first place; but also (in a secondary sense, *Libertatis Conscientia* says tamely), of structural sin.¹⁴

¹⁴ Cf. CDF, *Liberatis Nuntius*, *Introd.*; IV, 15; X, 8. ID., *Libertatis Conscientia*, Nos. 75, 3, 22, 23, 37, 38, 40, 42, 46, 47, 51-54. In this, we read: "Sin is the most radical evil (3); "Sin is at the root of unjust situations" (75).

In the journey of liberation to freedom, there is a need, for those who are making the journey, of personal and structural change: "It is therefore necessary to work simultaneously for the conversion of hearts and the improvement of structures" (no. 75). In the two Instructions, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith emphasizes -overemphasizes, perhaps- the negative aspect of liberation, that is, *from sin*; we believe that its positive aspect must be equally stressed, that is *for grace and love*. After all, Christian social ethics, like moral theology, is presented today more as positive than negative (even St. Thomas Aquinas' Christian ethics are more an ethics of virtues than an ethics of sin and vices): the "do not sin" is for the "do love," and both for "be and become more" a child of God and a brother/sister to others.

Authentic liberation includes necessarily *temporal liberation*. "Let my people go" (Ex 5:9; cf. Gen 12:1), God said to the Pharaoh; that is, "go" from the economic, political and cultural slavery of Egypt to personal and social liberation -to the Covenant with God on Sinai (cf. no. 44). Truly, there cannot be true religious liberation (from sin and for grace and love) without commitment to temporal liberation. Religious liberation is the action (God's gratuitous initiative and gift) to eradicate sin and renew oneself. It is to eradicate sin in the heart, first and most of all, but also in oppressive social structures, and to love all persons and fight with them and for them through liberating actions, so that social structures and human institutions realize the meaning of freedom (no. 32).

To be sure, liberation in Christian perspective has a primarily salvific dimension from which stems necessarily an ethical dimension: *Liberation is the restoration of freedom and also education in freedom, that is, to say, education in the right use of freedom* (no. 23).

Temporal liberation "must begin with an immense effort at education" (no. 81). At an education, we add, that does not domesticate persons nor manipulates people. At an authentic education that liberates persons and peoples. This education is -although *Libertatis Conscientia* does not use the adjective- libera-

ting education: an *education for the civilization of work, an education for solidarity, and access to culture for all* (no. 81). It is an education in truth, justice, freedom and solidarity; in human rights and duties; in freedom and participation. An education of consciences and in responsibility. Above all, it is an education in solidarity: solidarity among all peoples and nations; specially, solidarity of rich nations and persons with the poor and dispossessed. Solidarity to build together, through the paths of liberation, the civilization of love.¹⁵

Like freedom, liberation or the process of freedom can never be fully attained. Hence, the liberating process is a continuing process, the journey of life. *Truly, homo simul oppressus et liberatus; semper liberandus*: man is always in need of being more liberated, for he is simultaneously oppressed and liberated.¹⁶

Definitive liberation, that is, perfect freedom and happiness, will come only at the end of time to those who are in the liberating way of Christ, who has also liberated us from death. Not from biological death, but from death as the final word of life: the final word is our resurrection with Christ, when we are united to Him (cf. Rom 6:3-8).

Meanwhile, with faith and love, in hope, we march towards our definitive liberation by liberating ourselves and others from evil, anguish and oppression:

This hope does not weaken commitment to the progress of the earthly city, but rather gives it meaning and strength... For man's vocation to eternal life does not suppress but confirms his task of using the energies and means which he has received from the Creator for developing his temporal life (no. 60).

4. THE PRACTICE OF FREEDOM: LIBERATION

Christian faith is theory and practice, reflection and action, orthodoxy (correct doctrine) and orthopraxis (correct practice).

¹⁵ Cf. our study *Solidarity: The Heart of Christian Praxis* (Manila: UST Press, 2nd Ed., 1985).

¹⁶ L. BOFF, *Gracia y Liberación* (Madrid: Ed. Cristiandad, 1978), pp. 211-217). BOFF writes: "Therefore, we have been liberated for hope; this points always to a present *already*, but also to a possible and always threatened *not yet*; a path of progressive liberation is thus opened" (p. 211).

As we read in Instruction 1, orthodoxy "is the right rule of faith"; but -we have to add-, without praxis, right belief is not saving, not liberating. St. John said: "The way we can be sure of our knowledge of Christ is to keep his commandments" (1 Jn 2:3; cf Mt 7:21). The hierarchical Church has usually given much more importance to orthodoxy than to orthopraxis; it is time to give emphasis equally to orthopraxis, particularly when we are concerned with the practice of liberation. *Libertatis Conscientia* puts it rightly: "The considerable challenges of our time constitute an urgent appeal to put into practice the teaching on how to act" (no. 71).

As understood in social ethics, praxis is positive social action directed to the transformation of the social order. It involves two interrelated stages: namely, the denunciation of slavery and oppression and of the wrong paths of liberation, and the proclamation by words and, above all, by deeds of liberation and freedom and of the right paths of liberation towards freedom. What are, then, the wrong and the right paths of liberation? Before trying to answer this question, however, we have to see how the situation of liberation-oppression is in our world, for our liberating actions to be operative must try to fight real slavery, concrete oppression. How is the situation of liberation-freedom in our world?

4.1 THE SITUATION OF FREEDOM IN OUR WORLD

The situation of freedom and liberation in our world is ambivalent; there are positive as well as negative elements.

