

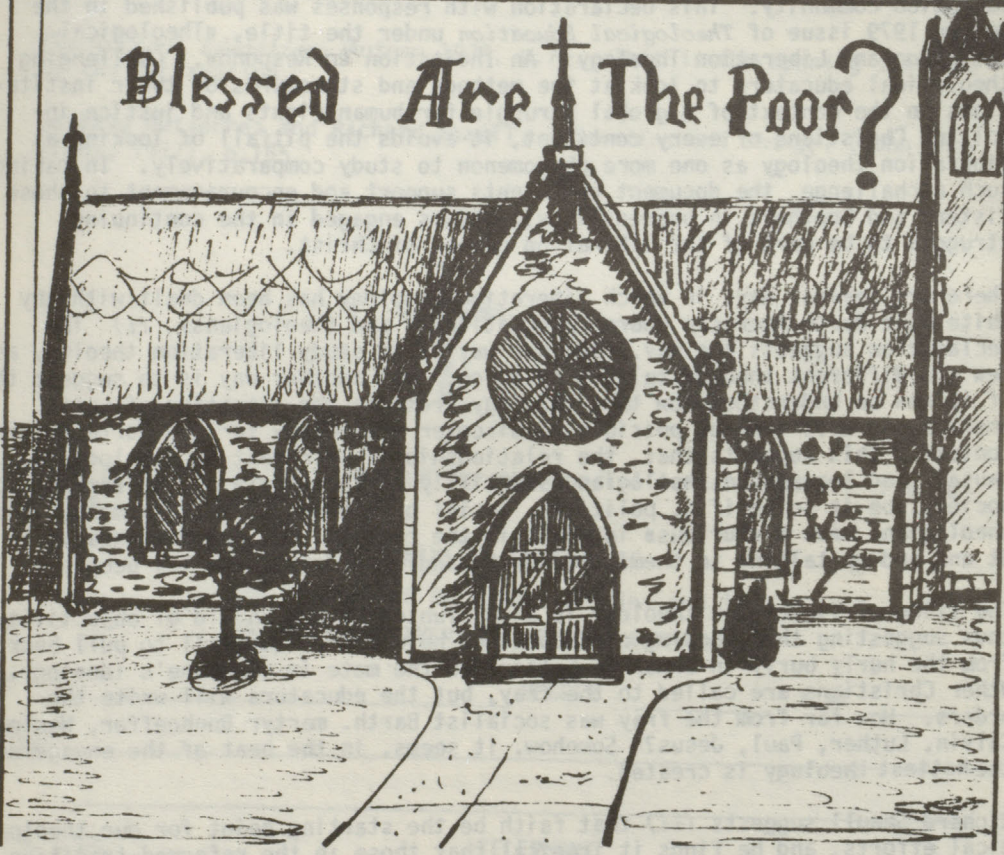
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Liberation Theology

Blessed Are The Poor?



A publication of the theological community of the Faculty of Religious Studies of McGill University, its affiliated Colleges (Anglican, Presbyterian and United Church) and the Montreal Institute for Ministry.

INTRODUCING THIS ISSUE. . .

TOM EDMONDS

The new way of theologizing out of the depths of the human struggle for justice has been recognized for some time now as a legitimate function of theology. In an attempt to exercise this function, and take the essence of liberation theology seriously, a group of American theologians, after considerable consultation, produced a challenging declaration for the theological education community. This declaration with responses was published in the Autumn 1979 issue of *Theological Education* under the title, «Theological Education and Liberation Theology: An Invitation to Respond». Challenging theological educators to look at the methods and structures of their institutions in the context of a global struggle for human rights and justice involving Christians of every continent, it avoids the pitfall of looking at liberation theology as one more phenomenon to study comparatively. In making such a challenge, the document represents support and encouragement to those sisters and brothers in oppressive situations engaged in the continuing struggle to be part of the liberating gospel of Christ.

There are several ways in which liberation theology has been dealt with «by white male North American church practitioners and theologians». (i) The declaration suggests one way. Another way is to study liberation theology as a new and different theological articulation. Yet another way is to suggest that if it can be understood how this theology arose in the situation of Latin America, it will then be possible to discover a theology for the North American context. This suggests that the relationship of a context to theology is causal, and leaves the theologian essentially on the margin of the ferment in society, be it scientific, political, social or economic. In this manner the theologians have a «curious» interest in the context, but are not engaged in it and end up talking to themselves or a handful of «trained» lay people.

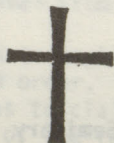
The sting of liberation theology is also blunted by the shield of objectivity, thus suggesting that theological educators have the unique call to pull back from the hurly burly in order to better see the mote in everyone's ideology. Other Christians are called to the fray, but the educators will write the orders. How far from the fray was socialist Barth, martyr Bonhoeffer, Wesley, Calvin, Luther, Paul, Jesus? Somehow, it seems, in the heat of the engagement the hottest theology is created.

Richard Shaull suggests (ii) that faith be the starting point for our theological efforts, and he finds it ironical that those in the reformed tradition have to be reminded of this. Faith seeking understanding! Faith may be sealed on the mountain top, its historical solidarity understood in the classroom, but for those who are creating liberation theology the surprise of faith, its formation and tempering, come in the crucible of life, and in the hottest part of the crucible - namely the wrestling with the principalities and powers that destroy human solidarity and human flesh. The declaration, «Theological

Education and Liberation Theology» asks theological educators to see themselves and their institutions as being an integral part of that crucible and that wrestling. From our understanding of the crucified Jesus of Nazareth, this is the vantage point from which theology can unmask the wisdom of the world as folly and the folly of the victims as the wisdom of God. Let us hope that the declaration and the continuing responses in ARC and elsewhere are but the first steps in the Liberation of Theology.

Footnotes:

- i) *Theological Education*, (Autumn 1979, p.7). This is the opening sentence of the declaration.
- ii) Gustavo Gutiérrez and Richard Shaull, *Liberation and Change*, (John Knox Press, 1977), p.165.



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THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND LIBERATION THEOLOGY: AN INVITATION TO RESPOND

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We are white male North American church practitioners and theologians, trying to listen responsibly to sisters and brothers living and dying under conditions of repression, and crying out for liberation. If it was initially appropriate for a group as restricted as ours to meet and covenant together, it is no longer so. The struggle involves all people, and the circle of the concerned is as wide as any participant chooses to define it. What follows, therefore, is not a manifesto or a credo, but an invitation to others with concerns about theological education to share with us in further reflection and action. It is our corporate task to try to respond to the promise and claim of the gospel of liberation that confronts us where the cries of the oppressed and the message of our own heritage meet.

Our immediate focus is the church. Our primary concern is not individual theological purity or insight, but responsible vocation within the Christian community. What does the gospel of liberation mean for church people, laity, ministers, seminarians, denominational leaders, and particularly for those committed to the task of theological education?

Even as we focus the question, we are aware of a certain presumptuousness, a danger that our rhetoric will merely co-opt the gospel's message of full liberation, quenching what is meant to be fire on the earth. More drastic measures may be called for, more searching questions may need to be asked, than have yet occurred to us. If that is so, respondents will challenge us further. We need to listen to the voices of those outside the church, but we want also to reflect within the church about what those voices mean for our corporate life as Christians, so that we can more truly relate action and reflection--an ongoing responsibility that the word *praxis* seeks to describe.

Our world is one in which oppression, exploitation, and alienation are the lot of the majority of the human family. We need not catalogue in detail the ills to which we remain so easily indifferent: a world economic system that provides overwhelming affluence for a few within each nation and overburdening poverty for many; escalating denials of human rights both individual and social; ongoing torture of political prisoners; widespread genocide, whether of Jews, Vietnamese, South African blacks, Cambodians or Latin American mestizos; dangerous or dehumanizing work for many who are lucky enough to have any job at all. Too often the ease with which we itemize such horrors is only another index of our secure removal from their devastating effects.

For this reason we are compelled to emphasize that we are living in the midst of profound changes in the world order. These changes result in part from the effects of many oppressed peoples to claim what is rightfully theirs. Such changes challenge the affluence of the few, and the hopes for affluence and upward mobility of many others, even in so-called affluent societies like our own. The affluent and powerful are naturally doing all they can to maintain their privilege. Thus we see cutbacks in welfare and social services, along with rising unemployment as corporations and governments compete, in an increasingly competitive world market, for resources and new markets. These trends are most obvious in the systems of «National Security» in the Third World, but there are similar symptoms at home too.

We cannot escape the conclusion that the churches (whose Gospel places them unequivocally on the side of the oppressed) are usually ranged against the poor, either in overt action against them, or in covert disregard of them under the banner of presumed «neutrality.» However, there are signs of hope. Voices inside as well as outside the churches in recent years have challenged our complicity in such realities--Third World citizens, women, blacks and members of other oppressed minorities, students, working people, at home and abroad. Their cries demand that we repent, rethink, and regroup, so that we can begin to embody a Gospel that equates the knowing of God with the doing of justice.

Is it possible for professional middle-class people in situations of privilege, purchased at the cost of misery to others, to turn in new directions and create communities faithful to Jesus and the prophets? The Gospel promise of conversion suggests that it is always possible. As an initial step toward that end, we offer the following affirmations

and questions as a basis for further reflection and for action by any who care to respond:

1. *We believe that God calls the whole people of God to do justice.* Action and reflection are the responsibility of laity and clergy alike. There is no special preference or exclusion based on status, class, race, or geographical location. We are not to engage in «the doing of justice» with heavy hearts or out of stern duty, but as those who, in celebration of our own liberation at the Lord's Table, are committed to placing food on all other tables, seeking to equate word and deed.

How can theological education liberate us from narrow specialization and exclusively inward focus and free us to turn outward?

2. *We believe that in the cries of the world's suffering we hear God's call to justice.* Human cries for liberation from racism, sexism, classism, and imperialism as well as from personal sin and guilt, converge with the Gospel's claim that God offers liberation for the captives and freedom for the oppressed.

How can theological education sensitize us to hear God's call in human pain and open us to new levels of responsiveness?

How can theological education be committed to the cause of the poor if the survival of its structures remains dependent on the largesse of the non-poor?

3. *We believe that doing theology today means joining action and reflection in the light of a responsible social analysis.* Concern for liberation is not a new item to be added on to our present theological agendas; it involves a new way of doing theology that pays as much attention to the social sciences as earlier theology paid to philosophy.

How can theological education work together with those who analyze the complex relationships of domination and dependence among nations and within them, of class exploitation, racism, sexism, and imperialism?

4. *We believe that to respond to human suffering means addressing the personal, economic, and political contexts of that suffering.* Our faith demands that we recognize the struggles of others as also our own struggles, that we refuse to let «timeless truths» remain a smokescreen to shield us from the immediacy of all levels of human need, that we acknowledge that questions of political economy have theological dimensions. Concretely, this means listening carefully to those who insist that our own economic system, capitalism, is itself a barrier to justice and liberation in the world today, however threatening that insistence may initially be to us and to our constituencies.

How can theological education enable us to embrace the radical shift in perspective that is necessary if we are to become involved in collective struggles against oppression?

5. *We believe that to do justice means affirming that salvation and release from oppression are bound together. We are not permitted to separate individual salvation from social salvation, religion from politics, reflection from action, or assume that interpersonal justice can flourish in the midst of structures of corporate injustice. Concretely, we are challenged to liberate our imaginations and hope for a different kind of society. While there are no clear examples to imitate, we need to wrestle with the question of what course our society should take to promote new human possibilities in the struggle against racism, sexism, imperialism, and class exploitation. Our present course does not avert these evils, but frequently profits by them. We cannot be satisfied simply to defend the *status quo*.*

How can theological education promote a concrete living out of our faith in the struggle for a new earth?

6. *We believe that the biblical witness links theological and ethical dimensions so closely that they can never be separated. We need to engage in a radical rereading of the entire Bible, realizing that such passages as Jeremiah 22: 13-16, Luke 4:16-30, Matthew 25:31-46 and Romans 12:1-2, are not isolated instances but are reflective of the biblical message as a whole.*

How can theological education liberate us to hear Scripture in ways no longer tied to the class perspectives we ordinarily bring to it? Is there a «canon within the canon,» centering on the hermeneutical privilege of the oppressed, that is appropriate for us?

7. *We believe that concern for liberation demands a new reading of the Christian heritage from «the underside of history.» Such a reading will focus attention on emphases we have conveniently suppressed or overlooked.*

How can theological education incorporate the voices and the presence of the oppressed? And how can theological education reappropriate resources from our own history (such as insights from pre-Constantinian Christianity, the left wing of the Reformation, the «social gospel») that have been devalued and frequently derided in the past?

8. *We believe we are called to do theology as participants in a world church whose membership elsewhere is predominantly composed of the poor and oppressed. Our collective obligation is to act in such ways that the elimination of oppression is always and everywhere the goal.*

How can theological education break loose from the parochial structures that presently dominate and domesticate it, so that we can be freed to act in solidarity with those from whom we are so often separated?

9. We believe that no final theological formulation of the liberation struggle is possible. New struggles against oppression continually emerge in ways that demand new kinds of action and new modes of reflection. «Faith seeking understanding» will also be *praxis* seeking justice.

How can theological education remain responsive to the sovereign God when opened to new and threatening leadings of the Spirit that emerge out of the ongoing struggle for liberation? How can we incorporate within our life those whom heretofore we have virtually excluded?

We offer these reflections and questions as a basis for ongoing discussion and action. We are aware of the seductive theological temptation to remain absorbed in thinking without doing. We wish to be faithful to the concern of Gustavo Gutierrez, that no theology is ever as valuable as «one genuine act of solidarity with exploited social classes.» Our talk will be hollow, our achievements will be demonic, if our lives individually and institutionally fail to respond to that challenge.



FIG. 118. ROSSANO: GOSPELS. CHRIST ENTERING JERUSALEM.

WHAT IMPLICATIONS HAS LIBERATION THEOLOGY FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION? *

MONROE PEASTON

The Autumn, 1979 issue of *Theological Education* took the form of a symposium on the implications for theological education of that particular emphasis in current theology known as Liberation Theology. (i) To a set of principles formulated by twelve prominent American theologians and Church leaders, sixteen equally distinguished Americans, and one Canadian, were asked to respond. Specifically, the respondents were asked to comment on the principles and then to say what they thought were their implications for theological education.

We are to review the principles and the responses in a moment, but before doing so, it will be helpful to consider briefly the general notion of liberation and some of the particular concerns of Liberation Theology.

Liberation is an archetypal word which makes a universal appeal to the human spirit. Children rebel against physical constraints, adolescents seek deliverance from parents who probe and pry, captives long for release and humans everywhere strive to rid themselves of everything that oppresses, negates or denies their freedom and humanity. I suppose the classic musical expression of this was Beethoven's *Fidelio*. It is true that the French play by Bouilly on which the opera was based had as its title *Léonore ou l'amour conjugal*. Indeed, the courageous, self-sacrificing devotion of Leonora to her imprisoned husband becomes one of the central themes of the drama. But the reverse of that coin is the liberation of Florestan from the dark dungeon kept by the despot, Pizarro. When the final trumpet sounds, announcing the advent of the Minister, Don Fernando, and when Leonora and Florestan are re-united, the liberation of the one is celebrated just as joyfully as the self-sacrifice of the other.

There can be no doubt that Beethoven intended his only opera to be a superb musical expression of the Christian drama of redemption. He wished to convey the truth that the liberation of mankind from bondage of every sort lies at the heart of the Christian Gospel, a liberation which was impressively pre-figured in the Exodus of the Hebrew scriptures and which was announced in the synagogue at Nazareth by Jesus himself: «The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me; he has sent me to announce good news to the poor, to proclaim release for prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind; to let the broken victims go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour» (Luke 4:18).

* This question and some related issues were debated at the March 1980 meeting of the Faculty Discussion Group. The paper reproduced above was presented as an introduction to the discussion.

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But liberation is also a crucial word in our time, since ours is an age of revolution. Revolutions intend a radical change in the ordering of human life, in political and economic structures, in prevailing attitudes and ideologies. They aim to replace an old, oppressive exploitative order by a new order of liberty and peace. When the *Communist Manifesto* called upon the workers of the world to unite since they had nothing to lose but their chains, there was no doubt as to the identity of the oppressed. They were the peasants and industrial workers of Russia and elsewhere, while their oppressors were Czarist imperialists, landed aristocrats and capitalists everywhere.

As easily identifiable are the protagonists of current revolutions: man versus woman; black versus white; poor versus rich. But perhaps the most fundamental revolutionary struggle of our time is that «between advanced technological countries of the West, who have exported their developmental advantages to the Third World in the form of colonialism and neo-colonialism, and those so-called 'under-developed' countries, which are struggling to liberate both their bodies and their souls from this tutelage. This revolutionary struggle is both material and spiritual... (involving) developmental 'seed-money' ... (and) an inner revolution of spirit which liberates colonial people from the psychology of dependence and self-alienation and is based on a people's demand for its own integrity». (ii)

In the same study in which the words just cited appear, Rosemary Ruether observes that the present struggles for liberation have brought about a new awareness of the universal *humanum* with its underlying question, What does it mean to be human and how may our common humanity be realised? Of the leading theologians of liberation, no one has related this question more articulately to present liberation endeavours than Gustavo Gutiérrez. His words present a compelling vision.

To conceive of history as a process of the liberation of man is to consider freedom as a historical conquest; it is to understand that the step from an abstract to a real freedom is not taken without a struggle against all the forces that oppress man, a struggle full of pit falls, detours, and temptations to run away. 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 a man, a *permanent cultural revolution*. In other words, what is at stake above all is a dynamic and historic conception of man, oriented definitely and creatively toward his future acting in the present for the sake of tomorrow... (seeking) the conquest of new, qualitatively different ways of being a man in order to achieve an even more total and complete fulfillment of the individual in solidarity with all Mankind. (iii)

To such an existential question and vision, a theological answer must be given. As I see it, that is what a theology of liberation must attempt, but I do not see this attempt being made in some current liberation theologies. That is why I find it necessary to distinguish between a theology of liberation and a

number of liberation theologies. Because of human finitude and the ambiguities of history, all liberations can only be partial and preliminary. They anticipate, and look towards, a completed liberation «in the end time». Some liberation theologies, however, seem to suggest that the removal of one particular group of oppressors will herald the day of liberation. This is too utopian to be credible. To justify this stance, may I draw attention to a short but very perceptive article by Jürgen Moltmann entitled, «Liberation in the Light of Hope.» (iv)

Cries for liberation, Moltmann notes, ascend not only from exploited, oppressed and alienated mankind, but from creation itself. «For the created universe waits with eager expectation for God's sons to be revealed...» (Romans 8:19ff). The body and matter itself cry out for deliverance. And so does God.

In the groaning of the starving, in the agony of the imprisoned, in the senseless dying of nature the spirit of God Himself groans, hungers and sighs... God...suffers with his forsaken creation because He loves it... Through His spirit of creation... God is involved in the world's history of suffering and through His pain is implicated in it... So long as all men are not free, those who now call themselves free are also fettered. So long as men have not been reconciled to nature and nature to men, there is no complete happiness. So long as God himself suffers in His passion and has not yet come to His rest in a new creation corresponding to Him, everything is living in hope and is not yet in a fulfilled joy». (v)

Liberation theologies usually adopt a narrower stance. It is a particular group of people who are oppressed, say black people, or women, and it is a particular group of people, or set of structures, which is the oppressor, say white people, men or capitalism. Some liberation theologians then proceed to identify the Divine purpose with the liberation of that particular segment of the oppressed. Thus, in a chapter entitled «Black Theology and Black Liberation», James H. Cone comments:

Black Power is not only *consistent* with the gospel of Jesus Christ but ... *is* the gospel of Jesus Christ... Black freedom becomes a reality only when the victims of white racism declare that the oppressors have overstepped the bounds of human relations and that it is now incumbent upon black people to do what is necessary to bring a halt to the white encroachments on black dignity. (vi)

The outcome of this, however, seems a little different from that movement towards the new creation of which Moltmann speaks.