Among the positive elements, we find the powerful aspiration to liberation (LC, 1) and the quest for freedom (no. 5); the awakening of the consciousness of the people, particularly of the poor, many of whom are prepared to fight, are really fighting, for their freedom or their lack of it (cf. no. 17); numerous modern movements of liberation, which have obtained some positive results (no. 8); and spectacular advances in science and technology, which have also achieved some remarkable successes (no. 7).

Like the Synod Bishops '85, the CDF underlines the negative situation of freedom and liberation in our societies.¹⁷ And understandably so. Instruction 2 is concerned with pointing out the slavery of sins, oppressive ideologies, structures and institutions -to transform them. In general, and besides the most radical personal oppression of sin, injustice, self-love; *Libertatis Conscientia* speaks dramatically of economic, political and cultural slavery and servitude; of inhuman poverty, structural injustice systematic violence, manipulation of truth, lack of solidarity, and moral degeneration, immorality and amorality.

In particular, inequality in all the dimensions of social life is repeatedly highlighted. Millions of men and women are caught in an intolerable situation of economic, social and political oppression (no. 81; cf. no. 57). The unjust inequalities in the possession and use of material goods are accompanied and aggravated by similarly unjust inequalities in the opportunity for culture (no. 92). New relationships of inequality and oppression have been established between the nations endowed with power and those without it (no. 16), as well as between those who possess knowledge and those who are simple users of technology (no. 12).

In particular, Instruction 2 points out concrete forms of social oppression in our world, such as, armed and structural violence (no. 76), unemployment (no. 85), and underpaid employment (no. 86), lack of education and culture for millions of people (92-94), the use of blind power to subjugate the forces of nature (11), terrorism (14), torture (79), murder (39), drug addiction (14); sexual license (39), militarization (16), the weapons of death "capable of destroying all human life on earth" (15), weakening of the recognition of a universal juridical order (15), and social discrimination (95).

Facing the darkened situation of freedom in our world, what is the believer in Christ, the People of God, in solidarity with all persons, movements and associations fighting for freedom, asked to do by his humanity and his faith?

¹⁷ Cf. SYNOD OF BISHOPS '85, *Final Report*, where we read: "Today, in fact, everywhere in the world we witness an increase in hunger, oppression, injustice, and war, suffering, terrorism and other forms of violence of every sort" (II, D, 1).

The Community of Christ, the Christians cannot remain indifferent: *The evil inequality and oppression of every kind, which afflicts millions of men and women today openly contradicts Christ's Gospel and cannot leave the conscience of any Christian indifferent* (no. 57).

The Christian is called by his vocation to freedom to condemn "all forms of deviation, slavery and oppression of which people are victims" (no. 65). He is asked to denounce falsehood, injustice, self-love, forced poverty, violations of human rights; to denounce principally the causes of slavery and oppression: the loss of the moral sense in human and social life; the separation of freedom from morality; the loss of the sense of sin; the denial of God. To stress most of all that sin is the most radical slavery: the root of personal and social slaveries, the source of unjust laws and structures (cf nos. 54 and 75).

In this particular context, it is proper to recognize that Instruction 2 mentions also the failures -at the level of theory and of praxis- of some of her members, of the Church, such as, errors of judgment and serious omissions "for which Christians have been responsible in the course of the centuries" (no. 20), failures and delays along the quest of freedom (no. 57). The denunciation of the Christians' failures, however, is, to our mind, not strong enough. The Church preaches freedom and liberation; but, has she been a community of freedom? Is she a liberating community?

To make her denunciations more credible, the Church, perhaps, must recognize more sincerely, deeply and humbly her contribution to historical and current oppression and servitude. Have the Church and many Christians -including myself- not been often, nearer to oppressive power and wealth than to liberating humble service and spiritual poverty? Theologian Federico Pastor writes:

It is not necessary to be an enemy of the Church to realize how often the community and the hierarchies have been and are oppressive, in many levels... It is no exag-

geration to say that the Christians have not presented and do not present, in general, the model of life of those who have been liberated by Christ to live in freedom.¹⁸

Denouncing oppression appropriately, that is, after a serious socio-cultural analysis of the situation, implies also to find out and condemn the wrong paths of liberation.

4.2 THE WRONG PATHS OF LIBERATION

We have repeated that truth, justice and love are the inseparable companions of freedom. Any path, therefore, which is paved by the manipulation of truth about man, his dignity and rights, or by social injustice, or by personal or collective selfishness or hatred cannot lead to freedom; it is not, then, a good liberating path.

Libertatis Conscientia tells us that the liberating movements which do not respect truth and love –including justice– are doomed to fail, for their result is “the death of freedom” (no. 24). Likewise, when science, technology, economics and politics are not measured by truth and love, they will produce forms of oppression; for example, when technological expertise was applied to acts of genocide (no. 14).

The truly liberating activities are those that are in conformity with human dignity and rights (76), and promote justice. Injustice, in particular, is a wrong path of liberation; most particularly injustice to the poor: *injustice to the little ones and the poor is a grave sin and one which destroys communion with God* (no. 46). The fight against injustice is to be done according to the demand of justice – by just means (no. 78).

Social discrimination, absence of people’s participation, cultural, social and political marginalization cannot pave the way to freedom. Instruction 2 states forcefully:

No one can be excluded from participation in social and political life for reasons of sex, race, colour, social condition, language or religion. Keeping people on the mar-

¹⁸ F. PASTOR, *Liberación y Libertad* (Madrid: Narcea, S. A. Ed., 1982), pp. 81-82, 62.

gins of cultural, social and political life constitutes in many nations one of the most glaring injustices of our time (no. 95).

Libertatis Conscientia underlines the need for man to be personally liberated and become a liberator: without God, man becomes alienated and, therefore, can not walk along the right path of liberation and freedom. When man denies God and rejects the truth about Him, he becomes alienated -from himself, from others, from the cosmos. He then tries endlessly to satisfy his longing for the infinite by abusing people and things, and thus contributing to creating and maintaining oppressive and enslaving structures of human life (no. 42).

How do we walk by the path of liberation? Instruction 2 answers: not by the way of revolution. Revolution as a way to abolish oppression is not acceptable. While fostering the illusion of creating a more humane society, it also encourages the setting up of totalitarian regimes (no. 78). Understood as violent revolution, this is not a path to freedom. In fact, systematic recourse to violence usually leads to new forms of servitude (76). As stressed in Instruction 1, violence begets violence and degrades man.¹⁹

We can walk the path of liberation through social confrontation, but not through "class struggle," the struggle of one class against another in order to eliminate the enemy; this is part of "a mistaken acceptance of an alleged law of history." Besides, evangelical liberation is incompatible with hatred of other people; indeed, the Gospel demands love of all people, including the enemies and persecutors.²⁰

In most situations of servitude and oppression, revolutionary violence is not accepted by the Church as a liberating path. Likewise, oppressive or repressive violence of the established order (or, better, disorder) cannot be condoned much less accept-

¹⁹ CDF, *Libertatis Nuntius*, XI, 7.

²⁰ Cf. CDF, *Libertatis Conscientia*, No. 77; ID., *Libertatis Nuntius*, XI, 11, where we read: "The class struggle as a road towards a classless society is a myth which slows reform and aggravates poverty and injustice. Those who allow themselves to be caught up in fascination with this myth should reflect on the bitter examples history has to offer about where it leads."

ed as a way to freedom. Other strategies or tactics that cannot be used by either governments or insurgents are: reprisals against the general population, torture, or methods of terrorism, deliberate provocations aimed at causing death during popular demonstrations, and smear campaigns which can destroy a person psychologically or morally (79).

Abusive powers, like tyrannies which scoff at human rights with impunity (no. 17), and dictatorships, which curtail unjustly the exercise of freedom and the right for liberation, cannot lead people to true freedom. In a strong text, Instruction 2 says:

When the political authorities regulate the exercise of freedoms, they cannot use the pretext of the demands of public order and security in order to curtail those freedoms systematically. Nor can the alleged principle of national security, or a narrowly economic outlook, or a totalitarian concept of social life, prevail over the value of freedom and its rights (no. 95).

5. THE RIGHT PATHS TO FREEDOM

Christian liberation, or the liberation of Christ and in Christ, is the process of freedom towards full freedom. It is the action of the believers in Jesus Christ, of the community of faith, that promotes and defends freedom as a basic dimension of human and Christian life.

In the perspective of the Good News of Jesus, of the Gospel, a powerful liberating force, what are the right paths of liberation?

5.1. THE RIGHT PATHS OF LIBERATION

The ordinary path of liberation is the way of reform -of *in-depth reforms* (no. 99). The journey is made by respecting and promoting the rights of freedom (no. 76), by working out and setting in motion "ambitious programs" aimed at the socio-economic liberation of millions of oppressed men and women of our world, those caught in an "intolerable situation of economic, so-

cial and political oppression" (no. 81), by courageously making far-reaching reforms and suppressing unjustifiable privileges (cf. no. 78).

The liberating path of deep and wide social reforms is doing the truth, and fighting for justice and solidarity. The strategies singled out by *Libertatis Conscientia* are: frank and vigorous dialogue (nos. 84 and 77), joint action (77), popular demonstrations (79), associations and unions (77), and movements of solidarity for freedom (89).

The pathway of social change from oppression to freedom is also the route of passive resistance (79), or non-violent action. This strategy for change of passive (it would be more accurate, perhaps, to call it *active*) resistance is rooted on the message and life of meekness of Jesus Christ, and practiced also successfully by Gandhi, who through non-cooperation and civil disobedience, and based on the power of truth ("Satyagraha"), succeeded in fighting political oppression, social injustice and collective selfishness. Although Instruction 2 frowns explicitly on the "myth of revolution" (no. 78), it does approve implicitly of non-violent revolution. An outstanding example of active resistance, of non-violent revolution is the Philippines' February 1986 popular revolution, which, led by the reformist group of the army and the backing of the Church, was able to topple, through non-violent and prayerful action, the dictatorial and corrupted Marcos regime.

The road to follow by the Christians and all men and women of good will, to struggle for truth, justice, freedom and solidarity, is the way of dialogue and negotiation, of social confrontation but not of "class struggle," and of joint action. This is more in conformity with moral principles and Christian imperatives than the violent fight. Violent struggle, however, can also be used as a strategy of liberation, according to Instruction 2; but only as a last resort when the peaceful means have already been exhausted and in extraordinary situations; that is, "to put an end to an obvious and prolonged tyranny which is gravely damaging the fundamental rights of individuals and the common good" (no. 79).

CDF's Instruction 1, *Libertatis Nuntius*, speaks strongly against revolutionary violence or armed struggle as a strategy

against oppression and injustice: "To put one's trust in violent means in the hope of restoring more justice is to become the victim of a fatal illusion."²¹ We feel that the widening and deepening trend towards active non-violence is one of the greatest signs and, therefore, messenger of the Word of the God, of our times.