Liberation happens where the new creation of all things which will be fulfilled in Christ is anticipatorily experienced... *Freedom* as the fulfilled process of *liberation* is for Christian hope the eschatological goal of the new creation for God... The *reality* of freedom is the

eschatologically new and free world, but the *effects* of this freedom are present in the experiences and actions of liberation... We should indirectly infer from the concretely experienced effects of liberation the freedom to come. (*vii*)

This way of looking at things allows us to see that liberation, in addition to being preliminary, is a multi-dimensional process. If it occurs in a single dimension only, it becomes a partial and fragmentary affair. The struggle for economic justice against exploitation is one important dimension; the crusade for human dignity and human rights against political victimization is another; the effort to achieve human solidarity where men are alienated from one another is a third; the endeavour to achieve peace with nature against industrial destruction of the environment is a fourth; a fifth is to be seen in the struggle of hope against apathy for a meaningful personal life. Liberation, then, means freedom from exploitation, oppression, alienation, the destruction of nature and inner despair. (*viii*)

Clearly, this distinction between a theology of liberation and liberation theologies will have a bearing on the curriculum of theological schools, but before attempting to show what that is, we should proceed at once to examine the document before us.

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The principles formulated by the theologians and Church practitioners seem to have such a direct bearing on the curriculum of theological schools as to justify their underlying thesis: «that we (the Churches, and by implication their theological schools) repent, rethink, and regroup, so that we can begin to embody a Gospel that equates the knowing of God with the doing of justice» (p.18). They proceed to justify this call by setting out a series of affirmations, nine in all, which embody their convictions. Their case, broadly speaking, might be summarized as follows.

Through the voice of suffering and oppressed peoples, be they the poor of Latin America, black people in South Africa, on this continent or elsewhere, women wherever they are subject to sexist discrimination, or the undernourished and starving migrants of Cambodia, God's call to justice can be heard. To this voice the people of God must pay heed, since their calling is «to act justly, to love loyalty and to walk wisely before...God» (Micah 6:8). They must also attend to a responsible social analysis of those structures within which exploitation and injustice take place, since it is within a particular personal, political and economic context that suffering and oppression occur. Having heard the cry for justice, and having appreciated the context in which it is heard, the people of God must respond actively and reflectively so as to confront the immediacies of human need and help to secure release for the oppressed. Only in this way will some measure of justice be achieved and the Church's claim to be the servant of the Gospel of liberation be upheld.

If these matters are of concern to the whole people of God, they impose a special burden on those within the Christian community who are directly involved in the process of theological education. Somehow, the voice and presence of the exploited must be incorporated within the process of theological education so that its participants may become directly involved with collective struggles against oppression. Praxis, or involvement in the struggle of the oppressed, becomes an essential prerequisite for the doing of theology. Critical reflection must accompany and follow such praxis. This will involve a radical shift in perspective from that which now underlies theological education, but however disturbing this may be, the fundamental question remains unavoidable. How can theological education promote a concrete living out of our faith in the struggle for a new earth? (p.10).

I cannot hope to deal exhaustively or in detail with the responses that occupy the following fifty six pages of the journal, nor would it be your wish that I should. At the risk of omitting some particular insight, or of passing over some specific recommendation, I shall try to deal with the responses in a general way, and then offer some comments of my own as a preliminary to our discussion of the issues involved.

If I may be allowed to read from left to right, I would like to suggest that the respondents may be classified in six general categories. To begin with, there are the *radical positivists*, that is, those who endorse the basic thesis enthusiastically and accept its implications unquestioningly. Then there are the *critical supporters*, those who, on the whole, are favourably disposed towards the thesis but wish to qualify their acceptance of it in some way. Next come the *advocates of pluralism*, who do not wish theological education to be monopolized by any one ideology or become subservient to any one particular method. The *detached scrutineers* feel that the principle of theological objectivity must be preserved at all costs, and that all passions and commitments must be subject to critical analysis. The *rightist critics* and the *committed individualists* represent only a small minority amongst the respondents, but they speak strongly and with conviction.

The *radical positivists* rejoice in the bold and challenging statements of the theological and church practitioners. They plead for «real solidarity with the poor, the rejected, and the marginated of the world» (p.35); and for serious dialogue with those who construct and control western societies. Those involved in theological education should remember that oppression is cultural as well as socio-economic, a fact which they are more likely to appreciate if they learned the languages of the oppressed (rather than French and German) and spent their sabbatic leaves living and working amongst the poorest of the poor.

Alas, in the opinion of one radical positivist, the personal commitment of the formulators of the principles does not match their excellent statement. They would obviously like to do good, but do not choose to take the risk of being heroic. Even so, if these principles could operate at the heart of theological education, the present system would be radically changed. «If a commitment to

biblical justice interwoven throughout all the curriculum could be the distinguishing mark of our Christian colleges and universities instead of frequently insipid and noisy chapel services we would indeed transform the world» (p.34).

The *critical supporters* contend that a change in the presuppositions, commitments and priorities now evident in theological education is long overdue. What now takes place in theological schools seems far removed from the cries for justice which arise from the oppressed everywhere. The Gospel must be shown to be intimately related to the actual lives of people and to their social responsibilities. The liberation perspective should be all-pervasive and opportunities for praxis should be sought. At the same time, it should be remembered that God's saving action towards the poor is not limited to the Christian community (p.61). Moreover «there is a religious reservation about politics as well as a religious affirmation of political action» (p.61). Theology must not be diluted into politics nor divorced from it.

The *advocates of pluralism* are both distinguished and forthright. Liberation theology should be taught and analyzed but liberation should not become the *raison d'être* of a theological school. Community involvement is clearly the preferred approach for those being educated in the Third World, but this method could hardly be accommodated within the present structures of theological education in North America. Neither students nor staff enter our institutions with this kind of expectation. With us, ministerial students prepare for a career in a church which does not seriously challenge the way churches function in this society. Students wish to be exposed to the classical theological disciplines, to appreciate the strategy of church leadership, to understand the principles underlying the art of counselling, the ordering of liturgy and the practice of spirituality. As for members of staff, «Given the career trajectories of most faculty members, the patterns of professional associations, the habits of lifetimes, and the fact of tenure, it is hard to see how real changes could occur in the teaching-learning process which is the pulse beat of any education» (p.29). «Would faculty members with a campus-based, classroom lecture-seminar style of teaching, developed over many years...be willing to enter into forms of teaching and learning so markedly different in approach?» (p.29).

It is however, the narrowness of the main thesis which concerns the *advocates of pluralism*. As one of them puts it, «it would narrow the scope of Christian concern... to prescribe a particular form of involvement in collective struggle for all traditions» (p.44). In contrast to such narrowness, biblical faith and human understanding present a «threatening and marvellous pluralism of alternatives» (p.47). Those involved in theological education in North America are called to discern and make known the saving work of Christ as it is evident in their situation. «We ought to get on with it and not be held back by a misplaced sense of guilt or a mistrust of the Savior's power to make witness even of us» (p.66).

The *detached scrutineers* take this contention even further. These respondents are rather critical of what they consider is a Marxist bias on the part of the formulators. For their part, they do not wish to see the church's theology become captive to any particular political ideology (p.37). Their main criticism, however, is that the activism proposed in the document would lead theological education away from its main task. Social change is not the primary aim of the theological school. Rather, its task is «to understand the meaning of the Christian witness and to assess its truth» (p.50). This «calls for a measure of disinterestedness or detachment which may be incompatible with the wholehearted crusade for justice which the document seems to call for» (p.38).

The *rightist critics* have very little to say in favour of the thesis proposed by the formulators. In their view, these men have accepted the Marxist parody of reality too readily and have proceeded to treat us to a «parade of tired cliches about capitalism, imperialism and oppression» (p.40). They have forgotten the simple fact that «industrial capitalism may be the greatest single blessing ever bestowed on humanity» (p.41). Multinational corporations have, in fact, shown far more concern for the welfare of workers and consumers than their detractors have ever imagined. As for revolutionary violence, it has never advanced the cause of human dignity and respect, and it has never provided a guarantee that the regime it seeks to inaugurate will be any less oppressive than the one it replaces.

One would not have expected to find a group of *committed individualists* among these respondents, nor indeed is such a body to be found. But one or two of the replies show awareness of this point of view so it seemed only fair to include it here. One of the respondents, for example, while approving of all the principles formulated, expresses deep concern over what he considers to be a serious omission. «Is it too much», he writes, «to hope for some brief mention of cross and atonement, Jesus' resurrection, or christology which goes beyond respectful admiration for the prophetic genius from Nazareth? Is evangelism (yes I mean the urgent task of sharing the good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection with the two billion who have never heard) truly irrelevant to a contemporary program of liberation?» (p.56).

But even this insistence on the importance of the Gospel for the renewal of the individual is not allowed to pass without comment. Another respondent, a woman, feels that the presence of women in the halls of theological schools will redeem the theological task from its pre-occupation with an isolated self. (p.67). Insights from feminine experience may shed light even in the dark canyons of theological academies which are «too old, too rich, too male, too concerned about standards and implications to make any very significant changes» (p.66).

Now where, along this spectrum of replies, is the present writer to be found? A direct answer to this question could, of course, be avoided by saying that this debate does not really concern us since we are a Faculty of Religious Studies in a modern university. Such a posture, however, is demonstrably evasive because, while being occupied with the study of religion and of the religious traditions, we are at the same time deeply involved in theological education. A very important part of our student body consists of men and women who are preparing to undertake some form of Christian ministry in the churches we represent.

I have sympathies with those who represent several of the categories specified above, but if I am required to be explicit, I have to confess that my preference lies with the advocates of pluralism. Perhaps I may be allowed to make a brief case for this, and then invite your response in the discussion which is to follow.

Theological schools exist for the doing of theology which is «the act of the believing person reflecting upon his belief and studying it methodically in order to reach a deeper understanding of God's revelation and to surrender himself more fully and more intelligently to God's manifest will and plan of salvation in the contemporary world». (ix) This task imposes certain limits on these institutions. They are not designed to do the work of the Church as a whole, but to prepare people for ministry in the body of Christ. «In an age,» Merton observes, «when man is crushed under unreasonable and unjust social structures and menaced with the threat of destruction in a ruthless power struggle which ignores all his true interests, it is evident that the most radical changes are called for in the most urgent way. The only theological outlook adequate for our time is one which is frankly and unashamedly open to the need for revolutionary change in man's secular world.» (x)

If, then, they are to be sensitive towards their cultural context, and if they are to remain aware of the plight of fellow humans whose lives are restricted and whose potential is denied because they are oppressed, theological schools must keep the liberation perspective continually in mind. Only so can they remain true to the founder of their tradition, and only so can they be kept alert to the fundamental theological questions that this perspective addresses to all of us: How are we to read and interpret Scripture? What is our understanding of the Gospel? What meaning do we attach to discipleship? And what is the Church's function and mission in the world today?

But liberation theologies insist that we should go about this task in a particular way. Personal involvement (praxis) in the struggle for liberation is essential, they urge, and only by critical reflection upon that endeavour can an adequate theology be fashioned. As Rosemary Ruether, for example, has put it, «it is evident that for Latin America the theology of liberation has been *praxis* first of all. The theology of liberation is not a dogmatic *a priori*

but a creative reflection upon *praxis*». (xi)

The kind of praxis, however, which this document has in mind, is by no means evident in this part of the world. Just over three years ago a contributor to *The Christian Century* commented: «the model of theological education today is still much more the philosophical academy than Christian praxis. Theological schools are enclaves of self-perpetuating intellectual elites...thought gives rise to thought world without end». (xii) I cannot think that philosophical academies and theological schools are as vacuous as all that. As Gutiérrez has reminded us, (xiii) the functions of theology as wisdom and as rational knowledge still remain, and this means that the traditional theological disciplines are still required if we are to grasp the meaning of the Christian tradition, assess its truth and appreciate the modes of its interpretation today. Should there be those amongst us who consider that the call to praxis as envisaged by the document is one they must answer, they should be free to do so. But it would be a mistake to think that everyone will feel like this, and unrealistic to imagine that they should.

At the same time, there is a place for praxis in our theological schools. Praxis yields a point of interaction between deed and thought where a distinctive kind of meaning is to be found. This has certainly been my experience in an area of praxis, individual and marital therapy, where I have some competence. For example, to witness, and be a participant in, any radical change in a person's basic attitudes and orientation is to grasp the meaning of resurrection in a way that the study of a book could never yield. Accompanying dreams about a new-born child, or about a river alive with colourful creatures, confirms the fact that the individual is rising to newness of life. Changes in outward behaviour and in sense of self match this interpretation.

But can practitioners slip into this kind of activity as soon as they begin to think it is a good idea? Hardly! Praxis of every kind involves the careful study of theoretical concepts, and the application of those over time in a clinical setting under the guidance of another so that they may be built into the practitioners' thought processes. They may then be exercised in as wide an experience as possible. It is in this process that theological reflection can occur. The end result is a kind of knowing and theological understanding, and incidentally a way of being, equally valid with the work of an academician. The goal is reached by a different route. It is as if one were to act in a drama, live a parable or become identified with the characters and plot of a story. One relies more upon imagination than upon concepts.

This kind of praxis already exists here to some degree. What disturbs me, however, is that we appear to devalue it. Pursuit of the classical disciplines seems to be considered superior, while praxis is regarded as inferior. Only subjects covered by the classical disciplines can count towards a degree. The danger here is that we may become victims of that prideful attitude which assumes that theology as rational knowledge is the only theology there is.

Notes

- i. «Theological Education and Liberation Theology: A Symposium» in *Theological Education*, Vol. 16 No.1 (Vandalia, Ohio: A.T.S., 1979). Page references after citations or comments are to this document.
- ii. Rosemary Ruether, *Liberation Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1972) p.77.
- iii. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation*. trans. and ed. by Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson. (Mary Knoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1973), pp. 32-33. Italics his.
- iv. See *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 26, No.3 (July, 1974), pp. 413-429.
- v. *Ibid.*, p.414.
- vi. See Basil Moore (ed.), *Black Theology: The South African Voice* (London: C. Hearst & Co., 1973), pp. 48, 52. Italics his.
- vii. *Op. cit.* p. 419, Italics his.
- viii. *Ibid.*, pp. 425-26.
- ix. Thomas Merton, *Love and Living*, ed. Naomi Burton Stone and Brother Patrick Hart (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1979), p. 105.
- x. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
- xi. *Op. cit.* p. 176.
- xii. Frederick Herzog, «Birth Pangs: Liberation Theology in North America», *The Christian Century*, Dec. 15, 1976, p. 1121.
- xiii. *Op. cit.*, pp. 4-15.



ON LIBERATION THEOLOGY: YES, BUT ...

19

JOSEPH C. McLELLAND

Theologians have been having a rough passage in recent decades. The Fathers have gone, familiar scenes pall. The children tried obvious grief patterns: not only the fathers, but God himself is dead; or the secular city is a promising place; or inwardness will help (the old theurgy or the new psychology, it's a strenuous task). Now political theology is with us, in the form of «liberation theology».

This is no put-down. A philosopher of religion may be forgiven his fringe benefit of crotchety critique, his question about meaning. To say «liberation» is no more self-evident (or self-authenticating) than to say «contextual». What do such qualifiers mean? Moltmann has said that «the new criterion of theology and of faith is to be found in praxis.» That may be true but it is not new. And if not, then the criterion requires testing against its history. «Faith» was once hotly debated as to its fruition, called «works». Indeed the formula «faith active in love» is thought by George Forell to sum up Luther's teaching on the moot point. A first question, therefore, has to do with a seeming lack of historical context, a need to liberate theology from faddism and momentary constraints.

Liberation theology-- yes indeed, insofar as theology always needs to be insist that faith issue in action, particularly on behalf of the unfree. One has read Gutierrez especially; one knows about the Latin American Bishops at Medellin and Puebla, with their vocation of «preferential option for the poor». And one sees the spate of titles on the topic as more get into the act (Alistair Kee's SCM books are a helpful summary: *A Reader in Political Theology* and *The Scope of Political Theology* to complement the Third World efforts). But what one misses is a clear statement of the horizon providing the perspective. Except when this is Marxist; then one knows, sometimes with sadness.

I do not say that Church Fathers and Doctors are better analysts (alienists?) than Marxists. I say merely that any theology of liberation must measure itself somewhere against what the martyrs knew (those suffering poor whose praxis was to die), what the mystics knew (a different kind of suffering which came to the same end), and even what the scholastics knew who talked so well about jurisprudence and economics and the labour theory of value.

It is not a question of keeping faith with the past in vain repetition, but rather one of knowing the rules of the game developed by those wise referees of our history. Of course there are new things, but only relatively speaking. Tillich considered the existential question to be the same, though differently articulated from age to age: death; guilt; meaninglessness; and presumably

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today, *bondage*. The trick is to recognize that orthopraxis of which today's theologians are so fond was already guaranteed and guided by orthodoxy.

The forms of human bondage are many and varied, today as always. No doubt we understand the dynamics of alienation better than our fathers, ever since Hegel and sons. Hegel saw the significance of property-relations for the dehumanization process and this became paramount when Marx turned him upside down. But Marx had other clubs in his bag, chiefly the new Darwinism (so much under attack nowadays) which posited the class struggle as the key to history. Perhaps it was this fatal pairing, which turned the social humanism of the early Marx into an ideology caught within the logic of its premises. If we could listen awhile to Kierkegaard on Hegel's other hand, what might we not hear about alienation as seduction of spirit and non-proprietyed disrelationship!

The Thematic number of the ATS journal *Theological Education* (Autumn 1979) which sparked this ARC provided the occasion for the above rumination. The position paper by the 12 «white male North American church practitioners and theologians» (which Robert McAfee Brown shared with us while Birks Lecturer in 1978) gives food for thought; and plenty to do as well. That opening gambit, of course, raises a primary question: the context relativizes the proposition. What would a statement from «black female Caribbean secular layabouts and atheists» say? Would we take it as seriously? or more? or less? That is, our modern dilemma of relativism (Historicism) is dark and difficult, but it little helps to isolate one lemma by identifying one's limitations too dogmatically. Can any good thing come out of white North American seminaries? so to ask.

To be sure, the statement proceeds to clarify its stance, to suggest wider dialogue and to call for repentance, openness and action. Such a plea strikes home to all who are privileged and to all who are tempted to have faith without works or theology without ethics.

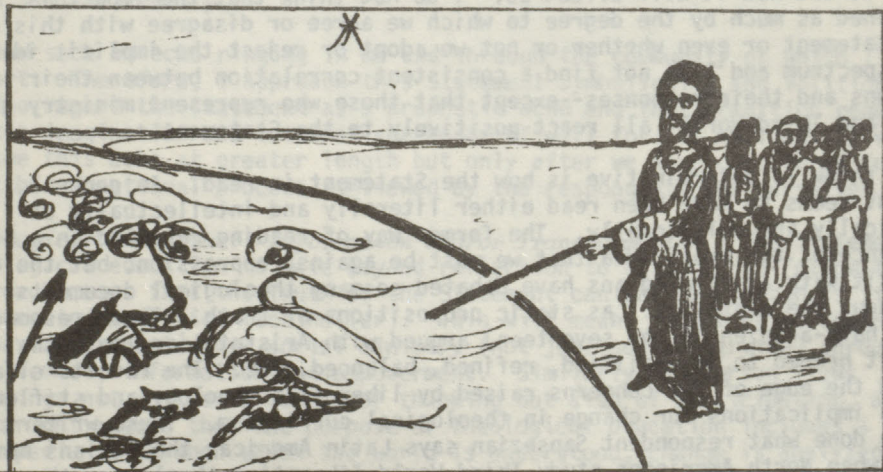
Two comments are still in order. One is that we need a *theological critique of ideology*, for too much liberation theology parades its leftist bias with little nuance. Such folk need the hard experience of Christian-Marxist dialogue (cf. Jan Lochman's writings, or Juan Segundo's call for such a critical appraisal of liberation theology in *The Liberation of Theology*). More to the point might be Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, a critique of all ideologies, a distinct advance in dialectical reasoning and a major step beyond naive Marxism (cf. Max Horkheimer's critique of «instrumental reason»). Such critical theory warns against running scared before relativism, offering one's limited context («white male North American...») and then solidifying someone else's (poor and...). Every contextual/indigenous theologizing risks the larger context and deeper indigenization (think of Karl Barth's massive dialogue with both historical theology and contemporary culture). Thus the present statement accords Marxism a «privileged» position as Martin Marty notes in his response (p.44). Sociology of knowledge cuts both ways, flagellates itself (in a backhanded way). Jacques Ellul adopts an alternative, but only

Donald Bloesch refers to him in his helpful response (16ff.) Dickinson notes the «latent romanticism» of the statement (30). Elizondo's strong comment sees a different sort of practice, a «serious dialogue» with the *constructors* of society in a search for new models of social justice (35).

Finally, *what of theological education in this debate?* The theopraxis promoted here has radical implications for TE, as Aharon Sapsezian (WCC Programme on TE) notes (51ff.). Whether TE is as decisive as assumed remains open for discussion, along with the question of role modelling by professors. How are we to follow the conclusion of Harvey Cox: the call is «not simply for a new way of *thinking* but for a new *social positioning* of the enterprise of theological education» (26)?

Before we sweep the house clean and invite others in, let us be clear on what such transition is expected to bring. To exchange one limited contextuality for another is no gain--unless some «privilege» is accorded it. To play games of reconciliation is a temptation for Western theologians burdened by guilt and desperate for a hearing. To invest in «liberation theology» too heavily is to risk other truths. It may enlighten much of our darkness about alienated humanity, but it casts new shadows on the helplessness of the affluent and the impotency not only of good will but also of good structures.

But the dialogue has been opened well and stoutly by sober men of evident conscience. As response develops we may look for serious reflection on theology itself, and on such a re-form of theological education as may shake us all. And that will be liberating.



AN INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN QUEBEC'S TRANSFORMATION

ART VAN SETERS

In introducing the Autumn 1979 issue of *Theological Education*, Jesse Ziegler referred the proposal to publish the Statement, «Theological Education and Liberation Theology, an Invitation to Respond» as a «once in a decade» issue. As editor he felt compelled «to put all else aside and build a publishing event solely around that issue». After reading both the Statement and the seventeen Responses, and after reflecting more specifically on our situation in Montreal, I concur with Ziegler's assessment and believe that this Invitation should prod us to struggle in unprecedented ways with the nature of our theological education enterprise here at this time. Naturally such a radical response is conditioned by a number of factors:

- how one reads such a Statement.
- how one views the educational process.
- how one understands and relates to the context in which the educating is taking place.

I shall attempt to deal with these in turn and then suggest some concrete implications for the reshaping of how we «do» theology in our consortium.

Ways of Reading a Text. How we approach a text like this Statement (which has the flavour of a manifesto) seems to me to determine very largely how we «hear» it and how it will affect us. I do not think that the impact is determined as much by the degree to which we agree or disagree with this or that statement or even whether or not we adopt or reject the implicit ideological spectrum and I do not find a consistent correlation between their positions and their responses--except that those who represent ministry groups (women and Third World) all react positively to the Statement.

What I think is determinative is how the Statement is read. In general, the document seems to have been read either literally and intellectually or symbolically and volitionally. The former way of reading resulted in a bland acceptance of the broad idea that we must be against oppression, but the text was dealt with as theologians have debated so many theological documents throughout the centuries: as static propositions of truth. These respondents (about half-a-dozen of the seventeen) argued with Aristotelian logic that this and that needed to be qualified, refined, balanced, etc. The results clearly blunted the edge of the concerns raised by liberation theology and stifled any serious implications for change in theological curriculum. These writers seem to have done what respondent Sapsezian says Latin American theologians have feared when North Americans study Third World liberation theology: they categorize it, assimilate it into the prevailing value system, and neutralize its prophetic and revolutionary stance and potential.

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The other way of reading the Statement is not as words which define, but as images which describe, point and beckon attention; not as a cerebral exercise according to which critical refinements are essential before there can be listening, but as a struggle of will aroused from complacency (and mere contemplation) to become engaged. Whatever seems extreme or unbalanced is not as important as hearing the cry, responding to the human predicament. Out of this engagement there is no debate about whether or not there need to be changes in theological schools; the task is to determine what changes are called for regardless of the difficulty of their implementation.

This is not a case of accepting or rejecting specific statements like «... a Gospel that equates the knowing of God with the doing of justice» or «a canon within the canon» (to which most objections were raised). What I am arguing is that our approach to language as such is of major significance in determining our response to a document such as this. If language is viewed statically, then words, phrases and sentences have fixed meanings and can be argued about abstractly. On this approach we seem to need to balance our propositions carefully so that they can be universally applicable. The reader should think the same thing as the writer. On the other hand, if language is viewed dynamically, then words, phrases and sentences come alive in new and unexpected ways in different circumstances. Understanding is not separated from imagination nor distanced from experience. What is said is connected with how it is expressed; form and content together shape communication. On this approach all learning and each expression is limited and partial but, nevertheless, at certain times specific statements express an existential reality that can be compelling for those in whose existence there resonate the echoes of a similar reality.

I find such an echo ringing in me and through the community of which I am now a part. Therefore, I approach this Statement symbolically and volitionally. I also regard the Statement as a prophetic echo and that tradition requires a poetic imagination and internal surrender of will for its healing. I want to pursue this echo at greater length but only after we have considered further how the educational process is viewed by the respondents and ourselves.

Theological Education: Information and/or Transformation. The Statement calls theological education to move beyond reflection to action. To follow this approach means that the Truth of the Statement can only be judged if it is implemented and tried (Schineller). This will mean, according to Schineller, preparing graduates for social ministry (not just social service) through involvement, information and empowerment. Similarly, Dickerson views «knowing» not just as a matter of thinking but also of participation, and Cartwright argues that the purpose of theological education includes a context of experience through which the world is understood, change is analyzed and action is considered.

Liberation theology is a way of theologizing out of the depths of human struggle for justice (Sapsezian). Writing out of a feminist perspective, Zikmund speaks

about the presence of women in theological education bringing about significant change. This is not just an intellectual process but also, and primarily, and existential one.

How different is the approach to theological education reflected by Jay (Douglas of T.S.T., not Eric, our former dean!). His wholesale objection to the thrust of the Statement is that the role of the theological school is primarily educational by which he seems to mean primarily reflective and certainly critical of all serious ideological options. What is called for is disinterestedness, detachment and distance, a kind of scientific objectivity. He acknowledges that some things can only be learned through involvement but qualifies this by adding that involvement inevitably entails a limitation of attitudes. Similarly, Ogden objects to the Statement's assertion that theological education ought to be *directly* involved in promoting the struggle against oppression. It can only provide an *indirect* service, he claims, because it is a process of critical reflection.

The fundamental issue which this raises for me is whether our approach to theological education is to be primarily *informative* or whether it ought also to be *transformative*. The document clearly calls for a both/and, urging that we move away from our presumed objectivity as though we could, somehow, be neutral observers. Most of those who seemed to view theological education as information giving, taking, and sharing, nevertheless still pointed to the necessity of graduates becoming involved in the struggle for justice at least to some extent. But few such graduates become involved and few churches become involved because this approach to learning is not neutral; it is insulating. It predisposes people to maintain the *status quo* because thinking is separated from living. Students and faculty alike are always shaped through *how* they act and not just by *what* they think. This is not to say that thinking does not involve praxis. Thinking can be transformative but if the transformation is not permitted to reshape life, then thinking becomes a head trip and little more.

Those who take a narrowly informative approach to theological education seem to me to be victims of the myth of objectivity. In his polemical attack on the historical critical method in biblical study (*The Bible in Human Transformation*), Walter Wink has argued cogently that we bring all kinds of subjective assumptions with us in such an approach. He acknowledges the necessity of trying to distance ourselves from the biblical text but then introduces a deliberate stage of subjective imagining. Similarly, his method of study recognizes the importance of a careful questioning process in wrestling with a text, but instructor and students interact to create a corporate learning that moves beyond individual and individualistic scholarship. The class period of study becomes more than information about something; it is an existential learning that becomes humanly transformative.

Now I am not trying to turn Wink's approach into a paradigm. It simply illustrates in a small way the difference between information and transformation. It is also obvious that, for me, transformative learning is what is

required of us in our programme here. This arises partly from the conviction that we are shaped and impelled, not only by what we know, but by how we relate and are related to. There is a theology implicit in our being and acting that often speaks more penetratingly than the theology of our papers and lectures. But alongside this, I look at our particular context in the midst of Québec and believe that only a transformative educational approach is ethically defensible.

Third World Echoes in Québec. I make no apology for the increasingly emotional tone of this response. I have, once again, participated in a workshop on ministry in Québec and, as previously, I have been compelled to face up to the reality of our anglophone minority position in this province. This appears to me to call for significant changes in our theological enterprise throughout our consortium.

As I face the political, social and economic evolution of Québec, I hear echoes from Latin American theology crying for liberation in ways that disturb the established orders of the past. As Sheila Arnopoulos and Dominique Clift describe in the book *The English Fact in Quebec*, the anglophone community in Montreal has not come to grips with the new reality of being a minority in Québec. No matter what happens either in the Referendum on Sovereignty Association or in the next provincial election, the clock will not be turned back. Vast social changes have already happened. About the only English institution in Québec that remains clearly under English control is the English Church. Although anglophones in business still sometime speak as though they continue to have economic power not only in Québec but also Canada, this is no longer the case. Nor are anglophone educational institutions autonomous as they are increasingly controlled through government funding and regulations. This is not to say that the anglophone community in Montreal should be written off as insignificant. But it suggests that we anglophones can best make our contribution by accepting our minority status and living out of it.

From this stance of trying to accept the reality of our provincial context, I, as an anglophone, am freed by the Statement which we are here considering when I approach it symbolically and volitionally. By this I mean that I am helped to look at the social transformation of Québec, not in terms of the abrogation of my individual rights but in terms of the recognition of French collective rights. I am able to recognize Elizondo's criticism of the Statement when he says that it deals seriously with economic and political oppression but ignores cultural oppression and colonialism. I respond positively, therefore, to his plea that culture, cultural analysis, trans-cultural communication, cultural domination and cultural hermeneutics must become a serious part of seminary formation and theological reflection.

It is ethically irresponsible for us to distance ourselves from our Québec context and «do» theology on/from this campus with intellectual detachment. That style speaks of an elitism (see Cox's remarks about elitism in theological education) that reinforces an anglophone avoidance of facing our

present reality. It perpetuates the very colonialistic attitude against which the francophone majority have been fighting. It rejects liberation for a return to the *status quo* of the now mythological two solitudes. It prevents our making a prophetic contribution in the direction both of pluralism in culture and respect for the nineteen percent minority population of the province.

We are, I believe, morally bound to a contextual approach to theology in our consortium. This calls for engagement with the francophone majority and an involvement in the struggle for real justice. Unless the theological schools here become embroiled in the social and political movements encompassing this land within a land, we have little to criticize an anglophone church that sees itself primarily as a shelter for a remnant dreaming a fantasy about survival. Yet at this very moment we have an option which could allow us to reread our traditions back to the earliest days of the Church because we, like the primitive Christian community of the first century, are a minority. Our ancient writings may now speak in fresh ways because the images in which our theologians were first written may once again spark our imaginations with a hope that has emerged out of the darkness and ashes through which we need to pass.

Suggested Shapes for our Liberation. In the light of how I read the Statement, approach the task of theological education, and live out of my context, I want to suggest some of the shapes that our education might take if it were to reflect what I see to be God's liberating activity among us.

1. The revision of our B.Th. curriculum would reflect engagement in the life of Québec from the very beginning. Core courses would include a socio-cultural analysis for the «doing» of theology contextually. The evolution of the curriculum would be an ongoing process involving a wide spectrum of persons including women, blacks, and francophones.
2. The Faculty of Religious Studies, the Colleges and the Institute would engage in an overall process that encourages integration without programming persons. This process would be free of jurisdictional tensions in a spirit of mutual interaction and respect for different approaches to preparation for ministry.
3. Teaching would not be marked by scholarly detachment and narrow specializations but by studied involvement and interdisciplinary interactions. Students and instructors would often be learners together so that the individualistic model of ministry would be challenged by corporate alternatives. Field based learning would be marked by a more serious engagement with the laity inside and outside of the Church. Women would be encouraged to provide alternate forms of learning.
4. Community life and spiritual formation would be recognized as integral to the total theological enterprise. Sub-groups would be respected as

alternative expressions of community and spirituality.

5. The formation of a francophone stream to begin in the Fall of this year would become one of our highest priorities. This would be an interim arrangement to encourage the development of an institute (controlled by francophones) in five to seven years time. This would bring together francophone and anglophone theologians and students and allow for a more direct experience of our differing cultural formations.
6. Learning to communicate in the French language would become a major priority for teachers and students alike.
7. Pursuing the granting of a college M.Div. degree would be dropped (because that would seem to be an expression of North American anglophone domination) in order to identify with the francophone preference for the B.Th. degree. Recognition of our degrees and programmes outside Québec would be of secondary importance since we aim to exemplify our minority position in the province in our programme. But we would, at the same time, seek the critical appraisal of our total theological enterprise from qualified scholars both outside and inside Québec (including those in the francophone community). If the Association of Theological Schools has difficulty accrediting our programme because A.T.S. rules do not allow recognition of our peculiar situation, we would argue for a revision or modification of the standards or, failing that, allow our accreditation to fall.

These are just a few of the shapes that flash through my imagination. They have not been carefully studied or critically examined. They have been put down on paper without much concern for how they would be implemented. One cannot dream and be concerned about implementation at the same time! No doubt many students will not be attracted to the kind of proposal here envisioned. It calls for people to walk together in new ways of dependency. But for all that, it appears to be a journey that will awaken fresh possibilities for human freedom and creativity. Is not this the time for us in this consortium to see our vocation in the midst of Québec's evolution, and to be directly and vocally contributing to the redemptive humanization of all Québécois?



«THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND LIBERATION THEOLOGY» - A PERSONAL RESPONSE

ANTHONY C. CAPON

Liberation theology, in its Latin American origins sprang out of a critical and compassionate observation of the living and dying of some of the most severely oppressed and impoverished people in the world. As a result of the writings of Gutiérrez, Segundo, Miguez Bonino and others, Christians throughout the world have been forced to re-think their attitudes to wealth and poverty, and to the exercise of political and economic power, and to reconsider the relation of the Gospel of Christ to the cry of the oppressed, the wretched of the earth.

The effect of this re-thinking on the process of theological education has yet to be seen. The writers of the article in *Theological Education* are right to challenge us to a more urgent concern and to appropriate action.

However, the affirmations and questions which form the body of the appeal force me to raise a number of objections. The propositions on which the outline is based are obviously those of mainstream liberation theology, and involve a series of polarizations which I believe to be false to the Gospel of Christ. I believe I can reject them without denying that call to concern which the whole situation undoubtedly embodies.

1. *I reject the polarization between truth which is known and truth which is done.* Gutiérrez and others maintain that truth does not lie in the realm of ideas but in the realm of action. In fact, they claim, action is itself the only truth.

This is a perfectly understandable reaction against the misuse of abstract and speculative theologies as means of bolstering an unjust *status quo* - but it is an over-reaction, and if not corrected may lead to the suicide of true theological thought. What is needed is not to seek a new way of doing theology, but to do theology in the old way but with a new integrity and a new awareness of its relation to the contemporary scene.

The separation of conceptualized truth and acted truth must not be tolerated. The Scriptures tell us to *know the truth* and to *do the truth*, Christian wholeness will involve the integration of both.

2. *I reject the polarization between the claims of the poor and the claims of the rich on the Gospel.* This polarization is found *passim* in the literature of liberation theology and is reflected in a number of places in the article under review. Under such phrases as «the Church's preferential option for the poor» (Puebla statement, 1979) the position is taken that the poor and oppressed of the world have an overriding claim on the Gospel.

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I believe that this is false. Undoubtedly the physical and material need of the poor and the exploited masses is immense, but so far as the need for the Gospel is concerned the need of all men everywhere who do not know Christ is identical.

The confusion often arises through a misunderstanding of certain New Testament texts. For example, Jesus' assertion that the fact that «the poor have the Gospel preached to them» (Luke 7:22) was confirmation of the validity of his mission is used as a proof-text for the preferential claim of the poor on the Gospel. But the remarkable thing to which Jesus was drawing attention was not that he was putting the poor ahead of the rich *but that the poor heard the Gospel at all*. The common attitude of his day was that of the Pharisees: «This crowd who do not know the law are accursed» (John 7:49). Other references to rich and poor are similarly misused and misinterpreted.

The fact Jesus, while recognizing that it was far harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God than a poor man, preached the Gospel to rich and poor without distinction.

I believe one could just as easily make out a case for the more urgent presentation of the Gospel to the *rich* in the present Latin American situation. Historical precedents can easily be cited for the effectiveness of this way of achieving social change, as for example in the conversion of such men as Wilberforce and Shaftesbury through the witness of English evangelicals.

In Jericho Jesus singled out the rich man Zacchaeus from among the whole population as the recipient of his Gospel, and profound social change (albeit on a local scale) soon came about.

3. *I reject the polarization between justice and love.* This polarization, common among liberation theologians, is strongly implied in the present article. Whereas the word «justice» is stressed over and over again, the word «love» is not mentioned once.

I believe we are here at the very heart of the matter. The liberation theologians make the establishment of justice the supreme goal of Christian action and of the Christian Gospel, and love, when it is dealt with at all, is referred to in a subsidiary way. This leads to serious error.

In fact, the Christian Church has always held that it is better to live without justice than to live without love. The Kingdom of God has never been more clearly seen than when love has flourished under conditions of extreme oppression and injustice. In fact, once the primacy of love is recognized, the polarization disappears, for one who really loves will always act justly. The supreme goal of Christian action and of the Christian Gospel is the establishment of the relation of love between man and God and between man and man. «Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law» (Romans 13:10).

Justice can never be christianly pursued until God's love is enthroned in the hearts of men and women. The order is vitally important. Atrocities have been perpetrated in the pursuit of justice, and too often in the very moment of success the oppressed become the new oppressors. It is very different when

justice is pursued in the spirit of Christ's words: «Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you» (Luke 6:27-28). Impractical as it may sound to non-Christian ears, this spirit is well expressed in Cranmer's *Litany*: «That it may please thee to forgive our enemies, persecutors and slanderers, and to turn their hearts.»

It is a failure to understand this essential principle which makes it possible for Jose Miguez Bonino to write: «On the one hand, there is no divine war, there is no specifically *Christian* struggle. Christians assume, and participate in, human struggles by identifying with the oppressed. *But they have no particularly divine or religious power to contribute (emphasis mine) ...* Secondly, it means that Christians are called to use for this struggle the same rational tools that are at the disposal of all human beings...» (*Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation*, p.124).

4. *I reject the polarization between personal salvation and social salvation.* The paper deals *entirely* with social salvation in terms of the changing of the structures of society. The place of the individual does not rate a mention.