Libertatis Conscientia refers its teaching on armed struggle to Paul VI's Encyclical *Populorum Progressio* no. 31 (and also to Pius XI's Encyclical *Nos es muy conocida*). Paul VI, however, as far as we know, did not use that famous, and often abused, text again. On the contrary, he spoke apparently against it: "I give a categorical 'no' to revolutionary violence, for this is neither evangelical nor Christian." Meanwhile, John Paul II has also spoken strongly against any kind of violence and in favor of non-violence. Likewise, some local Churches, in particular the Latin American Bishops Conference (CELAM) and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP). Seven days after the fraudulent elections of February 7, 1986, CBCP issued a powerful, prophetic Statement which certainly energized many Christians to oust the Marcos' twenty years regime. The Philippine Bishops wrote:

The way indicated to us now is the way of non-violent struggle for justice. This means active resistance of evil by peaceful means — in the manner of Christ.

In a creative, imaginative way, under the guidance of Christ's Spirit, let us pray together, reason together, decide together, act together, always to the end that the truth prevail, that the will of the people be fully respected.

But, we insist: our acting must always be according to the Gospel of Christ, that is, in a peaceful, non-violent way.²²

²¹ CDF, *Libertatis Nuntius*, XI, 7: "It mocks the dignity of man in the person of the victims and it debases that same dignity among those who practice it"; cf. *Ibid.*, XI, 10.

²² CBCP, *Post-Election Statement*: February 14, 1986; PAUL VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 37. JOHN PAUL II said in Ireland: "Violence is a lie, for it goes against the truth of our faith, the truth of our humanity Violence is a crime against humanity, for it destroys the very fabric of society" (*Address to the People of Ireland*: October 1, 1979). And the Pope said in India: "I wish to express to the people of India and of the world my profound conviction that the peace and justice of which contemporary society has such

Let us add that the conditions set forth by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in *Libertatis Conscientia* are hard to be fulfilled, if not impossible. These conditions are: armed struggle is *admitted in extreme cases, as a last resort* and only applicable after a *very rigorous analysis of the situation has been made*. Still we think that humanity's and, more so, Christianity's march to freedom seem to shun, more and more, violent struggle against grave oppression and slavery. (In the awesome context of nuclear arms, one can hardly defend, if at all, armed struggle as a moral path of liberation towards freedom; in particular, at the practical level.)

The most important strategy in the liberating path of indepth reforms, "the primary task" (no. 99) is an educational one; that is, what social ethics calls *liberating education* through "conscientization." The means of action, Instruction 2 avers, must be in conformity with human dignity and facilitate education for freedom (no. 76). This education centers on education for the civilization of work, education for solidarity, and access to culture by all (81).

Education for the civilization of work involves principally: full recognition of the dignity of work; just wages; participation of workers, and sharing in the fruits of their work; priority of work over capital; principles of solidarity and subsidiarity. *Libertatis Conscientia* summarizes here the innovative teachings of John Paul II in *Laborem Exercens* (1981).

Education for solidarity is a necessary demand of human and supernatural brotherhood. Considering the lack of solidarity among

great need will be achieved only along the path which was at the core of Gandhi's teaching: the supremacy of the spirit and Satyagraha, the 'truth-force', which conquers without violence by the dynamism intrinsic to just action. Mahatma Gandhi taught that if all men and women, whatever the differences between them, cling to the truth, with respect for the unique dignity of every human being, a new world order — a civilization of love — can be achieved. And today we hear him still pleading with the world: 'Conquer hate by love, untruth by truth, violence by suffering' (*A Message and a Prayer for Peace*: Raj Ghat, India, February 1, 1986; in *L'Osservatore Romano* [February 3, 1986], p. 2). The Latin American Bishops Conference (CELAM): "Violence inexorably engenders new forms of oppression and bondage" (*Puebla Document*, Nos. 532-533). The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP): "Let us renounce in theory and in practice violence as part of our apostolate" (*A Dialogue for Peace*: February 1983).

social groups and nations (Paul VI had said in *Populorum Progressio* that this lack of solidarity is the greatest tragedy of our times), new forms of solidarity must be created, including solidarity of the poor among themselves, solidarity of the rich -persons and nations- with the poor; solidarity among the workers and with the workers, solidarity among institutions and social organizations (89). This widening movement of universal solidarity is directed principally to the levelling of the huge inequalities there are in our world. Thus,

It is perfectly legitimate that those who suffer oppression on the part of the wealthy or the politically powerful should take action, through morally licit means, in order to secure structures and institutions in which their rights will be truly respected (LC, 75).

Access to culture for all, because "every human being has a right to culture" (no. 92). The State must respect cultural freedom: it is the competence of public authorities to promote and protect the cultural life of everyone, including that of minorities (93); they cannot, therefore, determine culture nor debase it by ideologies. Concerning the inalienable right of every individual to education, the State has a subsidiary role only, that is, to guarantee, protect, promote and supplement the educating task of the family, to which it primarily belongs. Within the context of cultural and religious freedom, the State cannot merely tolerate private schools, but it is obliged to give them financial assistance, because such schools render a public service (cf. no. 94).

5.2 THE PRAXIS OF CHRISTIAN LIBERATION

To fight social oppression effectively, one has to become liberated himself -from sin and for love. The People of God are required by their vocation to freedom to denounce realistically and humbly the different forms of servitude and oppression, and to announce, particularly by liberating deeds, the liberation of Christ.

With God's grace and love in his heart, "walking according to the Spirit" (Rom 8:4), in communion with his brothers and

sisters, man is asked by his faith to renounce sin constantly, to fight falsehood, injustice and selfishness in his heart, in others, in the structures of society. He is continually challenged to become true and truthful, just, a peacemaker, poor in spirit, in love with God and all men, particularly the poor and wretched of the earth.

In a real sense, *conversion* is the purpose of evangelization, of the mission of the Church; above all, conversion at the depth of the person. Christ came to call all to conversion (LC, 66); that is, to renounce sin and return to God. Conversion, *metanoia* means change of mind and of heart, a radical and total change of the human person -of his fundamental options, his basic attitudes and concrete action. In the face of mounting oppressions, the Christian is asked to be converted, to repent (Mt 4:17). The believers in Jesus, like the first Christians, ask: "What must we do, brothers?" The answer of Christ, of the Gospel, of his Church: "Renounce sin and return to God." We read in *Libertatis Conscientia*: "The first thing to be done is to appeal to the spiritual and moral capacities of the individual and to the permanent need for inner conversion, if one is to achieve the economic and social changes that will truly be at the service of man" (no. 75).

The loss of the sense of sin in our world is one of its great tragedies, for to be liberated from sin, one has to recognize sin. True renewal of heart and mind is based, according to the Synod of Bishops' 71, "on the recognition of sin in its individual and social manifestations."²³

Personal conversion, however, cannot be authentic without the action for freedom -and justice, truth and love. To be really liberating, conversion must be practically conversion to God and our brothers and sisters. That is why conversion is a never-ending process of life, which is *continuing conversion*, a permanent Christian attitude and existential task, actualized and strengthened by prayer (cf Ez 17:8-16; 1 Tim 2:1-8), the hearing of the Word, celebration of the Sacraments -channels of grace and energy to opractice and fight for freedom-, and the practice

²³ SYNOD OF BISHOPS '71, *Justice in the World*. No. 51; cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Reconciliation and Penance* (December 11, 1984), No. 16.

of all virtues, which are mediations of love and therefore expressions of true Christian freedom.

The Christian practice of liberation is the practice of *the great commandment of love*, the supreme principle of Christian social ethics (cf LC, 71). Love is the form of all virtues (St. Thomas). To love is the Christian commandment and value (cf I Cor 13). Hence: "love; then, do what you want" (St. Augustine), "for then you will love loyalty, purity, justice, generosity, and, in a word, all good."²⁴ This love-charity is individedly love of God and neighbor, and is expressed by doing works of charity (the practice of beneficence) and by working for structural change (the practice of social charity). The demands of the Gospel, according to *Libertatis Conscientia*, are summarized in the supreme commandment of love of God and neighbor in justice (no. 72; cf 68).

As it is well known, the love of the Christian is absolute and universal: it excludes no one and, therefore, it includes enemies and persecutors. Many times, in fact, this love is a crucified love (cf. Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23). It is principally, preferentially *love of the poor*. Instruction 2 speaks forcefully of *a love of preference* and of *a special option for the poor* (no. 68); in the now usual expression of pastors (including John Paul II) and theologians (particularly the theologians of liberation, to whom it must be attributed): *a preferential option for the poor*. In an article on this "love of preference for the poor," theologian Carlos Estrada prefers this to "a preferential option for the poor." The author writes: "*Love of preference for the poor?* By all means *Preferential option for the poor?* As long as it is not exclusive." But we may ask: Can it be an exclusive option if it is preferential?²⁵

Since Vatican II, and more dramatically since Medellin (1968), the preferential option for the poor or the love of preference for the poor is a recurring theme of the social teachings

²⁴ J. MOUROUX, *The Meaning of Man* (New York: Image Books, 1948), p. 147; cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS I-II, 23, 8.

²⁵ Cf. C. ESTRADA, "Confronting Reality: Preferential Option for the Poor," *Manila Times* (April 22, 1986), p. 5.

of the Church and the local Churches. Once convinced that the preferential option of the poor is a binding option for all Christians, as an essential characteristic in the following of Jesus, the People of God must be deeply committed to its practice. To practice it means essentially to witness poverty in spirit, a simple life-style, and solidarity with the poor centered on sharing. Instruction 2 explains poverty in spirit: "It is this sort of poverty made up of detachment, trust in God, sobriety and a readiness to share" (no. 66).

To be committed to the poor, one has to be converted. Conversion is conversion from sin and conversion to God and neighbor, particularly, again and always, the poor. Segundo Galilea writes: "A conversion to the Lord always implies as an important dimension a turning to the poor."²⁶ As for the celebration of the Eucharist, Schillebeeckx says:

The great scandal among us is not intercommunion among Christians of different communications; that is a sign of hope. The scandal is the intercommunion of rich Christians who remain rich and poor Christians who remain poor while celebrating the same eucharist, taking no notice of the Christian model of sharing possessions: the sharing of the one cup of salvation among one another. For this salvation also has social and economic consequences.²⁷

God, the Father of Jesus Christ and, adoptionally, of all those united to Him, is the Liberator of his Chosen People, oppressed by Egypt, the house of bondage: the Exodus is model and reference for God's liberating actions (no. 44).

Christ is the Universal Liberator of humankind throughout the ages. By His message, and His life, death and resurrection, He is the paradigm of authentic liberation. He is the freest Man who ever walked on earth, always obedient to the Father (Jn 6:38; 4:34). The Spirit of Jesus, that guides the Church and every Christian, is the source of freedom and liberation: to journey to freedom is to walk according to the Spirit (Rom 8:4).

²⁶ Cf. S. GALILEA, *Following Jesus* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1983), p. 32.

²⁷ E. SCHILLEBEECKX, *God Among Us, The Gospel Proclaimed* (London: SCM Press Ltd. 1983), p. 178.