To be sure, there is one reference to individual salvation, but it is in a negative context. «We are not permitted to separate individual salvation from social salvation» (No.5). This practice by liberation theologians of tying individual salvation to social salvation, as elsewhere the equating of knowing God with the doing of justice (paragraph 6) and the equating of love with justice (Paul Ricoeur) means invariably that the former in each case is absorbed in the latter and lost to view. There is in effect a total polarization.

In fact, personal salvation and social salvation must first be understood separately, and only then seen in relation to each other and in a truly integrated fashion. The key question is: Do we change social structures in order that human nature may be changed, or *vice versa*?

Liberation theology takes the first of these options. Following classical Marxism, it is utopian in its eschatology. By means of social change, the possibility will be opened up for man to realize his potential; there will be access to the wealth of God's creation for all, space to work and space to play - in fact, a new humanity. In just the same way Guevara wrote of «the new socialist man», filled with feelings of love, marching in solidarity with his brothers. But he taught that society must be changed first (*Notes on Socialism and Man*).

Now I suggest that this is not the Christian way. I challenge anyone to find anything in the New Testament that contradicts the principle that individual change comes before social change. This brings us to the primacy of the Gospel of salvation through the redemptive work of God in Christ, by means of

personal repentance and faith. It seems to me significant that there is in the article I am reviewing only one passing reference to Jesus Christ. Yet surely he must be central to any consideration of the subject we are discussing? I do not mean simply his example or his teaching, but the transforming power of his cross and resurrection in the life of the one who has faith.

I believe that the order must be faith - love - justice. I do not find this order in the paper we are considering, nor generally in the writings of liberation theology. This leads me to question seriously whether it can ever succeed in its objectives.

In conclusion, a few words on the implications of liberation theology for theological education. Let us not lose sight of the type of ministry for which the men and women of our colleges are being trained. They will be called upon to minister (chiefly in Canada) in the Church as it is and to people as they are. They will be conducting services, visiting the sick and shut-ins, ministering to people in crisis, counselling those with marital problems, evangelizing those who are out of touch with Christ, developing the gifts of the laity, building up the body of Christ, chairing meetings, sharing the love of God with the lonely and anxious, directing the Christian education of children, preparing young people for full Church membership, participating in the life of our regional and national Church bodies, and tackling a host of other opportunities and responsibilities. I suppose, in the dreadful opening words of the article we have read, they will be «white North American church practitioners». We in the F.R.S./College consortium have the responsibility of enabling them to «make full proof of this ministry», and to ensure that it is a true ministry of Christ.

How then are we to respond to the challenge of liberation theology? Not by throwing out everything we have been doing, but by seeing to it that we never teach theology without context or ministry without heart. As one who has travelled extensively in Latin America over a period of many years and has rubbed shoulders with the desperately poor as well as with the rich and with the middle-of-the-road church member, I hope I may never be content with training men and women to keep the wheels of the North American Church turning, simply to preserve a comfortable, blinkered, middle-class existence. I hope that our graduates will always see the world as their context, and that they will be open to every leading of the Spirit, whatever the cost. May we help them to be men and women of the truth, ministers of the age that is and of the age to come.

THE QUESTION OF CHRISTIAN DUTY IN THE PRESENT AGE: A RESPONSE TO «THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND LIBERATION THEOLOGY»

PETER A. CARPENTER

These nine theses on «Theological Education and Liberation Theology», like Luther's ninety-five, are not merely an appeal for discussion, they are also a call to action. In «the cries of the world's suffering,» they say, «we hear God's call to justice.» «Faith seeking understanding» (reflection) is therefore not enough, what is needed as well is «praxis seeking justice» (action).

We always need to be reminded that it is not enough to think good thoughts, we also need to put these thoughts into practice. In the words of 1 John 3:18: «let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and in truth.» Thus a summons to action is always timely and necessary.

The question we must ask, however, is whether this particular exhortation is consistent with traditional views on Christian duty. (Not that this would settle the matter, but this is a question nevertheless that must be asked.) For example, is it anything like the kind of challenge we find in the Epistle of James? James, as we know, urges us to «be doers of the word, and not hearers only» (1:22); he also insists that «faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead» (2:17). But what precisely does he mean by «doing» and by «works»? His answer is: visiting orphans and widows, clothing the naked, and feeding the hungry. Is this equivalent to what the liberationist theses are saying? Yes and no. Yes, because on both sides there is concern for the poor and the oppressed; no, because James' thinking on this matter is more personal and more individualistic. The liberationists are thinking in political, collective categories; James on the other hand is thinking more like Tolstoy, who believed that the neighbour God commands us to love is the *one* who is nigh, the one close at hand. Nevertheless James goes beyond a purely one-to-one ethic when he criticizes the «rich» for having defrauded their employees: «Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts» (5:4).

It seems then that the two points of view are perhaps not that far apart. And yet, as we look more closely, we soon discern a quite fundamental divergence. On the one hand these modern theological activists, in millenarian fashion, talk of a goal of a «new earth»; and to achieve such a goal, they say, the Church itself should become directly involved in the struggle against oppression. Whether or not they are right in their conception of what constitutes oppression is not important; what matters here is the principle itself

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of revolutionary praxis. In contrast, the attitude we find in James and indeed throughout the New Testament is one of resignation. The authors of the New Testament were, in a sense, living in another world; as far as they were concerned the present world was doomed anyway and beyond redemption, and all that mattered was to be prepared for the world to come. Plato, about four hundred years earlier, had come to a similar conclusion regarding the world of politics. In a mood of disillusionment he remarks, in *The Republic*, that the ideal commonwealth, the «pattern set up in the heavens,» is perhaps attainable, not on earth among men, but only within the individual (IX, 592). The early Christians believed, even more radically, that the world was unsalvageable, and for this reason they pin their hopes, not on individual enlightenment, but on divine intervention. James therefore urges Christians to be «patient--until the coming of the Lord» (5:7).

What are we to make of this difference? If the Scriptures, and in particular the New Testament, are taken as normative, must we then reject liberationist activism and opt instead for the otherworldly eschatology of James? Only a biblicist would feel compelled to make such a choice. A better approach, a more historical one, is the *via media* of combining what is of value in the two points of view. Barth seems to achieve such a synthesis when, in «The Christian's Place in Society,» an address delivered in Germany in 1919, he declares: «We throw our energies--into the business nearest to hand, and also into the making of a new Switzerland and a new Germany, for the reason that we look forward to the new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven.» (*The Word of God and the Word of Man*, p. 323.) The emphasis here is on God's action from above. The new Jerusalem does not arise from below, from human effort, but descends from above, from God.

A further point. In attempting to do theology «in the light of responsible social analysis», that is, in the light of Marxist philosophy, is there not a danger of creating a consciousness of conflict and tension where formerly there might have been harmony and understanding? Is there any guarantee, once antagonism has been aroused, that it can be healed and overcome? Is division, is disruption, the goal of Christianity? Or is it unity and peace? A few lines from a poem by Isaac Rosenberg, an English poet, are illuminating. They express the view that conflict cannot be the last word, that there is a higher unity transcending the countless issues that divide humanity. The poem is called «Break of Day in the Trenches» and in it Rosenberg describes how a rat touches his hand as he picks a poppy to put behind his ear:

Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew
Your cosmopolitan sympathies.
Now you have touched this English hand
You will do the same to a German -
Soon, no doubt, if it be your pleasure
To cross the sleeping green between.

Hans Küng, in a statement concerning the Church, also deals with this problem of division and conflict. Given its vocation of *diakonia*, he says, the Church should intervene «constantly and effectively for the socially neglected or ostracized groups, for all despised, downtrodden, abandoned people in the world,» and yet at the same time it should also note «without prejudice the concerns of the ruling classes.» (*On Being a Christian*, p.505.) How, he goes on to say, «could it set up new barriers (mental, ideological, denominational) to communication instead of breaking down the old; preach disorder and divide people into friends or enemies instead of preaching peace and justice?» (p.506). Plainly this is an attitude that looks beyond division to unity, an attitude grounded in the belief that God's salvation extends to all.

In conclusion, I will attempt to bring into focus some of the main points covered in this brief discussion and to raise some general questions regarding the liberationist standpoint.

1. Social concern, the struggle for the amelioration of the general welfare, surely has its place in the Christian life, but this must not lead us into the temptation of reducing «the poor» or «the oppressed» to abstractions. *Collectivism needs the corrective of Kierkegaardian individualism.*
2. Activism too has its place; Christians surely should follow in the footsteps of Jesus who «went about *doing good and healing* all that were oppressed--» (Acts 10:38). But here too there is danger, the danger of forgetting that the future of the world, the Kingdom of God, depends not on human but on the divine initiative. Activism therefore needs to be balanced by the sense of the eschatological - not in the secularized Marxist sense, but in the sense of the early Church's conviction that the «form of the world» was «passing away» (1 Cor. 7:31) and that a *new* world was coming.
3. Finally, empathy with the suffering and oppressed of the world is likewise a very Christian attitude. Nevertheless even this can go wrong if it leads to a hardening of heart towards those who are deemed responsible for this state of injustice. There is a solidarity more basic than an «act of solidarity with exploited social classes» (Gutierrez), and that is the «solidarity of sin» (Kierkegaard). Such a sense of solidarity precludes a judgemental attitude towards others, no matter who they might be or what they have done. Judgement is the prerogative of God. To perceive this truth, to realize that the judgement of this world lies in the hands of God, is to experience liberation. Only then can one confidently apply oneself to the task of building a better world.



THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND LIBERATION THEOLOGY: RESPONSE TO AMBROGI ET AL.

It has been almost five years since I gave a two paper presentation on liberation theology at the National Chaplains' Conference in Ottawa. At that time the phrase was new and the expected excitement and rejection were both manifested in response. The newness of the term has obviously worn off. In fact the first thing to strike me regarding the «Invitation to Respond» is the overwhelming acceptance of the phrase «liberation theology» and the assumption that all readers of the invitation know the term. No definition nor explanation of the term as used in the paper is offered. The phrase has gone from being specific to abstract. As always in such a case something has been lost. When Frigidaire becomes a synonym for refrigerator or Kodak a synonym for camera, the specific is lost to the general. So it is with «liberation theology.» Although I applaud a growing awareness of many of the tenets of liberation theology, I fear that in its abstraction it has lost concreteness. Liberation theology can make sense only in a specific context. Once the context of liberation theology is lost so is its reality.

It is far easier to talk of liberation theology as an abstraction within the process of theological education than to confront specifics. It is safe to be for a general liberation theology, but not so safe to deal with real issues in a real world. At the level of specific issues liberation theology is highly complex. Must it always be violent? Must it never be violent? Who are the poor? Who are the oppressed?

These complexities become particularly apparent in those situations where the oppressed become in turn oppressors. Who should the outsiders support when they cannot grasp the multi-level nature of many situations - Consider a relatively mild example of oppression at two levels. Many of the French of Quebec see themselves as having been oppressed by the English speaking minority. Today, however, many English Quebecers see their rights and way of life seemingly endangered by the Québécois. Can those who live outside Quebec truly understand the situation and fairly chose whom to support? This type of situation can become much more complex and much more violent, for example, in multi-tribal societies. In brief just as there is a spiral of violence, so is there a spiral of oppression which makes the taking of sides in a specific situation a very difficult task.

Yet another complexity comes to mind. In solidarity with a foreign «oppressed» group suppose the North American supporters of liberation theology call for a boycott of a particular «exploitive» company's products. Who suffers most-- the multi-national company or the layed-off workers, previously poor but with a boycott and lay-off even poorer? Again the specific situation is such that to take sides endangers the welfare and even lives of those whom the outsider seeks to liberate.

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Do the complexities of moral action in the context of liberation theology mean there is no choice but paralysis? No, I think not. On the other hand does it mean one must ignore the complexity and «sin boldly»? No again. I propose a three-point programme for theological educators and theological students.

First, theological education should make students aware of specific situations where liberation theology is in action. Interdisciplinary programmes with the social sciences should be provided. Increasingly they are available but under-utilized. Perhaps the theological student needs encouragement to move out of the safe and known theological environment into the more dangerous but exciting interdisciplinary areas of study. Travel grants and exchange programmes can also contribute to an understanding of specific cases.

A second, and most likely unpopular, phase of theological education in relationship to liberation should be a period of reflective isolationism. Too many supporters of liberation theology seem naively to expect that the oppressed of the Third World or the downtrodden of the First World will be delighted by the support of the First World's theologians and theological students. A lesson should be remembered from civil rights battles of the United States. Finally the well-meaning, well-educated and often affluent white outsiders learned that the blacks wanted to work on their own for their own without the help of «bleeding hearts.» Dignity required it. Similarly after learning about a liberation situation, the theologian or student must realize they are likely to be asked to stay home or to go home and take care of their own problems. So it should be. For the Third World it might be better to lose with dignity than to win only by replacing one master with another. This is the case even if the new master is well motivated and seeks to eliminate economic dependence. Unfortunately it is too easy to replace economic dependence with psychological dependence.

The third phase of the programme I propose is the development of concrete (not false) utopianism. Let a theological task be the creation of an image of the practical concrete local utopia and later with the input of others from all corners of the world a world-wide utopia. This should not be the capitalistic utopia, the Marxist utopia, nor the traditionally Christian utopia. Further, it must not be confused with another-worldly «heaven.» For now the theological task should be to envision an earthly utopia which draws all to action, not an other-worldly heaven which serves as an opium for the oppressed. This utopian image should draw upon the best elements from all past and present utopias. Within the theological context it should particularly consider the lessons of the Blochian «underground bible» and utopianism.(i)

Having developed a truly worthy utopia the theologian and student should write about it, sing about it, dance about it, know it and bring the good word to the oppressed and the oppressor that there can be a better system here and elsewhere. If the telling is vivid enough, even the oppressor will be able to recognize his oppression in oppressing and the benefit of his liberation in a new utopian system.

From this programme it is not necessary for «white male North American ... theologians» and theological students to grovel in their real and imagined guilt, nor to become permanent Third World «tourists in solidarity,» nor to become spokespersons for others, nor to become apologists for one particular presently existing world-view. All of these actions, after all, show a certain arrogance. Rather, it should be a task of theologians and theological students to imaginatively bring forth the new out of the old. Let the theologically inclined in North America not attempt to kill the past, but, as Alves would say, to assist the mid-wife as the world in travail gives birth to the new. (*ii*)

It is easy to anticipate the critics of this approach. «Isolationism and utopianism are nothing less than the tools of the present oppressors,» the detractors will say. But what truly are the elements of oppression and what exactly works in the support of oppression? Let us examine two sets of words-- isolationism and interventionism, and utopianism and realism--to see what contributes most to oppression.

If oppression is defined as the unjust use of power and authority, it seems that in attempting to enter into foreign situations the church, just as much as any government, stands constantly in danger of trapping itself into «an arrogance of power.» Interventionism, not isolationism, is capable of leading to an arrogant effort to impose an outside will upon a group which is thought (most likely falsely) to be incapable of dealing with its own problems. This type of action must be called the unjust use of power, that is, oppression. Granted, there is another side of this issue. Certain individuals do seem to be able to whole-heartedly and altruistically become one with another people. Mother Teresa and Norman Bethune serve as examples of the non-arrogant involvement in the welfare (and broadly the liberation) of others; however, this additionally illustrates two points. First, the individual can sometimes serve where the institution cannot--the institution simply exerts or appears to exert too much power. Second, the individual who is successful in helping others at this level cannot be «a tourist-in-solidarity» for long. Either the person must learn then leave or irrevocably become one with those whom he or she seeks to serve, as have Mother Teresa and Norman Bethune.

Utopianism is often taken to be «false»--a constituent of the «false consciousness.» Realism is often taken to be «true»--a constituent of the «consciousness of reality.» If, however, civilized persons seek and attempt to approximate «the good and the just» in their social and personal lives, but have not yet achieved this, which source will be of most assistance in the search for these goals--the imperfections of realism or the image of a utopia which incorporates personal and social justice? Realism too often stands for the acceptance of the *status quo* with its injustice and it should be condemned as false consciousness to the degree that it interferes with the search for justice. The oppressor loves to say «be realistic»: the oppressed can best respond by saying «be utopianistic.» The oppressor wishes that all persons would accept and support the present reality. The oppressed must remind all

persons that the search for justice is not finished, change is neither a danger nor an option. If persons are to become fully human, it is a necessity. Utopianism is a tool to move toward justice. It is realism which is a tool of the oppressor. (iii)

As a final response to possible criticism, I wish to note that I have written within the context delineated in the first sentence of the «Invitation to Respond.» The context is that of white, male North American theological education. If I were writing from many nations of the Third World, I would be calling for an involvement in liberation at the level of true revolutionary praxis. In my view, revolution within the North American context is neither necessary nor desirable. We are in an unusual situation in North America, for our energy need not be solely channeled into the overthrow, violently or nonviolently, of an oppressive system. We have time and energy to fight for justice in a socially democratic manner in our own neighbourhoods, cities, provinces and country, and at the same time sufficient additional energy to begin to limn a utopian image which can excite others and result in a renewed and vigorous search for a just and truly human society. We need not search the world over for a place to begin the task of liberating all people nor a place to impose our image of liberation upon others; rather we should seek justice at home and dream dreams of a better society which can become part of our waking lives.

Footnotes:

- i. A good introduction to the works of Ernst Bloch: Ernst Bloch, *Man On His Own* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971).
 - ii. Formore of Alves' thought see: Rubem Alves, *A Theology of Human Hope* (New York: Corpus Books, 1969). Rubem Alves, *Tomorrow's Child* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).
 - iii. On the issue of realism versus utopianism see: Rubem Alves, «Christian Realism: Ideology of the Establishment,» *Christianity and Crisis*, XXXIII (Sept. 17, 1973), 173-176.
- Thomas Sanders, «Theology of Liberation: Christian Utopianism,» *Christianity and Crisis*, XXXIII (Sept. 17, 1973), 167-173.

FOR AND AGAINST A THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION

DOUGLAS J. HALL

Introduction. The following discussion of Liberation Theology assumes two methodological presuppositions which should probably be acknowledged immediately. The first is that I understand Christian «systematic theology» to be a *critical* enterprise. Theologians do not simply accept what is happening in church or society as a matter of course; they reflect critically upon events and thought-patterns, and they attempt to introduce questions or dimensions which may have been overlooked by current «trends».

The second methodological assumption is that genuine theological reflection must be consciously *contextual*. The truth is, of course, that human thought of every kind is *always* conditioned by the situation in which it occurs. But very often people do not acknowledge this. They assume that they are presenting «eternal truth» when in fact they are expressing ideas which are historically and sociologically conditioned--ideas which frequently hide the vested interests of the economic and other groupings with whom their authors are identified. To be quite *deliberately* contextual means to recognize that one is «doing theology» in a specific situation; and it means to ask about the appropriateness of a theological position for that particular time and place.

My response to Liberation Theology, as I shall try to articulate it in the following four theses, is an application of these two methodological principles. From the perspective of a theology which intends to be «critical», I am prepared to believe that much of what is being presented as Liberation Theology today is an authentic expression of the Christian Gospel. But from the standpoint of a theology which wants to be *contextually* appropriate I am bound to ask whether this undoubtedly sound theological emphasis is necessarily right for us.

Thesis No. 1: THE LIBERATION OF MAN AND OF THE WHOLE CREATION IS OF THE ESSENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN *KERYGMA*.

Quite obviously no one word can convey the mystery and fulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Nor can all the words there are! And yet we may admit that the word «Liberation» comes very close to being one of those summing-up words, which not only say a great deal in themselves but also point towards the mystery that cannot finally be said.

(a) *Historical Significance of the Concept of Liberation*

Christians have recognized this from the beginning, and before them the concept of liberation was integral to Hebraic thought and experience. The Jews looked

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always for liberation -- for they were always being delivered into the hands of oppressors. The Christians announced that the Deliverer had come, finally and decisively -- in the form of a servant, handed over to the oppressor! They knew how to state the whole meaning of their belief in the language of liberation -- as in the Magnificat, or in Luke's version of Jesus' introduction of his ministry, where the Lord states his intentions in the words of Isaiah 61:1-2:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
 because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.
 He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
 and recovering of sight to the blind,
 to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
 to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

The Scriptures are in fact full of liberation language, explicit or implicit.

In the early Church, this language gathered itself into an atonement theology which is explicitly built on the concept of liberation: the so-called Ransom or Rescue theory, which envisages the whole activity of God in Christ in terms of freeing man from bondage to demonic forces stronger than himself -- a theory which is mirrored in the legend of St. George and the Dragon, and in many other places.

According to the Swedish theologian, Gustav Aulen, this ancient theory of atonement was displaced in Western Christianity by the (in his view) very questionable Sacrificial or Substitutionary atonement theology associated in particular with the name of Anselm of Canterbury. And Aulen, the Lutheran, finds that the theology of Atonement -- Christ as the victor, the Liberator-- only comes into its own again with the appearance of (guess who?) Martin Luther. I personally think that this is a rather biased reading of the history of Christian thought. For one thing, Luther was capable of giving voice to two or three different atonement theories in the space of one paragraph! It is however true, certainly that Luther, and with him the Protestant Reformation as a whole, found it necessary again and again to express the Gospel in terms of the theme of liberation. Luther himself never tired of speaking about «the liberty of the Christian man,» which meant both liberty from the bondage to sin and liberty from an institutional Christianity which had replaced the Gospel of freeing Grace with a religion of Law and Works. It would be interesting in this connection to investigate, at the same time, whether Luther--and with him «respectable» Protestantism at large--ever carried the liberation in Christ about which they spoke into the social, not to mention the political, arena. Many today have found occasion for looking again with new interest towards the Left Wing of the Reformation for a critique of Protestantism, and indeed for a model of «Liberation Theology» that goes beyond religious and individual liberty.

(b) *Theological Implications of the Concept*

Instead of pursuing further the historical course of the concept of Liberation, however, I would like to turn now for the elaboration of this first thesis to a closer examination of the concept as such, as it is employed in the Tradition. What does it mean? What is implied in it? These immense questions can only be answered here in theological shorthand; but let me make the attempt.

i) In the first place, the announcement of God's work in Christ as a work of liberation *presupposes that the human condition is one of bondage, enslavement.* Classical Christianity, in distinction from that so-called Liberal Christianity of the Modern Epoch, belongs to those views of the human situation which look upon man with a certain pity. That is, it understands man in terms of what Paul Tillich called the «tragic» dimension of sin: Sin is not only wilful disobedience, but a tragic--or perhaps a pathetic--condition. It is a matter, not only of doing what Adam did, but of *being* what Adam did. For many, the so-called «eleventh hour»--the hour of decision--never comes. And none of us is born into a Garden of Eden, with all of his decisions ahead of him. The temptations of the Christ, unlike those of Adam, occurred in a wilderness. Someone has been there before and spoilt it. That Christianity so-called which preaches repentance and moral rearmament as if *that* were «Gospel» is very shallow. The point of departure for all Liberation Theology, old or new, is the recognition that man as man is bound; that we are all bound, even though some may be more conspicuously bound than others. And we do not and cannot liberate ourselves; we can only *be* liberated.

To whom are we bound, or to what? Classical Christianity spoke in terms of the bondage to Satan, sin and death. St. Paul, who was demythologizing things before Bultmann started, spoke about bondage to «principalities and powers»; and once, in an interesting turn of phrase, he spoke about bondage to «decay» (Rom. 8:21). In the secular world which has rejected evil as well as good spirits, Christians are prone to demythologize all of these even further, and to say that we are bound by attitudes and lifestyles and conventions; or by corporate sin, or by multinational corporations, or by the Establishment, or by «Technocracy». And these things are not false. But whoever gets to the bottom (or near it) of what is meant by, e.g., «Technocracy»--as George Grant and Jacques Ellul seem to me to do--realizes that we only delude ourselves if we think we have become so very adult as to need no more recourse to the concept of the demonic. Auschwitz cannot be fully explained in secular terms. Nor can Vietnam. And when St. Paul said that the creation was in bondage to «decay», I think he knew as much as Freud did about the death wish and as much as Ehrlich or René Dubos do about the corporate fatalism which hides itself in adaptation to environmental collapse rather than face its own crisis of survival.

ii) Secondly, the announcement of the meaning of the Christ in terms of liberation means that *there is at the very heart of the Christian Gospel a polemic.* Throughout the Kerygma there rings the cry, «Let my people go!»

Now let me say at once that I am in perfect agreement with those who insist that the Gospel is first and last a declaration of the *Love* of God. Peter Abailard knew that, and for that reason he deplored every articulation of the work of Christ, especially Anselm's, which seemed to him a fundamental contradiction of Divine love. The Liberals of the 19th Century followed him in this. But love, in the Christian understanding of it, is never unambiguously «accepting». There are things that it will not accept, because those things are destructive to the beloved. Love therefore comes very often into the human scene as judgment--and indeed, judgment is never lacking from it. It comes as a polemic against that which denigrates and distorts the creation and the creatures. In the name of being irenic and accepting, bourgeois Christianity in our society has almost totally neglected this polemic that is at the heart of the Gospel. We have to rediscover what it means.

The most difficult aspect of that rediscovery is when it comes to the question whether this polemic may sometimes have to express itself in terms of violence. Those who accept violence as an occasionally necessary implication of the divine love, point out, accurately enough, that if the work of Christ is directed against that which keeps man and his world in bondage, then it must be directed also against men--individually and corporately, for instance against classes of men. And if the liberating work of the Christ is in essence polemical, then is it not purely arbitrary to draw a line between non-violent and violent polemic? I am not going to go further in this particular problem just now. I leave it for reflection. My own impression is that the answer to this difficult question must involve us in a renewed attempt, within the secular world, to understand the mystery and transcendence of evil. If we want to work our way through the question of violence, we must learn again, I think, how to distinguish between the «principalities and powers», the «decay», «death» and «nothingness» by which we are bound, and those institutions, classes and individuals who may in some special ways embody these powers and images.

iii) Thirdly, the concept of Liberation as a key metaphor for the Gospel means that what is encompassed in God's work in Christ is *not only the liberation of man, but of the whole creation*. There is a double intention in this statement. It means on the one hand that liberation in Christian tradition has universal applicability within the human community. To be sure everyone who comes to this point in theology knows that Scriptural evidence can be found for a predestinarian salvation which saves some men for hell. But against that Scripture, or the ecclesiastical traditions which have used it, there needs to be the whole emphasis (which for example one finds in much of the Pauline literature), which insists that even the alienated principalities and powers will somehow be liberated from their destructive destiny. But beyond that, the liberation in Christ has reference to the whole creation, to nature, which is after all not so inarticulate as Modernity tended to make it: it groans, it waits for the liberation (Rom.8). Today we have new evidence of its groaning and waiting with eager longing! And it has to be asked with great seriousness, in the context of the crisis of the biosphere, whether Christians can dare any longer to speak about liberation of humanity as if that were in itself the end of the matter.

Can we for instance support programmes which may (may!) lengthen the stay of *Homo-sapiens* on earth at the expense of other creatures? I leave that question open as well. In any case, there seems to me to be no doubt that the Scriptural view of Liberation encompasses also the *non-human* world. And in any case, could there be any real liberation of man which was not at the same time a liberation of nature? That is no longer just a theological question, it is an ecological challenge.

iv) Fourthly, the Liberation envisaged by the Christian *Kerygma* is not merely a matter of the establishment of a new psychic or spiritual state, but it drives towards embodiment in material and political reality. The Hebraic tradition, which Christianity could never quite escape, though it has tried to do so with might and main, refuses to indulge itself in docetic conceptualizing. What has to be overcome is not just some subtle internal death--the death of the spirit (though that is certainly real enough)--but death itself. A well-known Jewish theologian said to me once, «I am against death.» I was rather stunned at the time, for I realized that he didn't just mean «death» in a symbolic way. We were speaking about the death of a mutual friend. He meant death. He was right. The liberation of creation in terms of the Hebraic-Christian Tradition must mean finally the defeat of death itself. And in just those terms does the New Testament announce the victory of the Christ, the eschaological victory over death and the grave. The liberation in Christ will be complete only when the final enemy has been put underneath His feet.

v) This leads to my final observation in connection with the first Thesis: *Liberation in the Christian understanding is a process whose fulfilment is given eschatologically.* This is the most difficult observation to elucidate, though perhaps also the most important. To say that liberation is a «process» should not, in my view, imply the term «progress». Certainly not in the Modern sense. There is a sense in which, with Paul, we can say that we are nearer now than when we first believed--nearer to the completion. In terms of chronological time, that must in fact be said; for Christianity holds to a linear view of history. But it does not mean, with the doctrine of historical progress in the Modern epoch, that we are gradually getting better and better; that we are incorporating more and more, each day, each decade, by way of the liberating influence of the Christ. It does not mean that either in our corporate, historical existence, or in our personal lives. If we need to be liberated from anything, we Christians of the North Atlantic world, it is of the assumption that we represent a kind of pinnacle of civilization, towards which all earlier civilizations, as well as many present societies, were and are struggling with baited breath! In terms of liberation, we are infants. We don't employ the practice of slavery, as did the Greeks, so we think we have gone indefinitely beyond them in the understanding of freedom. That only shows how little we understand what freedom means. . . and slavery! The liberty Christ gives us is a liberty that has to become new every morning--because we slip back into slavery all the time. We look longingly at the fleshpots of Egypt and are glad to sell ourselves to anyone who will give us security.

Liberation is not a state, but a process. We are never done with it. It is never possible for Christians to say that they are liberated; only that they are being liberated. We have begun to begin to be free--and we can't store it up. Christ draws us anew, each day, into *His* liberty. Each day we resist, though sometimes we are drawn in spite of ourselves. We resist this liberty, I say. For despite all Celebration talk, this liberty Christ seeks to give us is not the sort of Dionysian orgy of the spirit that we want. We are capable of some approximations of this liberty, in our personal lives and in our life together in the *Koinonia*, and also in the civic community. But it is always a matter of becoming. It is this becoming--this process--which in fact prevents the Christian understanding of liberation in Christ from becoming just another ideology. For it understands that the consummation of the liberty that is being given, a consummation which always judges the approximations of it and keeps us from regarding them as ultimate or absolute, is something for which one waits and «groans», with the whole creation. It cannot become a programme, with progressive stages of development and a completion within the conditions of historical existence. The consummation of the process, like its inauguration, must be given, must break into time from beyond time.

In anticipation of the second thesis, I said just now that the liberty Christ seeks to give us is not the sort of Dionysian abandon that we would gladly enough latch onto. The explanation of that statement now becomes the task of the second, thesis, in which I want to raise what seems to me the primary critical point of *doctrine* with respect to the theme of liberation.

Thesis No. 2: LIBERATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CHRISTIAN KERYGMA HAS TO BE SEEN IN DIALECTICAL TENSION WITH WHAT MUST APPEAR TO THE WORLD (AND SO ALSO TO US!) AS ITS VERY ANTITHESIS: SERVANTHOOD (doulos).

(a) *Liberty as Bondage to God and the Neighbour*

Christian literature, including the Bible, abounds in statements and confessions of faith which embody the apparent contradiction, liberty and servanthood. The Book of Common Prayer, in a time-honoured prayer for peace, speaks of the Lord as one «whose service is perfect freedom.» For Paul, the new *freedom* that is given is at the same time bondage to Christ: and the word he uses is not servant only but slave (*doulos*). The Scottish poet George Matheson put the thing succinctly when he wrote, in a hymn familiar to all of us, «Make me a captive Lord, and then I shall be free.»

Unfortunately, just the sentimentality and pietism which has surrounded this hymn--partly on account of the music--tends to sweeten and obscure the dichotomy that is really present in it. And this is the fate of many of the polarities which belong to Christian thought: they are made nicely compatible by pious usage. The two concepts involved here--liberty and servanthood (slavery)--are in the final analysis compatible. But only «in the final analysis». And only as paradox and tension. That is, their compatibility can be understood only insofar as they are used to describe a relationship: namely, the relationship with this One, the only One whose service is «perfect freedom».

They are not compatible *as concepts*; and they are never *easily* compatible in the life of faith. There is and remains a tension within them. Because we are who we are, there is tension. For we are always looking for the sort of liberty which frees us from any sort of ties to others--not to speak of servanthood in relation to them! But we find that we are able to receive the liberty Christ gives us only in the form of bondage. A new bondage. Liberation is not only liberation *from* something, but liberation *for* something: namely, I am being liberated in order that I may serve.

There are some important nuances in this juxtaposition of liberty and bondage:

i) One is that genuine freedom in the sense of the Kerygma apparently means being freed *from* one's own self-determination. Here, freedom is not a synonym for autonomy. It is not an internal condition which pertains when one has finally rid oneself to all the knotty ties that bind; that bind us to parents, to peer groups, to social conventions and pressures, etc. Freedom is not the liberation and cultivation of subjectivity--of one's own selfhood. On the contrary, freedom in the Christian sense seems to mean being *liberated* from one's subjectivity, from the whims and dictates of one's own being, and being delivered over to . . . Another. Liberated from the self and the service of self; liberated for the Other.

ii) And who is this Order? The most obvious answer, in line with the progression of our discussion so far, is that the Other is God, or Christ, or the Spirit--in short, the Godhead. We are freed *from* bondage to the self, a self which is bound and gagged by «principalities and powers», in order that we may be freed *for* the service of God.

But what is the service of God? Only the most questionable theology could answer that question in strictly *theological* terms--or rather, strictly *religious* terms. The service of God which is «perfect freedom» could never mean a strictly God-oriented life. Not in a Faith like ours, in which God himself, as we discover often to the horror of our *religious* aspirations (!), is not God-orientated. The service of God which is sometimes glimpsed as «perfect freedom» is the service of a God who from first to last orientates *Himself* towards man and the world: A God who Himself serves, who takes upon Himself the form of a slave (Phil.2). The service of God which in the last analysis is «perfect freedom» means also, therefore, in an immediate sense and not merely as a second step, the service of man and of the world. The liberty of the Christian is his bondage to God and the Neighbour. In fact, the end which governs the whole process of liberation is just this service, this bondage to the Other. Or, to say it now in another way--a way which is nothing more than a matter of changing the words around: *the goal of liberation is Love*. It is for love that God wills to liberate men. He frees us from our bondage to destructive and distorting powers, including the power of the alienated self, in order to bind us in a new relationship of love and justice one to another.

iii) This is not however simply the same as saying that liberation in the Christian sense is a matter of self-denial. There is a kind of religion (sometimes it takes the form of a sort of humanism, and sometimes it masquerades as Christianity) which insists that true virtue is a matter of allowing my life to be determined by others--being the slave of a husband or a wife, or children or parents, of friends, of associates, or simply of Humanity. This can occur in the guise of Christianity only where the fellowman (the neighbour) has been unambiguously equated with God. As a Christian I am bound to God: His service is my freedom. His service means, always and immediately, not as a second step, the service of the neighbour, but it is He who directs me to my neighbour, and who determines the nature of my servanthood with respect to my neighbour. I may not serve my neighbour in the way that I personally want to serve him, or in the way in which he wants to be served. My neighbour's claim upon me is an indirect one: It is interpreted by, filtered through the love of God for my neighbour. And--to make it quite clear why I am inserting this observation here--if it is remembered that in this usage of the word «neighbour» we are also thinking of husbands, wives, children, parents, and in short our closest human relationships, it may be seen as having some importance for the institutions of marriage, family and work, which have in so many cases become oppressive in our society with the unambiguous blessing of Christianity and the churches!

(b) *The Danger: Liberation as End-in-Itself*

There is an inherent danger in every theology. The typical danger inherent in the so-called theology of liberation is that the theme of liberation becomes isolated from its polar concept, servanthood, with which in Biblical faith it stands in dialectical tension. This is not simply a remote or theoretical danger; it happens easily and regularly. And the reason why it happens is not hard to discover. Let me elaborate.

As we have seen, the dialectical tension with servanthood which belongs to the Christian concept of liberation can be maintained--and maintained as tension, as paradox, not as contradiction--only so long as it functions as the description of a relationship: namely, of this particular relationship, the relationship between the Christ and the Christian or the Christian Community; the relationship with this *particular* One--the only One, according to Faith, whose service is finally «perfect freedom».

Now what happens, regularly and easily, to the theme of liberation is just what happens to every theology of grace: namely, the *idea* of liberation is extracted from this relationship. Liberation becomes an idea, a primitive principle, a soteriological concept. Liberation is separated from the Liberator. The theology of Liberation becomes an ideology of liberation. The Christian terminology may still be used; it may be very interesting, and learned articles in theological journals will not fail to discuss it. But it will be no less an ideology, and no theology.

Moreover, it will be an ideology which from the vantage-point of Christian Faith will have to be seen as particularly questionable. For when Liberation as such, as an idea and programme, becomes the primary preoccupation of Christians, what has occurred is not only that the Gospel of the Liberator has been exchanged for a religious ideal of liberation, but, beyond that, it has happened that the *means* has been substituted for the *end*. For in the polarity of liberation and servanthood, as we have discussed it, the liberation of those in bondage is not an end-in-itself but the means to something else. The end for which liberation is means is service--that is, is love; that is, is justice. We are being liberated in order to be able to love. Unless liberation leads to this service, this love, this justice vis à vis the Other; unless the liberating witness and act is informed from beginning to end by *this* end--it is a cheap and questionable thing. «Cheap grace,» said Bonhoeffer, many years ago by now, is grace without the call to discipleship. A liberation theology which offers freedom without requiring the most demanding service of those who are being liberated is «cheap grace».

(c) *The Call to a Prophetic Critique and Human Vigilance*

I think that it is especially in connection with the awareness of this danger that theology is called to enter the arena of contemporary life. In the world today there are many movements whose aim is some form of liberation. They are numerous; and they are diverse. Some of them conflict with others. Some are rather directly related to Christian concerns; others only tangentially. It is right, according to my understanding, that Christians should seek to relate themselves and their belief to these existing movements. It is right, I think, to see in them, amongst other things, the activity of the Spirit of God. Christians are called, not so much to initiate as to recognize and make common cause with the movements within their world which in some way embody or reflect the liberating work of God as He is revealed in the Christ.

It is however *not* the job of theology merely to relate such existing movements to the Gospel, nor merely to find justification in the Christian Tradition for the existence of such movements. The task of theology, and of the Church as a whole, is to preserve what is human according to that humanity which is defined and glimpsed in the man, Jesus. To follow the God who, to use Paul Lehmann's language, is «at work in the world to make and to keep human life human.» The relation of theology and of Christians to existing movements of liberation, therefore, is not only to seek to relate to them in a positive way, but also to become involved in them as those who are *vigilant for man*. That means to be involved in these movements on the basis of a genuine solidarity with them; but also it means to be involved in them as critics, who seek to influence them *for* humanity and *against* the dehumanizing elements which are present in these movements also, as they are always present in human undertakings.

There is, it seems to me, sufficient reason to believe that many of the liberating movements in the contemporary world, perhaps especially within our own social context, do in fact manifest such destructive and dehumanizing potential. And this potential for inhumanity is conspicuous precisely at the point where

the question is raised, whether the liberation that is desired is regarded as a means to some other end or as an end in itself. What is this liberation *for*? That question has to be put to all causes of liberation. It may be rejected--especially when it is put by Christians. And it will usually be resented; for people who are caught up in movements of liberation are frequently given to think that Liberty (capital L!) is indeed an end in itself. Moreover, there is a sense in which, when the oppression is real, those who take up the cudgels against it ought not to be expected to answer in a fully developed sense for what end they are seeking liberty. Perhaps in the heat of their cause, they are able only to know what they need to be liberated *from*. Even so, the Christian is obligated to raise that question (hopefully he will be able to raise it from within): What is the *end* which informs this struggle for liberty? For even though he cannot and dare not expect to receive a specifically *Christian* answer to that question (that is, he cannot expect to hear that the struggle for liberty is motivated by the end of sacrificial love for the neighbour), still he can hope to hear that it is motivated by something which approximates or reflects this answer (that is, he can hope to hear that the liberation is sought for the sake of service). And if he does not hear that, then it is his responsibility to attempt to inform and season that movement with some such reflection about the goal that it might have.