Other models for the Christians to follow in their journey to freedom are the saints, who contributed -and contribute today- substantially with their lives to liberate many people. The past and the present saints, including so many martyrs who have died fighting against oppression and for freedom continue to be for all an example of commitment to and solidarity with the oppressed and the poor. In particular is Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, a Poor of Yahweh, a perfect image of freedom and of the liberation of humanity and of the universe (LC, 97).

As we have mentioned earlier, the mission of the Church is evangelization: one mission to be carried out by various ministries. *Libertatis Conscientia* emphasizes that the transformation of the secular order belongs properly to Christian lay men and women, and not to pastors. There is the danger today, as some lay organizations have already pointed out, of the "clericalization" of politics. The political construction and the organization of social life form part of the vocation of the laity, who are asked to act on their own initiative with their fellow-citizens (no. 80). Moreover, Instruction 2 underlines, following the Synod of Bishops '85, the importance and relevance of the so-called Basic Ecclesial Communities in their commitment to the complete liberation of man.

The Christian, then, is asked by his faith in Jesus Christ, to follow His example, that is, to cooperate with the grace and love poured in his repentant heart by the Spirit of Christ. To liberate others, he needs to be liberated himself previously or simultaneously and always! To be a liberator in the Community of freedom, the Church, he is called to be a saint. (Leon Bloy used to say: "To be a saint? Just one step beyond mediocrity.") John Paul II has said: "The Church of today does not need any new reforms. The Church needs new saints." Gandhi had said: "Our age needs saints, not politicians."

6. LIBERATION THEOLOGY AND CHRISTIAN LIBERATION

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued *Libertatis Nuntius*, or Instruction 1 to warn theologians and all Christians of the dangers of some theologies of liberation. CDF pub-

lished *Libertatis Conscientia* or Instruction 2 to present the theory and praxis of Christian freedom and liberation. Thus, while Instruction 1 is directly concerned with the theology of liberation, Instruction 2 is only indirectly, implicitly connected with liberation theology. After the two Vatican documents, how does the theology of liberation appear? How do theologians of liberation evaluate the second document?

6.1 LIBERATION THEOLOGY AND THEOLOGIAN'S OF LIBERATION

In September 1984, the Vatican's CDF issued the 36-page *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation."* Contrary to some sensational press reports and theological commentaries, Instruction 1 does not condemn the theology of liberation, not even most of its currents. It only warns of the serious ideological deviations of some theologies of liberation; in particular, *concepts uncritically borrowed from marxist ideology, and recourse to theses of a biblical hermeneutics marked by rationalism.*²⁹

In April 1986 CDF published the 59-page *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation.* Contrary to the expectations of some quarters in the Church and in the world, Instruction 2 does not deal directly and explicitly with the theology of liberation, but with Christian liberation in world context; that is, the universal liberation stemming from the faith in Christ and proclaimed by the Church, as we face the hopes and afflictions of our societies. It is basically a doctrinal document; but directly concerned with and committed to the Christian practice of liberation and freedom in a world that longs and fights for liberation, but is still plagued with grave oppressions and servitudes.

During the nineteen months that passed from the publication of *Libertatis Nuntius* to the issuance of *Libertatis Conscientia*, some important events took place -events that had a real impact on the *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*: the continued debate on The Ratzinger Report, the CDF directive im-

²⁸ Cf. CDF, *Libertatis Conscientia*, No. 69; ID., *Libertatis Nuntius*, XI, 18; SYNOD OF BISHOPS '85, *Final Report*, II, C, 6.

²⁹ CDF, *Libertatis Nuntius*, Introd.; XII, 1; V, 10.

posing a one-year silence on liberation theologian Leonardo Boff (it was lifted one month earlier, just before the presentation of Instruction 2), and the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops '85 re-launching Vatican II (with its heated pre-synodal forecasts and unwarranted fears). Instruction 2 had a long period of gestation, due to the wide consultations with local Churches and theological experts that preceeded its final text.

The Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation was positively received by most theologians and sectors of the Church, including the theologians of liberation. Two theologians of liberation, Ignacio Ellacuria and Jon Sobrino, however, criticized it, to our opinion, rather negatively.

Ellacuria sees the second Vatican document -and rightly- not as theology of liberation, but as a new formulation of the social doctrine of the Church, which he evaluates as too abstract. According to him, Instruction 2 "takes very little from the great richness of the theology of liberation"; he also questions negatively the method of universalization used, and the place from where it comes out, namely, the European culture, which is not the most appropriate place (Latin America is). The theologian from El Salvador even complains about the scarce use by the CDF of Puebla and Medellin; the latter, he says, is quoted only once. We are tempted to ask Ellacuria: How many times are documents from other Churches used by Instruction 2? Nevertheless, Ellacuria also sees a positive general aspect: he admits that it can be read, reflected on and put into practice with great profit.³⁰

Jon Sobrino, the popular author of *Christology at the Crossroads*, does not seem to find Vatican's second document very helpful either. According to him, it embraces too many things without deepening on them, giving a formally similar approach to really different problems; he also sees the document as doctrinal and abstract in tone. There is not sufficient theological depth nor a concrete historical analysis; and, although it deals with themes of the theology of liberation, it is not appropriately its sub-

³⁰ "Responden los teólogos de la liberación," *Vida Nueva*, No. 525 (April 19, 1986), pp. 24-25. See I. ELLACURIA, "Estudio teológico-pastoral de la Instrucción sobre algunos aspectos de la teología de la liberación," *Revista Latinoamericana de Teología*, 2 (1984), 145-178.

tance, finality and mood. Sobrino underlines three major differences between *Libertatis Conscientia* and the theology of liberation; first, the Vatican document shows mistrust, facing the history of freedom and liberation while the theology of liberation does not; secondly, the document takes the orienting principle "the truth will make you free," but the theology of liberation explains it better; thirdly, while Instruction 2 distinguishes properly between the personal-spiritual-eschatological and the social-material-historical planes, it subordinates improperly the second to the first and, therefore, Sobrino concludes, "still does not understand the synthesis between both planes."³¹ Sobrino's positive comments: he believes that the needed dialogue between the theology of liberation and the Vatican is still possible; he asks bishops, priests, theologians, parishes and theological movements to answer with the proper decision the oppressions described in Instruction 2. Earlier, he charged *Libertatis Conscientia* with triumphalism.