This is all the more necessary because where the question of the goal has been avoided, for whatever reason, the means--namely, the liberating activity itself--are not answerable to anything beyond themselves. So it happens that in their zeal for displacing oppressive systems, many of the most sensitive reformers or revolutionaries fall victim to the very oppressiveness of the systems they want to overthrow. They lose sight of the vision; liberty becomes an end in itself; and this end, having nothing better to judge and purge it, justifies all sorts of means that might otherwise have to be questioned. In the process, the liberators themselves begin to manifest the same distortions of humanity which characterized the oppressors. They in turn become oppressors. It is an old story. The most authentic and poignant literature coming out of the Soviet Union and East Germany, Chile and South Africa, is a documentation of this story to which all would-be liberators should submit themselves. And it by no means alleviates the nausea produced in one by this story when the liberators-become-oppressors insist that they are only employing «temporary measures».

Above all, Christians have the responsibility of raising the question of the end (what is the liberation *for*?) in relation to those movements in which they involve themselves, individually or communally. There is no guarantee that Christians will not also fall into the danger of substituting the means for the end. But a theological reflection which returns again and again to the relationship with the Liberator, and refuses to separate its understanding of liberation from Him, can at least recognize the prospect of tyranny in every implementation of power, including those which are motivated by the cause of freedom!

Thesis No. 3: IT IS A MATTER OF CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE TODAY--AS WELL AS A WORLDLY NECESSITY--THAT CHRISTIANS DEVELOP AN ECUMENICAL THEOLOGY AND ETHIC OF LIBERATION, WHOSE SPECIFIC POINT OF REFERENCE IS THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED WITHIN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD.

(a) *A Matter of Christian Obedience*

In the preceding thesis, I drew attention to the indelible connection in Christian thought between liberation and servanthood: we are being liberated for a new bondage to God and the neighbour. The present thesis hangs upon a further observation with respect to the definition of the neighbour. «Who is my neighbour?»

Not only in the well-known parable that Jesus gave in answer to this question, but also in many other ways, including the famous parable of the last judgment in Matthew 25, the Bible defines the neighbour more precisely in terms of need. In a special sense, «the neighbour» in Christian thought is the one who is oppressed: the one who fell among thieves and is lying in a ditch; who is naked or in prison, hungry, wretched. The Scriptures reinforce this insistence over and again by their testimony to the divine solidarity with the wretched of the earth. The prophets bear witness to a God who takes the side of widows and orphans, sold for a pair of shoes. And Jesus walks amongst the poor, the sick and the alienated--and is not so gentle to any as to these.

It is not being denied here that all men are oppressed. Existence under the conditions of the Fall *is* oppression. All require liberation. All people therefore are potential neighbours to those who are being liberated for servanthood to God and neighbour.

It remains, however, that the oppression of some people is greater than that of others--or at least more debilitating. It remains also that some, though they are undoubtedly also oppressed, being human, are themselves more conspicuously cast in the role of the oppressor. In Biblical thought, both of these distinctions are honoured, in spite of the fact that they seem to contradict the more general observation, which is also voiced frequently enough in the Tradition, that all human beings are equally bound, equally in need of being freed. No doubt it belongs to that same Hebraic refusal to indulge in docetism and spiritualism that those to whom God pays most compassionate attention are those whose oppression is manifest in their *physical* condition: the hungry, the naked, in a word the poor. And if the Bible dares to name the names of those who, if they are also oppressed, play more convincingly the daily role of oppressor, it is because of the realization that the very strength and prosperity of those people deceive them with respect to their real condition. The *physically* oppressed are of special interest to the writers of Scripture, not only because they are in obvious need but because their need, which they cannot ignore, illuminates the human condition in its totality. Who could doubt, reading the Gospels, that Jesus thinks the Pharisees and the rich men sick and needy as well! But they are in no need of him, the «Physician», until their sickness begins to manifest itself. And that may require an eternity, as is intimated in the parable of Dives and Lazarus.

Because the neighbour is in a special sense, an immediate sense, the one who fell among thieves, a theology of liberation concentrates upon those whose oppression is visible in the externalities of their lives. Whatever it may be necessary to say about the universal applicability of the theology of liberation, there is in my mind no doubt that it is a matter of Christian obedience today that the ecumenical Church must engage in a search for a theology and ethic of liberation which has special reference to those who are physically and materially oppressed within the contemporary world. In a moment I want to elaborate briefly on the meaning of the term «ecumenical Church» in that context. But first, we should observe that the necessity for liberation of the poor and oppressed is by now quite beyond the category of theological responsibility of morality; it has become . . .

(b) *A Matter of Worldly Necessity*

For it is absurd for any sane person to imagine that *part* of the world can survive--namely, the affluent part! The image offered by a past Moderator of the United Church, Robert McClure, is appropriate: to ignore the crisis of the Third World is to act like a man on the deck for first-class passengers who looks down condescendingly at the people in steerage and says, «It seems that your end of the ship is sinking.» Barbara Ward and many others have documented this statement many times over. By now it is clear, also, that the solution to the dilemma is not to be found in bringing the people in steerage «up» (as we like to imagine) to our exalted level of consumption. . . and waste.

It is sad that so many Christians have had to wait for this situation to become «a matter of worldly necessity» before they began to explore what it meant and means that the neighbour, whose service is bound up with our freedom, is in a particular way the one in need, physically oppressed. But what it means that liberation of these neighbours has become today a matter of survival for the race is that Christians, insofar as they become aware of this, will inevitably find themselves facing the issues of oppression and liberation on several fronts, at home and abroad, in company with many others. These others are acting out of different motives--some political, some religious, some humanitarian, some from the simple recognition of a biological question of survival. It becomes a particular question in our time, therefore, how the Christians can work with these others, many of whom operate out of non-Christian ideologies and motives, some of whom are openly hostile to Christianity and regard it as an element of the oppressive System they are seeking to overthrow. I have already expressed what seems to me to be the special critical function of Christians in this situation: to raise the question of the end for which the liberation is sought; to be vigilant for humanity. But the positive basis for co-operation with non- and anti-Christian liberators is only possible if and insofar as Christians discover, out of the depths of their own Faith, that belief in God as such necessitates their solidarity with the poor. This is by no means an automatic discovery for Christians of the affluent Western world, and even when they discover it they are hard pressed to convince other people, in the face of Christian performance in the world, that it is an actual corollary of Christian belief to be committed to *the oppressed!*

(c) *An Ecumenical Theology -- We Must Listen!*

Because the connection between Christianity and the poor has been more a matter of rhetoric than of reality in our experience, I have deliberately stressed that the theology and ethic of liberation which is today a matter of obedience and worldly necessity must be the endeavour of the *ecumenical Church*. What I have intended by this can be stated quite simply and quickly: «The Church»--the Body of Christ--does not mean, as White Westerners have been so prone to imagine, the Church of North America, Europe, and certain other Caucasian lands. In fact it is my impression that the churches of the affluent nations--especially of the North Atlantic nations--are so inextricably identified with their oppressive and repressive cultures that even where some members and groups have been able to break through and beyond that «establishment» they are hardly believed or trusted by the oppressed. In a real sense, the *credibility* of the ecumenical Church today--insofar as it is credible at all--depends on those churches which, mostly by sheer necessity, have been forced out of the Christendom mold, and forced to exist in the world as a suspect and alien body. In my own recent experience, I have learned more from the Church in East Germany than ever I learned in my life from the Church in North America or so-called «free» Europe. I have said that it is the task of the ecumenical Church to forge a theology of liberation which has special reference to the oppressed. But I am convinced that the greater and most active share in this task must of necessity fall upon those churches of the *Oecumene* which have been disestablished, and which themselves can only exist in the world as the dispossessed. Only dispossessed Christians have the right and the insight to speak with authority about the situation of dispossessed persons and peoples. As for the rest of us whose theology and practice is bound up with possession, our role in all of this must be almost passive. We must listen. A very humiliating and difficult thing for us, who have fancied ourselves the enlightened ones, the liberators, for so long!

Thesis No 4: WHILE THERE ARE THEREFORE ASPECTS OF A THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION WHICH WE REQUIRE IN THE AFFLUENT SOCIETIES OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC, AND WHICH ILLUMINATE OUR SITUATION, IT SHOULD NOT BE ASSUMED AS EVIDENT THAT THIS THEOLOGY AS SUCH AND BY ITSELF IS APPROPRIATE FOR OUR SITUATION.

(a) *Theology must be Contextual*

I have insisted in the introduction that theology must be *contextual*. Not every word that could be derived from the Bible or from the Tradition is appropriate everywhere and always. In the beautiful words of the third Chapter of Ecclesiastes, there is a time, and there is a time. I like very much this statement of Martin Luther:

If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are *at the moment* attacking, I am not *confessing* Christ, however boldly I may be *professing* him. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at the point.

To be sure, as I have already been at some pains to show, our context today is the globe itself. We cannot live apart from the others. And therefore I have insisted that the development of a theology of liberation with special reference to the dispossessed is also *our* task, as part of the ecumenical church, though our rôle needs to be that of listeners, mainly. All Christians everywhere, regardless of their specific contexts, and because the context called spaceship earth is one, are obliged today to direct their attention towards the neighbour who has fallen among thieves. That is true.

But the problem is: *we are the thieves!* We belong to a people--a people of «unclean lips»--which with much pleasant rhetoric has robbed and plundered and beaten the poor «Samaritan» neighbour for generations and generations. And this, quite special and specific context of ours has to be taken into account when as Christians in this society we look for the appropriate word and try to confess Christ within our own situation.

It is of course true that by engaging in a certain interesting and perhaps dialectical (but more likely gimmicky) twist of the theological wrist, it is possible to come up with a theology of liberation that is designated also for thieves. That is what is being done by many who have caught on to the new emphasis as the latest slogan in the theological world. Thieves and victims, robbers and robbed--all alike are invited to share in the richness of the latest theological discovery, the Theology of Liberation. It is said that the Gospel of Liberation is after all as relevant for the oppressors as for the oppressed, for the possessors as the dispossessed. While in relation to the poor, Christians of the affluent West are invited and urged to engage in the theological and political work of liberation, on the home front they are invited and urged to submit themselves and their society to the same liberating Gospel--which of course liberates the rich from their riches, just as surely as it liberates the poor from their poverty. This is all very nice; and there is a certain rightness in it. But there is also something terribly predictable about it, and in the last analysis, I think, very questionable.

It is predictable, especially when it is found in the North American scene, because our habit from the outset of our history has been to get our theology, already made, from some other source. Except for the Blacks, I think we have never had a truly *indigenous* theology, one that grew out of our own despair and hope. Partly because we never had any despair that we couldn't lick. Usually we got our analyses of sin and redemption from Europe. Sometimes straight from the Continent, but usually through the filtering-down and simplifying process that inevitably occurred whenever a theology moved across the Channel to England or Scotland. (Of course I am speaking now mainly as a Protestant). By the time our theology got across the Atlantic Ocean -- all that water--it was normally washed down and reduced to the sort of intellectual fare that could be sung to children's hymn tunes. To speak only of the modern period, we got our Liberal Theology that way; we got our neo-Orthodoxy that way; we got our theology of secularity that way too (Harvey Cox's Americanism notwithstanding), and our theology of hope. Now the winds are blowing from a slightly different direction,

and we are hearing the sounds of creative thought which are being made in the Third World, notably Latin America, which before now we hadn't even noticed. A few--very few, by the way--get the idea that we should at least try to think out the theology of Liberation indigenously, as it applies to us, to the thieves. But for the most part it can be quite exhilarating to plan conferences around the Third World and other themes which have no real intention whatever of asking about our need, the need for being exposed to and liberated from «our darkness», as Black Theologian Eric Lincoln aptly phrased it.

(b) *Our Propensity for the Positive*

But the predictability of this trendy move to Liberation Theology in North America does not constitute, for me, the main question to be asked about it -- to be asked of it, at least, as a total or exclusive theological emphasis. My wariness of it stems, much more than that, from the suspicion that once more we are reaching out with a certain desperation for a very positive sort of theology, because we can't stand the thought of being exposed to our own bankruptcy and the general negativity of our experience.

I mean: one can't help remembering--after all it was less than a decade ago!--how excited we all were over the theology of hope. Nobody read Moltmann's book; the slogan itself was provocative enough. We were short on hope; our national philosophy of optimism was becoming daily more thread bare. So many latched onto the theology of hope, because hope is after all a very good thing and very Christian.

Liberation is also a very positive idea. It's true that for many North American liberals it has some nasty connotations--guerilla movements and revolutions and violence in all those far off places. But after all, as many have been quick to point out in the United States, «America» was founded on the crest of a movement to liberation. And Liberty has always been strong in our dream, our way of life, on this Continent. For Christians of many colours, even for some on the economic and political right, the concept of «liberation» has this nice, positive, activist ring about it. And there is also the somehow fascinating, somewhat naughty possibility of seeming to be associating with movements of the Left, Marxists and other *avant garde* people.

In short, what I mean is that the preoccupation with a theology called 'Liberation' could easily be nothing more nor less than other stage in the old game, so much a national sport on this Continent, of insulating ourselves against «our own darkness» by taking refuge in the light that other people have found for theirs! I repeat: I know that by a certain dialectical twist of the wrist you can turn it all into a quite «critical» theology which asks about the liberation of thieves and robbers, the multinational corporations and the society and the churches which undergird them. But the temptation to turn it, on the other hand, into a new (but not very new) occasion for North American *hubris*, a new temptation to swinging Christian triumphalism, is just as real; and frankly it is far more likely, given our well entrenched predilection for accentuating the positive, eliminating the negative, and not messing with Mr.

Inbetween! I have to confess that I am increasingly disturbed that so many thieves, in and outside the churches, have become excited about the theology of liberation. I feel a little the way that I do when I see an ad of the Ford Motor Corporation which speaks about the need to fight pollution. If Liberation really means that we want to liberate ourselves--really disestablish and dissociate ourselves as Christians from the bourgeois cultural religion of this officially optimistic society, then hurrah! But I suspect that it doesn't mean that, and that under the aegis of «Liberation Theology» it couldn't. I suspect that for most of those who get onto it it means another ego-trip, another instance of that typical North American Christian theology of glory which sees us, suitably «liberated» from our cultural bondage, of course, going off into the world again to clear up everybody's problems.

Instead of sitting down quietly and letting it sink in that far from being universal problem-solvers, we are part of the problem. A very large part! After all, it is no new thing that North Americans should have a vision of themselves as Liberators. And well, we never have been just nasty and callous about our liberating; we've always been modest, innocent, helpful, full of good will and practical know-how--technique!

(c) *The Need to Explore «our darkness» (Lincoln)*

It's terribly hard, therefore, for us to make the connection between the problems and our so willing attempts to solve them! We don't know what it means when someone in the Third World tells us--as I heard a young Chilean economist tell an American theologian at a conference in France (The American wanted to know, «How can we help you?»)--«LEAVE US ALONE!» cried the Chilean with passion. He might have added: «Explore your own darkness».

I would not recant the third Thesis: the need for a theology of liberation with special reference to the dispossessed involves the ecumenical Church, and therefore us North Americans and Europeans as well, though mainly as silent partners. But as for us here at home--the thieves; the innocent, modest thieves; the little foxes who spoil the grapes; the Sargent Lil'Abner Calleys--I think we need to hear something else before we will be in any position to listen for a Gospel of Liberation that has specific application to our own *Sitz im Leben*. I think--to put it as briefly as possible--that we have to spend a good deal of time exposing ourselves to the fact that in the name of liberating people from this and that, we have become perhaps the most oppressive society the world has ever known. We need to explore the meaning of our failure--if you like, our failure as liberators, amongst other things. We need to open ourselves to the truth that, imagining ourselves masters of the world, we have become the victims of our own tools of mastery, of that «technocracy» which Buber called «leaderless». We need to contemplate in deepest reverie the sense of meaninglessness which permeates our culture, and which is felt by every African and Asian student who sets foot on our soil, so that he wants to go home, where there is still meaning, even if there is also oppression and want. We need to enter into the depths of our own night: the failure of our institutions and the buffoonery of our highest offices; the mediocrity of our educational

institutions; the joylessness of our entertainment. We need to reflect with great seriousness, and without ready answers, on the bankruptcy of our values and the underlying nihilism and cynicism of our intellectuals; the shallowness of our religious thought and our philosophy. We need to contemplate in studied concentration the failure of the European dream called «the New World», that was born in the minds of some enlightened men in the 17th and 18th centuries and was supposed to «happen» here. Perhaps what we need most of all, theologically speaking, is a theology of failure. I mean: a theology that would give us the courage to reflect on the meaning of our experience as a people, the failure of the dream we dreamt, and the reasons for this failure. To speak in theological language that some of you may know, but many probably do not, because it has not been a part of our experience (except for the Blacks), what we need, I think is a Theology of the Cross.

Such a theology--call it theology of failure, theology of the cross, or what you will--is finally not unrelated to the theology of liberation that is emerging from our Christian brothers in the Third World. For it is only as we as Christians in the affluent, established-Christian nations are brought into the experience of failure--the experience of our own darkness and oppression--that we can hope to have any real solidarity with those who really do sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Sometimes it seems to me that we are at the place in our history as a people here in North America where we could become wise: for we are for the first time undergoing a darkness that is not just a dust storm, and cannot be passed off as such. And, as Hegel said, the owl of Minerva, the symbol of wisdom, only takes its flight at evening. To become wise at the level of Christian life and thought would mean--would have to mean--to go into the darkness; to explore it, to find out the depths of it--for it is indeed very deep. The only light that is in any case pertinent to our situation is light that might shine, perhaps it really does shine for us, in the midst of our own night. Only those who are bound can be freed. I think our task here in North America today, and maybe in Canada we are in a better position to do it than in the United States, is to discover--it may be for the first time--just how bound we are by our own most positive image of ourselves as free!

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JESUS, THE GOSPEL, AND RESISTANCE

BRIAN ALLAN

Introduction. The purpose of this article is to show the difference between the motivations which inspire the Christian and the non-Christian to social action at the various levels within the world-wide community. The paper in no way will attempt to judge whether or not such action should be taken, but will rather work on the assumption that injustice is the common concern of all humanity, both Christian and non-Christian alike, and that resistance to it is essential.

It is, moreover, the purpose of this paper to show, at the risk of standing at the edge of fundamentalism (which I would wish to avoid at all costs), the implications for the Christian faith if it chooses to involve itself in any form of resistance for any reason other than Christian morality, or indeed for any justification other than the living Christ Himself. This is not to imply that all the questions concerning Christology are answered with unanimity within the Church, but rather to assert that it is essential that Jesus Christ, and He alone, should be the reason and the motivation for any involvement of the Church and her members in social action. For unless the Church bases her reasons and her motivation in Jesus and His Gospel alone, she is not only in danger of apostasy, but indeed she is in danger of losing the basis for her existence as well as the basic content of her faith.

Therefore, it must be asserted, that in order for the Church to involve herself in resistance to any form of oppression, it is necessary for her to do so by using the proclamation of the Gospel and her faith in Jesus Christ as her point of departure; or simply, that the Church can never justify actions of resistance, in any form, on purely secular or political grounds. For if she does otherwise she is in danger of losing both her authority and her authenticity and stands before the world as little more than another secular pressure group which in the end is involved, at the best, in raising the quality of human life for the sake of human life and, at the worst, is involved in the justification of her own existence for the maintenance of her *status quo*.

The Apostate Church. Although the theologians, who provide the Church with her interpretations of Christian ethics, still maintain that Jesus Christ and His life and teachings are indeed the point from which every action is to be taken, the Church in the world, when carrying out these actions (when she is courageous enough to do anything), does so with little, in fact often with no reference to Jesus and/or His Gospel whatsoever. The implication of this divorce between faith and action is that the Church, through her actions, places herself in a state of apostasy. This is so, not because of her actions, but because of the omission of her proclamation with her actions.

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For, if it is true, as the ethicists claim, that Jesus must be the ultimate authority and His life and teachings the ultimate principles by which the standards for Christian ethics are formed, then it follows that the proclamation of the Kingdom of God must be behind as well as at the forefront of every action of the Church. The call of Jesus to the Church to witness to Him «to the ends of the earth» (Acts 1:8) must be at the root of the Church's reasoning and action. For, presumably, if the Church is involved at all, it is because she seeks to enter into cooperation with God to further establish His Kingdom on earth even as it is in Heaven (cf. Matt.5:10, and 2 Cor. 6:1). (i) Thus, it is not for the sake of humanity, it is not for the sake of political persuasion, it is not even for the sake of justice alone that the Church adopts a stance of resistance in the world. Indeed, it must be only for the sake of Jesus Christ and His Gospel that she acts at all. For, to do otherwise is no less than a denial of her original commission, which by necessity must result in the state of apostasy!

This is, to say the least, a serious accusation, which, if it is to be made, must be supported. Here arises a difficulty. For, in her ethical position (whether it be on the lines of conventional ethics or even on those of the increasingly popular «Liberation Ethics») the Church bases her need to resist oppressive governments or to be involved in social action upon the Gospel and the life of Christ. At this level, then, it is difficult to find fault. The apostasy becomes apparent, however, when the Church moves from thought to action. For in this transition the purpose and the proclamation are lost. This is true even in the explanation of the motives behind the actions of the authorities of the Church to her members, to say nothing of their explanation to the secular world.

Support for the hypothesis can be found by citing three examples of the Church's action from the present day. To allow for a comprehensive view of the frightful reality of this situation, the examples have been chosen from international, national and internal church affairs.

1) *International issue*: the \$85,000.00 grant from the World Council of Churches (WCC) special Program to Combat Racism (PCR) to the Patriotic Front of Zimbabwe.

WCC Statement: «(the decision was made) strictly according to the criteria laid down for the Special Fund -- namely, that grants are to be used for humanitarian activities. ... The PCR grant is not given as a sign of approval or blame for the suffering of either side. The WCC simply wants to help some of those caught in the conflict in a way that it believes will end the suffering of all Zimbabwe people most effectively and rapidly.» (ii)

While it must be supposed that behind the criteria of the PCR there lie the very definite Gospel related insights of Liberation Theology, it must be noted that in the press releases no mention of these motives has been made. The emphasis is placed rather on «humanitarian» concerns.

2) *National issue*: the plan to help Indochinese refugees - 'The Boat People' specifically the country's intention to take in 50,000 such refugees, during 1979 and 1980.

Church Statements: «The United Church of Canada will urge its parishes across Canada to sponsor families.» (iii) «Canada was built upon the hard work of immigrants ... We, of all people, do not have the right to close the door to others.» (iv)

While it is conceded that the press will pick up what they will and disregard the rest, it is nonetheless evident that no statement that *might* have been made concerning Jesus Christ and His Gospel was made with enough strength or conviction to be picked up by the press. The emphasis again is «humanitarian» in nature.

3) *Internal issue*: Training for Ministry - specifically in the area of pastoral care.

Church Statement: «A goal (of such training) is that each person will become increasingly responsible for her/his development.» (v) «As students assess their strengths and weaknesses, encouragement is given to that internal growth which can liberate one to minister as fully as possible to others.» (vi)

While granting that the aims of such programmes still claim that «a deepening faith commitment» (vii) is important, in light of their context, it must be assumed that the faith which is deepened is indeed in the individual's skills and ability to minister and not in Jesus Christ.

Martin Luther King, Jr., used a saying to T.S. Eliot to reproach the Church for both her action and non-action. (viii) The same may be used here: «there is no greater treason than to do the right deed for the wrong reason.» Indeed, even while avoiding the ethical judgements which are demanded by the actions of the Church, that is, be they right or wrong according to the standards of Jesus Christ and His teachings, the actions themselves must nevertheless be considered as incurring the full weight of the Charge of «High Treason» upon the Church for the deliberate denial and avoidance of its witness to, and because of, Jesus Christ. For such an omission displays, beyond doubt, the subversion of the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth!

Apostasy: Reasons and Rebuttals. The fact that such a treasonable act should be committed by the Church, in the name of «humanity», is surprising for she above all should know, as Bonhoeffer says, that, «Man's apostasy from Christ is at the same time his apostasy from his own nature.» (ix) Yet, the apostasy continues and true Christians are forced to ask, Why? The answers are as varied as the actions themselves. Some of them, however, regardless of the extent to which they are false justifications, must be considered.

1. It is often posited by the Church that in order to be obedient to the Christian law of love, it is imperative that we in no way cause offense to our non-Christian brothers and sisters by an over-zealous proclamation of the Gospel.

While the difficulties caused by «over-zealousness» on the part of some fundamentalists and the fanatic fringe of Christendom will always be a problem, the point which is usually overlooked is that not to proclaim the Gospel is in itself the breaking of the law of love. For, if the Church believes her message, the very grounds of her existence, she must, by necessity, recognize that not to proclaim the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the Good News is indeed the most unloving action she could take. Again Bonhoeffer states the case clearly, «There is no greater service of love than to place man in the light of the truth of this (God's) Word, even when it gives pain.» (x) Moreover, while the Church must defend the right for a person's freedom to believe what she/he will, the Church must at the same time assert her right to be Christian. Being Christian includes the proclamation of the Word to the world. This proclamation is not so likely to give offense as the omission of it is to bring about the charge of hypocrisy.

2. The Church, in her desire to achieve justice, has stated that it is more important to relieve the oppressed than to be concerned with the salvation of their souls.

It was Régamey who stated that «The conversion of men must precede the changing of systems.» (xi) Such a statement may well be idealistic, and in fact provide, with misinterpretation, the grounds for doing little or nothing about injustice. But, nevertheless, it holds within it an element of truth which cannot be overlooked. For, without such conversion, relief of the oppressed is in danger of becoming little more than the transfer of power, which in turn means only the transfer of oppression. What is advocated in this rebuttal is not that the Church should preach first and offer aid only upon the reception of the Gospel. But rather, that as the Church acts, she must also proclaim! And to do so with the hope that her witness to Jesus and His teaching will bring about the changing of systems for the whole of humanity, so that she does not find herself simply applying band-aid treatment to a broken world when she, in fact, holds within her the potential to heal it.

3. The Church avoids her commission to proclaim the Gospel today in order to maintain her hard-earned recognition by the world. «After all,» she claims, «in light of the sins of our history, it has taken a great deal of reconciliation for the Church in a pluralistic society to gain the respect and the attention of the world and this must be maintained.»

In truth, what is often mistaken for reconciliation, is no more than compromise at Christ's expense, with the added possibility of the total loss of the content of the Christian faith. «Needless to say,» Merton states, «Christian humility must not be confused with a mere desire to win approval and to find reassurance by conciliating others superficially.» (xii) The cry of the world

today is against just such superficiality. «I don't want some pretty face to tell me pretty lies. All I want is someone to believe,» sings Billy Joel in a popular song («Honesty»). No doubt it is time that the Church provided herself as just such a someone to believe. Not in nice flowery evasive language, but, in the language of the faith, which presents Jesus as the Way, the Truth and the Life (Jn. 14:6). Bonhoeffer, once more, sizes up the situation and its danger:

In American theology, Christianity is essentially religion and ethics. But that means that the person and work of Jesus Christ have to retire into the theological background, and finally remain uncomprehended. (xiii)

Needless to say, many of these, as well as many of the inexhaustible list of other reasons given for the neglect of the Gospel by «Official Christendom» (Kierkegaard) boil down to no more than the perpetuation of the personal security of clerics who represent and enjoy the *status quo* and the maintenance of a false authority -- a false authority because the Church has refused to remain within the truth. The result of this apostasy is, of course, that the Church is becoming less and less a means of spreading the Gospel. It is becoming less and less Christian. Thus, people who are seeking truth, meaning and a place in which to grow in their consciousness of humanity and God, are turning (especially in North America) to cults, movements and sects (xiv) instead of to the Church which offers little more than an «irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century.» (xv) Therefore, the Church herself through such right actions for the wrong reasons contributes to the world's state of separation from God. Indeed the Church has sinned and grievously!

Repentance, Reconciliation and Renewal. All is not lost, however, for the message that the Church once knew and once proclaimed is still true. Moreover, it holds true for her - The Good News that there is forgiveness for sin in Jesus Christ. For through Him, God seeks to reconcile all things, whether in Heaven or on earth, to Himself (Col. 1:20). The Church, therefore, in these times is called to reconciliation. She is called to reconcile herself to God through Christ. It is essential that the Church see the necessity of making right this relationship. Her duty is not first to make peace with the world; her duty is first to make peace with God. For peace with the world shall follow only after her relationship with God is reconciled (Matt. 6:33).

The first step which the Church must take in this journey back to God is to recognize that God has never abandoned her. To see clearly that regardless of her apostasy she remains under the grace of Jesus Christ, who Himself has taken the guilt of all people through all ages upon Himself. For only through the acknowledgement of this mysterious communion with Christ can the Church ever truly recognize her guilt, which is the first step toward the second -- repentance. (xvi)

Such repentance must begin with the individual but must not stop until the whole of official Christendom has publicly acknowledged her apostasy and reclaimed her authority, not in her righteousness, but indeed in her dependency and

submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Bonhoeffer, then, was quite correct in his insight into the nature of Christ and the form of Christ into which each individual, the Church and ultimately the world must be transformed. He was right when he suggested that in Christlike fashion individual believers must see their own sins as responsible for the apostasy of the whole Church--the whole world. Yet, even if it is possible for individuals to confess the sins of the whole world and by so doing release the forgiveness of God upon the Church and the world, (*xvii*) it remains imperative that the preaching of such repentance should not end with a mystical understanding of the grace of God. Neither the Church nor individual believers must be deluded into believing that the making of the confession alone is sufficient, be it by one or by millions. For transformation must follow (no matter how gradually) the reception of forgiveness.

This transformation is only possible if the mysterious communion with Christ, which belongs to all through His grace, becomes an experimental belief. For only if those who make up the Church know their Lord, can they ever hope to know His will for them. And only in knowing His will can the Church hope to make the right decisions with regard to resistance. Or at least, only in knowing the will of Jesus Christ can the Church dare to make a decision for resistance and be courageous enough to bear the responsibility for her decision (right or wrong), before the world in the knowledge of the love of God.

In other words, the proper relation of the Church to the world cannot be deducted from natural law or rational law or from universal human rights, but *only* from the gospel of Jesus Christ. ... The word of the Church is the call to conversion, the call to belief in the love of God in Christ, and the call to preparation for Christ's second coming and for the future kingdom of God. (*xviii*)

These words from Bonhoeffer effectively describe the standpoint from which the Church should work, as well as the work itself. But, such is only possible if the Church succeeds in reconciling herself to God, for then, and only then, can she truly partake in the renewal of the world. Only then will she be equipped to manifest before the world the depth of love, the fulness of peace, and the joy of faith as it shall be experienced in the coming kingdom. Merton said it well:

The great historical event, the coming Kingdom, is made clear and is *realized* in proportion as Christians themselves live the life of the Kingdom in the circumstances of their own place and time. (*xix*)

Thus is described the third step that the Church must make in her journey toward renewal; that she, that is, each of the individuals of whom she is comprised, must live as though the Kingdom of God is already established. This is not to advocate a spiritual other-worldliness which shows no regard for the suffering earth, for the experience of the tension between the expected and the established Kingdom will continue till the end of time -- the end of history. Until that time, however, those of the community of faith have a task to

perform -- the task of «living the life of the Kingdom» -- in the world. For to do otherwise, as was seen earlier, is treasonable. This «living the life of the Kingdom» will of course demand that the Church enter into resistance against all forms of oppression (including those which she herself has created), but it demands further that she do so, while at the same time, proclaiming unashamedly and unreservedly that Jesus Christ is Lord and that His standards for the quality of human life are the only motives for her actions.

Moreover, the Church should never be afraid to state emphatically, that while she gives practical aid to resistance against oppression, her *real* power lies in her living Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps now, more than ever before, the Church must relearn the potential and the power of prayer. Perhaps now, more than ever before, the Church must be the Church at prayer.

Notes

- i. Cf. also Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (Macmillan, paperback ed., 1978) pp. 332-353, wherein Bonhoeffer discusses Jesus Christ as the ultimate authority for both the Church and the State and demonstrates that the purpose of the Church in her interactions with the State is precisely the proclamation of the Gospel and the eschatological establishment of the Kingdom of God.
- ii. *Questions & Answers* (released by WCC August 1978), pp. 1-2. It is interesting to note that the *Criteria For the Special Fund to Combat Racism* (publication of WCC) nowhere in its six points makes any mention of either Jesus or the Gospel. The closest it comes to any such reference is in the statement «The purposes of the organizations must not be in conflict with the general purposes of the WCC and its units.»
- iii. *The Ottawa Citizen* July 13, 1979, front page col. 5, the Rev. E.P. Thompson quoted.
- iv. *The Canadian Churchman*, February 1980, p. 4, col. 2, Editorial, «Without Immigrants We could all be Losers.»
- v. *The Montreal Institute for Ministry* (syllabus, released by MIM, 1978), p. 2.
- vi. *Ibid.* p. 3. To be fair it must be mentioned that the following sentence claims «Such growth is necessarily spiritual as well as personal». Yet, there are many forms of spiritual experience, and Jesus Christ and/or His Gospel is not made mention of at all in the whole of the 10 page pamphlet.

- vi. *Ibid.*
- vii. Martin Luther King Jr., *Letter from Birmingham City Jail*, as quoted by Bedau, *Civil Disobedience: Theory and Practice*, p. 87. Thomas Merton also employs this quotation to the same end in *Faith and Violence*, p. 211.
- ix. Bonhoeffer, *op. cit.* p. 110.
- x. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christology* as quoted by Bethge, Eberhard, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography* (Collins Fountain Books, 1977) p. 430.
- xi. Régamey, *Non-Violence and the Christian Conscience*, p. 214. It is also noted that this is the opposite viewpoint to that posited by Bonhoeffer in his essay «*After Ten Years*,» but it is believed that this dichotomy is solved in the concept of action with proclamation.
- xii. Merton, *op. cit.* p. 215.
- xiii. Bonhoeffer, as quoted by Bethge, *op. cit.* p. 564.
- xiv. Let the Church find herself fully responsible for the Jonestown incident.
- xv. King, Jr. in Bedau, *op. cit.* p. 86.
- xvi. Cf. Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, p. 110 ff.
- xvii. Cf. *ibid.* pp. 112-115. Here Bonhoeffer offers on behalf of the Church a full confession of her apostasy, all of which still remains to be confessed today.
- xviii. Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, p. 357.
- xix. Merton, *op. cit.* p. 209.

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ALEXANDER GUINZBURG ON THE STATUS OF RELIGION IN THE U.S.S.R.

GEORGE MOGILJANSKY

After taking part involuntarily in a spies-for-dissidents trade between the U.S. and U.S.S.R. last April, Alexander Guinzburg, one of the dissidents, embarked on a speaking tour of Western countries. He visited Montreal last September 22nd as a guest of Amnesty International and took part in a discussion held in St. Joseph's Church in the Town of Mount-Royal. The topic was the «Status of Religion in the U.S.S.R.» «One word best describes it,» he said, «tragic.»

As a member of the Moscow Committee for monitoring Soviet compliance with the Helsinki Accords, Guinzburg was observing various, smaller Christian churches in the U.S.S.R., including Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists and Pentecostals.

He began the discussion with a brief description of several cases of religious persecution. The first one dealt with a young Baptist, Victor Peredereyev, sentenced to three years in a prison camp for objecting, on religious grounds, to serve in the army. Guinzburg cited the local Amnesty International group's efforts to free Peredereyev. (A petition to free Victor Peredereyev was organized during the discussion).

The second case of religious persecution concerned an Orthodox priest with a talent for preaching. Father Adelgai's parish in Uzbekistan had grown to three times its original size before he was arrested on the charge of beating children. «Apparently the (Soviet) regime knew he wasn't guilty...and didn't strip him of his priesthood,» noted Guinzburg. Having lost a leg during his three year sentence in a labour camp, the priest was assigned to a parish in mainly Protestant Latvia. This «parish» had only one retired priest for a member. Guinzburg commented on this: «To get rid of religion in the U.S.S.R., prison is not necessary.»

Another case of religious persecution involved a Seventh Day Adventist leader, eighty-three year old Vladimir Shelkov, who was sentenced to five years of labour camps (strict regime) for his religious activities. Guinzburg said the Adventists, through their underground presses, had published hundreds of books and pamphlets, and had «surpassed all officially recognized Orthodox, Catholic and Baptist production.»

Questioned on relations between the Vatican and Moscow, he said that they are secret, but that the Vatican did help to obtain the release of the Ukrainian Cardinal Slepī (of the Eastern Rite Catholic Church) from a prison camp. Guinzburg said: «The Eastern Rite Catholic Church in the Western Ukraine is very deep underground...We know more about the Lithuanian Catholic Church not as a government body or hierarchy, but as a living body which issues an underground magazine called the *Lithuanian Catholic Church Chronicle*.» He added

that the Catholic church in Lithuania has no real relations with the Vatican, although the church there is under the auspices of the government's Religion Committee. He also noted that a Catholic Committee for the defence of the rights of the faithful was recently organized in Lithuania and has five Catholic priests among its members.

Alexander Guinzburg outlined some of the legal aspects pertaining to religion in the U.S.S.R.: «A religious service can only be performed in one place of worship and anything else requires special permission which is never granted. ...The law forbids religious instruction for children and any sort of charitable work.»

A question from the audience followed: «We know the legal situation of religion, but what about faith and the existence of it?» Guinzburg answered: «Faith is the only thing that helps us to persevere. Is there another way of opposing the regime? No, none.»

Asked about the number of believers in the U.S.S.R., he said: «Official sources list 30 to 100 million Orthodox, six to eight million Baptists, a few million Catholics and other groups ranging from 5,000 to one million.» As to the authenticity of these numbers, he gave as his opinion: «As the regime would not want to believe, I am inclined to believe the larger figures are correct.»

Concerning the passing on of religious faith and practices by generations, Guinzburg commented: «In Orthodox churches in the U.S.S.R., people (who attend services) are either very old, more than seventy, or younger than forty years old. The generation in between has been killed off as far as the church is concerned. You may conclude that the family influence was absent, but it still does have some influence, for example, my grandmother baptized me.» He argued that places of worship by themselves, by their physical presence, could not serve as a religious influence because they are up to 300 km distant from one another in the rural areas. Guinzburg underlined two major sources of religion in the U.S.S.R.: books and foreign radio transmissions in the languages of the Soviet Union.

Asked if the Helsinki Accords had any impact on the status of religion there, he replied: «None,...no fewer priests have been jailed, not one church has been opened, the faithful are not any less persecuted and not one law restraining freedom of conscience has been repealed.»

When questioned about the condition of other religious groups, such as Muslims and Jews, Guinzburg answered: «All religious faiths are equally persecuted.»