Far from the criticism of Ellacuria and Sobrino are the conciliatory and dialogical remarks of liberation theologians Gustavo Gutierrez and Leonardo Boff. Gutierrez, the author of the seminal work *A Theology of Liberation*, finds the Vatican document a positive one. With it, a new era begins, an era that, "with the necessary attention and maturity, will allow us to place all our energies in the service of the task of proclaiming the integrity of the Gospel to all people, particularly to the poor and oppressed." He adds: "The second *Instruction* has critical observations and important assertions in relation to the evangelizing task of the Church in the present. They are themes that must be worked out, deepened and reflected on, but they place things from now on in a wide horizon. In this, the discussion on the theology of liberation may find a different perspective to the one had during the past years."

Gutierrez points out that regarding freedom and liberation, there are many things that need to be clarified; with other theologians of liberation, he has the impression that they are read in a key which is not theirs. Everything considered, however, "the

³¹ ID., *Vida Nueva*, l.c., pp. 25-26.

positive tone of the document creates at the same time an atmosphere of work and a process to be developed, which it is underlined by the text itself when it speaks of the non-exhaustive character of the themes touched in it."³²

Leonardo Boff, the exemplary theologian from Brazil and controversial author of *Church: Charism and Power*, says that the second Vatican document was received with great joy. It is not really a theology of liberation, he adds, but "a doctrinal presentation of freedom and liberation"; it is, in fact, "an official teaching of the Magisterium on the minimal principles that must be present in the theology of liberation, which must be worked out in *Europe*, which is already spread out by and large in *Latin America*, or the theology of liberation in *Africa* or *Asia*." Instruction 2 is, among other things, a vehement call of the Church to all, so that all, "including the conservative Christians -the critics of the theology of liberation- make their own the option for the poor in an effective manner and assume in their evangelization the theme freedom and liberation." Moreover, the document backs, according to the author of *Liberating Grace*, the different fights -big and small- of the people for liberation and freedom.³³

As it spoke negatively of some theologies of liberation, we would have liked that CDF had talked positively of most of the theologies of liberation, of the theology of liberation, in general -explicitly and directly. Fortunately, John Paul II did that a few days after the publication of Instruction 2. In a Letter to the Brazilian Episcopal Conference, dated April 9, 1986, the Pope said: "*The theology of liberation is not only timely but useful and necessary.*" This is the strongest positive statement of the Church on the theology of liberation -and a most welcome one.

For the theology of liberation to be really useful and even necessary, John Paul II points out, it must be "consistent and coherent with the teachings of the Gospel, of the living tradition and of the ongoing Magisterium of the Church." Thus, the theology of liberation, the Holy Father adds, should constitute a new stage in theological reflection, closely connected with the previous

³² ID, *Vida Nueva*, l.c., 27-28.

³³ ID, *Vida Nueva*, l.c., 28-30.

ones. Therefore, the *correct and necessary* theology of liberation must continue being developed in a *homogeneous way* in relation with the theology of all times, in full fidelity to Church doctrine, attentive to a preferential love for the poor.³⁴

The theology of liberation represents in the Church a new stage in theological reflection. Some theologians of liberation seem to emphasize the "newness" of their doing theology, but not the "linkage" with the previous theological reflections, with traditional (not conservative) theology. Their doing theology depends also upon other theologies (and theologians), such as political theology, theology of hope, etc. And even of the classical theology done by the great theologians, including St. Thomas. In this regard, Clodovis Boff wrote an illuminating article on St. Thomas and the theology of liberation.³⁵

Although Instruction 2 does not speak directly of the contribution of the theologies of liberation to the theory and praxis of Christian freedom and liberation, it does use it implicitly; particularly regarding the option for the poor, the significance of orthopraxis, the relevance of Basic Christian Communities, the liberating message of Exodus, Mary's *Magnificat*, prayer of commitment, etc. We can say that the theology of liberation is substantially accepted by *Libertatis Conscientia*, and even given a new impulse. Therefore, Instruction 2 does not tame the theology of

³⁴ JOHN PAUL II, *Letter to Brazilian Episcopal Conference*, No. 5.