He praised and expressed his gratitude for what he termed the «authentic heroism» of Amnesty International.

THE JEWISHNESS OF JESUS AND HIS GENTILE FOLLOWERS

THE BIRKS LECTURES, 1979

LECTURER: KRISTER STENDAHL, PROFESSOR OF NEW TESTAMENT AND FORMER DEAN,
HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL.

Often the Birks Lectures have not been preserved. Some of the lecturers have, it is true, produced the substance of their lectures in books or articles, but many have not. The committee responsible for this issue of ARC thought that a resumé of this year's lectures should be printed as a reminder to those who were present of what was then said and for the benefit of many of our readers who could not attend.

It is impossible to reproduce the atmosphere of the lectures, which owed so much to the piety - what a pity that this word has lost its savour!, the wit, the little asides, and even the tone of voice of the lecturer. Dr. Stendahl spoke to us out of a wide knowledge, but also out of a deep commitment.

What follows is a summary of what was said, «without note or comment.» Direct rather than indirect speech is used in the hope that it will convey something of the liveliness of the occasion.

Lecture 1: *The Jewishness of Jesus*

No surprise is involved in the title of these lectures. Everyone knows that Jesus was a Jew and that the movement which began with him became a predominantly Gentile movement in a comparative short space of time. But the conclusions that can be drawn from these facts may cause us to question our deepest convictions, e.g., that a universalist outlook is wiser and more spiritual than a particularist one. In point of fact it is the former that «starts crusades and causes trouble.»

It is a good thing that we should celebrate today, *Yom Kippur*, by reflecting on the Jewishness of Jesus, but it is also dangerous, for none of us has the capacity of hearing how another community hears. A saying of Jesus applies to us here: «If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you...» The Jewish people have ample reason to have quite a few things against us. So while they are today fulfilling the obligation that God has laid upon them, let us approach our subject in the spirit of the rabbi who prayed that he would never use his reason against the truth.

The Jewishness of Jesus is far more stark than we sometimes think. Half the population of Galilee was Gentile but there are few references to Gentiles in the Gospels. Either by deliberate design or as a result of unreflective Jewish behaviour, he appears to have avoided Gentile towns. Sepphoris was not

(This summary of the Birks Lectures should have appeared in the last issue of ARC. Unfortunately it was delayed in the mail. We express our regrets both to our lecturer and our readers. The Editorial Board).

far from Nazareth and Tiberias was an important Galilean city, yet neither is mentioned in the Gospels as visited by Jesus. There is always some hesitation displayed about his contacts with individual Gentiles. Luke has some Jews act as intermediaries when a centurion seeks his help (Lk.7:1-10), and in the parallel story in Matthew (8:5+13), the sentence punctuated as a statement on the lips of Jesus is more probably a question: «You expect me to come and heal him?» The centurion replies that Jesus is capable of healing at a distance and therefore does not need to contaminate himself by entering a Gentile home. In the story of the Syrophenician woman, the Canaanite, as Matthew calls her (Mk.7:24-30; Mt.15:21-28), it is the wit of the woman that saves the day. Her response to being spoken to as a dog is to say that dogs get the crumbs that fall under the table, and for this response her daughter is healed. This story, spiced with humour, closely resembles stories found in the Rabbinic tradition, in which humour is used to express theological insights. It also resembles Jewish writings in which Gentiles are shown in a sympathetic light in order to stir up Jews to emulate them. «A righteous Gentile is more dear to God than the High Priest in all his glory.»

But such incidents are rare in the Gospels. Jesus is mainly concerned with the «insider.» Two incidents in the Gospel of John may be used to sum up this point in our argument. When some Greeks ask to see Jesus (John 12:20ff.), John has Jesus reply with an aphorism on death as a necessary preliminary to new life, but he does not seem to visit with non-Jews. In John 4:22, the Samaritan woman is told that salvation comes from the Jews.

When we turn to the teaching of Jesus, we find there is not a single idea that could not be held by a Jewish person. Much of it is a discussion within the Pharisaic structure of debate, so we may presume that they were the Jewish group to whom he felt closest. Let us look at one or two examples.

The Golden Rule was not original with Jesus. It had first been expressed by the famous Jewish teacher Hillel. «Whatever you would not have done to yourself, do not to your neighbour. This is the Torah. All the rest is commentary.» Christian exegetes have sometimes said that Jesus' version is superior to Hillel's because it is expressed in positive terms. What they have failed to notice is that it is the negative version that we find in the writings of early Christian teachers. Clearly they say no difference between the two forms. The summing up of the Torah in the two commands to love God and to love one's neighbour is no less basic Jewish teaching.

It is common knowledge that Judaism took many forms in the time of Jesus, and while he was closest to the Pharisees in many ways there are other aspects of his teaching which approximate to that of other Jewish sects. In his understanding of Satan he stands closer to the popular tradition than to the more sophisticated thought of the rabbis. In his expectation of the nearness of the Kingdom and in his own conviction that he was the agent of its coming lies the main difference between himself and the Pharisees. People could therefore live the life of the Kingdom in an anticipatory fashion. The Pharisees, not

seeing in the words and works of Jesus the signs of the Kingdom, thought that he would undermine rather than advance the cause of justice in the world. The Qumran Community, also believing in the nearness of the Kingdom, had this «anticipatory ethic,» but confined the living of it to its own members. A close parallel to this may be found in the First Epistle of John, where love is confined to the members of the Christian community and none of it spills over to the outside world.

There is nothing in the teaching of Jesus which goes beyond the prophetic criticism of Israel. A true prophet denounces the sins and injustices of the nation and proclaims the nearness of the judgment, but prays that his or her prophecy will never come true. (Jonah's attitude to the Ninevites is the very opposite of what a prophet's attitude should be). It was when the critical words of Jesus were spoken in a Gentile context that their theological content was misunderstood; they then became a fertile source for Christian anti-Judaism.

Even the words which Christians associate most closely with Jesus, The Lord's Prayer, contains nothing specifically Christian. It is a shout for the coming of the Kingdom, and all of it can be traced to Jewish sources. The petition which seems most down to earth, «Give us this day our daily bread,» is a prayer for the day when God's children will sit down at table with the Messiah, at the banquet of which the community meal is a foretaste.

It is noteworthy that Christians did not try to «Christianize» this prayer by adding, «through Jesus Christ our Lord.» This was partly due to the fact that Jesus himself had used it, but when one thinks of the strange things that have happened in the history of Christian worship, it is surprising none the less. By rounding off the prayer with a doxology taken from 1 Chron.29 the tradition has borne unwitting witness to the Jewishness of Jesus.

Lecture 2: *His Gentile Followers*

The documents which make up the New Testament were written by Gentiles or for Gentile churches, or for churches with Gentile majorities. This is well seen in the Gospel of Matthew, which appears on the surface to be a Jewish Gospel. It has, no doubt, many Jewish features. With all its formula quotations, with all its Jewish exegesis, it yet reflects a situation in which the Gentile presence is substantial. Like Hellenistic Judaism it is very conscious of the sensitivities of the Gentile world.

To take the first of Matthew's sermons, The Sermon on the Mount. Think of Matt. 5:20: «If your righteousness is not superior to that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.» What is discussed is not the set of issues which divided Jews and Christians: circumcision, food laws, the Sabbath etc.; rather, Matthew tries to show that Christians have a deeper understanding of morality than Jews do. Josephus does very much the same kind of thing with the Essenes. In reality, the Essenes believed that they should mask their hostility towards outsiders, because if it were revealed

it might cause their enemies to reflect and repent, and thus escape the divine judgement. When Josephus reports on this attitude, he says that the Essenes hold their righteous anger in check as if they were «restrained Stoics,» and thus ascribes to them a superior moral attitude. In the same way, Matthew commends Christianity as a deeper moral and religious system. He abandons the Jewish prophetic mode for the moral argument of Hellenistic culture.

The leading spirit in the Gentile expansion of Christianity was the apostle Paul, «the only intellectual among the writers of the New Testament.» In all probability he was the first to see that the future of Christianity lay in the Gentile world, though he was not the only person who worked among the Gentiles. He does not think of himself as a convert to Christianity but as one who was called by God, just as the prophets were (Gal.1:15,16). There are places where he expresses hostility to Judaism, e.g., 1 Thess.2:16, but his considered opinion is given us in Romans 9-11. Here he argues that the Jews, in the providence of God, rejected Jesus in order that the Gentiles might accept him. And his point is that this does not give the Gentiles the right to feel superior. God has a plan for saving the Jews and Paul does not say that this involves their acceptance of Christ. In the final section of these chapters (10:18 - 11:36), Christ is not mentioned at all, and it ends with the only doxology that Paul wrote in God language, not in Christ language. The Jews are to be left in God's hands and he will save them in his own way. The probable reason for this view is that Paul himself had come to see that missionary zeal could be dangerous; had he not persecuted the Church of God out of zeal? He came to see that there was a mystery to mission and that its goal did not necessarily have to be maximum expansion. In these chapters he is not thinking in terms of winning individuals but of the roles that peoples play as entities in the design of God. What is at stake is not when individual people will become Christians but when God will redeem his creation, all peoples, Jews and Gentiles alike.

How predominantly Gentile Paul's churches were can be seen in some of the discussions that take place in the Corinthian correspondence. In the discussion on food, for example, Jewish food rules do not enter in; the basis of decision is whether a certain line of action will strengthen or weaken the community. Acts gives us a different picture. In that book Paul always goes to the synagogue first, and it is only after being rejected there that he turns to the Gentiles. Since no hint of this appears in Paul's letters, we must conclude that what Luke has given us is a theological construction.

In the Gospel of John, the Jews have become a symbol for «the enemy,» so that it does not give us much knowledge of what actually took place. For John, the Jews are no longer the people of Israel; they represent «the World.»

That this could happen should cause us to reflect seriously about our relationship to our mother faith, and no less seriously about the possibility of finding models for religious co-existence in this world.

Lecture 3: *The Consequences*

(The lecture began with a prayer for freedom from anxiety, especially from anxiety about God's and Christ's prestige in the world.)

These lectures have been indirectly, and now directly, on the mission of the Church. To whom is it directed? How is it to be carried out? These two questions are of equal importance. There are some who seem to think that any method which has done a good selling job in the secular world can also be used in selling the Gospel. This is a highly questionable proposition.

The big question for Christians is this: How can they sing their song to Jesus without denigrating other religions, either directly or indirectly? How can they in witnessing to Christ, avoid false witness against their neighbours, belittling the latter's faith in order to make their own shine more brightly by comparison? What is the method which the Lord whom they worship would have them use?

The statement that Judaism is particularistic and Christianity is universalistic is partly true, but not in the sense that Christians have often suggested. A particularistic attitude may be a sign of humility rather than a sign of self-centred pride. In Deutero-Isaiah especially, we find a particularism which acknowledges a responsibility of obedience and witness that is part of God's total plan for the world. The humility of Israel is shown by the fact that she has no missions programme. She must bear her witness to God and to justice and to the moral order, but why this should be so is a mystery which lies in the mind of God. She is to be a light to the nations (Is.49:6; cf. Lk.2:32). If a Gentile insists, he may join the Jewish people, but he is not pressured into doing so.

The Early Christians understood their mission in a similar way. Gathered out of the world on the basis of their faith in Jesus Messiah, they did not think in terms of Christianizing the world. That idea did not arise until the time of Constantine when the Church allied itself with the secular power, and it did not come into its own until modern times when the countries of Western Europe set out to colonize the rest of the earth. The Gospel followed, it did not precede the explorers and conquerors.

The basic images of Jesus are minority images, such as light and salt. Both of these are Jewish images for Torah, and in one sense that is what Christianity turned out to be: Torah for the Gentiles. Indeed, Maimonides, the mediaeval Jewish sage, applied that term to both Christianity and Islam at a time when Judaism was suffering at the hands of both.

In a pluralistic time like ours, we will have to think of humankind as a community of communities held together only in the universalism of God. Our boastful universalism may find this irritating, but we will have to learn to live and let live. There are precedents for this in the Gospels. The Magi

come, worship and offer their gifts, and then go back to their own country. The person who gives a cup of cold water to a disciple (Mt.10:42) is thought of as an outsider who remains an outsider. In the parable of the Last Judgement (Mt.25:31-46), the Gentiles will be judged on how they treated Christians, not whether they became Christians. The Christian community is called to function as God's witness and it should know that it is precious in his eyes.

A secular view of the present religious situation is to divide the world religiously, leaving each religion a particular area: Hinduism to India, Buddhism to the Far East, Islam to the Middle East, etc. But this is unacceptable to anyone who has been touched by God. Dialogue, give and take between the various religious traditions will have to be the pattern of the future. The adjuncts of mission in former days, e.g. schools and hospitals under the control of the Church, will soon be things of the past. That is all to the good, for without necessarily meaning to do so, these institutions exercised a great deal of power over the powerless people who needed them. New ways will now have to be found to «sing our song to Jesus,» while allowing others to sing their own songs, to tell us who and where they are, and allowing ourselves to be open to them.

Out of all the themes that were possible to him, Jesus chose to speak about the Kingdom, that is, in terms of the Biblical myth, about the redeemed, restored, mended creation. All mission has to do with that theme. To give only one example, Gandhi learned significant things from Jesus, and through him the Gospel may have been able to do more or less what God wanted. That Gandhi did not become a Christian is insignificant in the total perspective of God's hope for the Kingdom.

Paul's description of the End (1 Cor.15:24-28), where he uses cosmic language, can be told as a story in the style of the Rabbis of old. All nations and all religions are gathered before God with Christ at his side. Christians look at the others as much as to say: «You see, we were right; there is our Jesus.» But when they turn back again, Christ has disappeared, for he will never be available to bolster the smugness of those who believe in him. That is why it says: «..in order that God may be All in All.»

The reporter of these lectures adds only one comment. There are things here, perhaps many things, with which our readers will disagree. The lecturer expected disagreement and would be disappointed if there were none. It is to be hoped that disagreement will not lead to rejection, but rather to serious reflection on the issues that he has here raised.

NOTES FROM THE DEAN ...

As the second term draws to a close I am happy to report on the continuing good humour of our Faculty. To wit: the students have inaugurated a «Happy Hour» in the Junior Common Room on the last Thursday of each month - *very well* attended by students and staff! Academic work is thereby enlightened, with our usual busy schedule of lectures, seminars and Common Room dialogue and debate. We have enjoyed visiting speakers such as *Ursula Niebuhr*, a delightful lecturer and guest; *Gilles Quispel* from Utrecht on the Gnostic Tradition - stimulating and erudite; *Philip McShane* from Halifax, this year Visiting Fellow at the new Lonergan College of Concordia University, provocative and entertaining; *Walter Brueggemann* of Eden Seminary as Presbyterian College's Anderson Lecturer, a solid and «relevant» series. The Doktorklub continues to serve the research interests and needs of our advanced students, while the Faculty Discussion Group is revived thanks to *Monroe Peaston*, and the «liberation theology» theme of this issue is one of its concerns.

Our accreditation visit by the Association of Theological Schools' team was an excellent exercise in self-examination. Since we are and are bound to be out of step with the ATS norm of a three-year M.Div. program, we now must attend to preparing our defense. A new feature of our total theological education will be part of that answer, since we expect that the United Theological College will be able to offer the M.Div. to recognize the «professional» Montreal Institute for Ministry education, and to honour the fact (as we think) that our style of theological education in the Montreal consortium is worthy of comparison with the North American pattern. We also expect a Roman Catholic presence with us next year, in some of our STM seminars and in the MIM, through negotiation with the Department of Theological Studies of Concordia (Loyola Campus). Still another new thing is a Francophone group of B.Th. students which we hope will register in September; at this moment details are complicated and you will hear more of this anon.

Now to staff affairs. This summer two professors come of age and will retire. *Dr. Monroe Peaston*, Associate Professor of Pastoral Psychology, will continue with us as part-time lecturer for two or three years. *Dr. Keith Markell*, Associate Professor of Church History, who joined us through the Presbyterian connection in 1969, will be missed by staff and students for his solid contribution to the area.

The Nominating Committee of the Faculty has been at work for more than one year in searching for and interviewing possible candidates. I am happy to report that two new staff members will join us, their appointments confirmed by the Board of Governors in February. One will replace *Dr. John Kirby*, who has continued an extra year as Lecturer in New Testament. The other will replace Keith Markell. They are:

Dr. Edward J. Furcha, B.A., (McMaster), B.D., (McGill), Ph.D., (Hartford), Associate Professor of Church History.

Dr. Frederik Wisse, Ing. (Utrecht), B.A., B.D. (Calvin, Mich.), Ph.D. (Claremont), Associate Professor of New Testament.

We look forward to the presence of Edward Furcha and Frederik Wisse in September, to augment our staff and to bring their own approach and wisdom to their topics. We will benefit also from two new part-time lecturers, *Dr. John McNab* who will teach the course «A History of Christian Liturgy» formerly taught by John Kirby, and *Principal Pierre Goldberger* of UTC who will give a new course on «A Theology of the Body».

Other staff changes will occur because the Dean will be on sabbatical; this is part of my reappointment as Dean for a second term (1980-1985) and will allow me to pick up my research interests which have been largely «on the shelf» the past five years. During my absence *Dr. Robert Stevenson* our Assistant Dean will become «Acting Dean» (with all the powers and privileges pertaining thereto, as they say). *Dr. Peter Carpenter*, another of our own Ph.D. graduates, will replace me in the Philosophy of Religion area. Since these will be my last Notes until I return, let me express my sense of gratitude to our staff and students for making my job relatively enjoyable because of the harmonious spirit which obtains among us.

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND STEWARDSHIP: A NEW OPPORTUNITY

ART VAN SETERS

It was the week before Christmas in Chicago. I was attending the first official Board meeting of the newly formed Ecumenical Stewardship Resource Center. I had been appointed to represent the theological schools in Canada (through the Co-ordinating Committee on Theological Education). The talk at coffee-breaks constantly centered (we'll stick with the Yankee spelling!) on a fellow named Doug Hall who had spoken some months earlier to a large gathering of Denominational Stewardship leaders in the far South West.

Now what had attracted me to become involved in the setting up of this special study center on the joint campuses of Garrett Evangelical and Seabury-Western Seminaries, was the focus and scope of the center's attention. This was not another «how do you sell it?» program. Stewardship was not just a matter of fund-raising within the institutional Church. It comprehends human relationships, economic structures and their societal effects, ecological issues, and the like. But the focus for reflecting on these is quite specifically biblical and theological. The center will bring together denominational and seminary representatives to examine the theology implicit in stewardship programs and the stewardship theory implicit in theological education curricula and teaching.

It was clear to me, that the enthusiasm for Doug's theological approach to stewardship indicates a serious openness to rethink stewardship theory and practice. I believe that theological educators need to get involved in this development and I welcome the opportunity to share in this dialogue.

MEMORIES

BY

TAPAS MAJUMDAR

It was the last working hour before Christmas holidays. The circulation statistics for the last month of the year were marked. The reading room was literally empty. And I was waiting for the distinguished Canadian poet-lawyer. He wanted to see his poem which he wrote almost two decades ago. The library had the magazine where the poem was published.

The poet came. He was a tall man with a pensive look, wearing a rumpled raincoat.

«My name is ...»

«We've located your poem. The magazine is in the basement stacks.»

«Can I go down and have a look at it? Also, I want a copy of it for myself.»

As we walked down the staircases, he said that he wrote the poem on the death of a friend. We entered into basement stacks. I gave him the magazine. He sat down on a chair and read the poem in silence. He stood up and mumbled, «He was a dear friend.»

We came to the Common Room to photo-copy the poem. Flickering lightbulbs on the Christmas tree gave the forlorn room some semblance of liveliness. The poet xeroxed his poem. I walked him to the door. He thanked me, and said, «Memories fill in the emptiness of our being. Merry Christmas.»

* * * *

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