³⁵ Cf. C. BOFF, "Santo Tomás de Aquino y la Liberación—carta a un teólogo," *Christus*, No. 553 (March 1982), pp. 44-51. CLODOVIS BOFF writes: "You tell me that you have professors who in the name of St. Thomas Aquinas are opposed to the theology of liberation... No, I find that the relationship between St. Thomas and the theology of liberation is profound in four levels. In the first place, Thomas Aquinas, that is, his theology, is linked to the theology of liberation at the level of pre-suppositions: the theology of liberation exists and can exist only if it is based in the previous theological tradition, within which the theology of St. Thomas occupies an acknowledged and eminent place. In the second place, St. Thomas is linked with the theology of liberation at the level of subject-matter; in fact, he was really a 'political theologian' of his time like the theologians of liberation are today. In the third place, St. Thomas connects with the theology of liberation as example, within the sense that he assumes theological mediations: Thomas Aquinas confronts the cultural challenge of his time — Aristotelianism from the perspective of faith and he does it in an exemplary manner. In the fourth place, Thomas Aquinas is near the theology of liberation because he was a militant theologian, because he theologized connecting with praxis, although this might seem surprising to us."

liberation, but considers it in the wider horizon of the universal Church. Instruction 1 has warned on the dangerous flirting of a few theologies of liberation with Marxism; it does not either tame the "useful and necessary" theology of liberation, but has tried to purify it. What some theologians of liberation must try to understand is that their doing liberation theology is not the only authentic way of doing it; there are other ways and, thus, other theologies of liberation, as Leonardo Boff said when commenting on Instruction 2.³⁶

6.2 CHRISTIAN LIBERATION

Christian liberation is Christ's liberation, continued in the Church and in the local Churches. It is radically, in any sociological context, a liberation *from sin and for love*, including truth, freedom and justice. The principles, criteria and guidelines for action presented in Instruction 2 are the general elements to be considered by particular Churches and theologies, from the various social situations and cultural and historical contexts.

Libertatis Conscientia encourages different contextualized and inculturated theologies (cf. nos. 70 and 96), which will highlight from different particular experiences, new aspects within the unfathomable richness of the Word of God, as long as it is a true reading of the Sacred Scriptures, and as long as the unique experience is interpreted within the experience of the Church. In this perspective, the local Churches are asked to apply the document to their respective situations (cf. no. 2).

Today's theologians are further asked by Instruction 2 to make the truth, which frees people, the light and guide of all theolo-

³⁶ DEANNE WILLIAM FERM writes: "Liberation theology has many different emphases, depending on where has it emerged. For example, one could roughly generalize that Latin American liberation theology zeroes in on social, political and economic oppression; South African liberation theology stresses the racial component; Asian liberation theology in its pluralistic religious setting strongly affirms that liberation must include coming to positive terms with the major living religions; and North American liberation theology has had several emphases: black theology, red theology, feminist to positive terms with the major living religions; and North American liberationist theology, gay theology — and even these theologies have their varieties" ("Third World Liberation Theology: What's it all about," *The Irish Theological Quarterly*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (1985), p. 309).

gical and pastoral reflection on freedom and liberation (no. 3). A renewed indepth reflection is needed on the relationship between the commandment of love and the social order so that appropriate programs of socio-economic-political liberation can be implemented (no. 81). Theologians are also asked by the social teachings of the Church to help the poor express their faith, and not to manipulate popular religiosity -for this would be "criminal" (no. 98) As all Christians, they are also asked to let the poor evangelize them: Puebla spoke of "the evangelizing potential" of the poor and oppressed.³⁷

Furthermore, we like to add, theologians like all Christians are encouraged not to be overcritical. This might appear, if it has not yet, "a holier-and-wiser-than-thou" attitude. The time has come for all to denounce less and announce more: to announce, more by deeds than by words, the liberating paths to full freedom. The perfect world, the perfect Church does not, cannot exist: full freedom is here impossible! The theologians' task in the Church is to read and discern the signs of the times in the light of faith. Bernard Haring speaks of discernment as the virtue of critique, which shuns two extreme directions, namely, idle conformism and vicious critique and chooses -and develops- critique in the sight of God. The virtue of critique, or discernment, presupposes "gentle persuasion, self-control and commitment to non-violent speech and action."³⁸

After all, by ourselves we can do very little; "if the Lord does not build the house, in vain do its builders labor" (Ps 127:1). But, with God's grace and love energizing us, urging us we can do a lot, although, at times, failures can be the way to freedom. Facing the seemingly unsurmountable tidal waves of servitude and oppression at all levels in our societies, many Christians are tempted to be discouraged or indifferent -even despairing. The

³⁷ CELAM, *The Puebla Document*, No. 1147.

³⁸ B. HARING, *Free and Faithful in Christ*, Vol. I (London: St. Paul Publications, 1978), p. 258. Constructive criticism is, of course, necessary in the Church and Churches. Writes HARING: "We must also be ready to accept criticism from others and to acknowledge our own shortcomings and faults. We have to listen to the prophets even if they shake us and unmask our errors. Towards community and society, critique must be exercised as a ministry in continuing service for the common good. However, one should have given a hundred signs of solidarity and cooperation before proffering one effective and credible protest" (Ibid.).

Christian attitude, however, cannot be pessimistic (this would be a form of slavery); neither can it be escapist (this would not liberate: escapism is another form of servitude). It has to be hopeful – with a faithful and loving hope. As pilgrims in the world, we make the journey to heaven, to full freedom in joyful hope, even in the midst of suffering, struggling for liberation like the Poor of Yahweh, like Mary, like the saints.

As I close these comments, a few texts from the *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation* keep coming back to my mind. With these texts I conclude these notes:

The evil inequities and oppression of every kind which afflict millions of men and women today openly contradict Christ's Gospel and cannot leave the conscience of any Christian indifferent (no. 57).

It is perfectly legitimate that those who suffer oppression on the part of the wealthy or the politically powerful should take action, through morally licit means, in order to secure structures and institutions in which their rights will be truly respected (no. 75).

Access for everyone to the goods needed for a human, personal and family life worthy of the name is a primary demand of social justice (no. 88).

Injustice to the little ones and the poor is a grave sin and one which destroys communion with God (no. 46).

The Son of God who has made himself poor for love of us wishes to be recognized in the poor, in those who suffer or are persecuted: "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (no. 50).

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